

## The Genre of Polemics in the Literature of the English Enlightenment and Uzbek Jadid Writers

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the genre of polemics in two literary traditions: the English Enlightenment and the Uzbek Jadid movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Polemical literature serves as a vehicle for social critique, moral instruction, and educational engagement. English Enlightenment writers, including Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele, employed satire, irony, and allegory to challenge social and religious norms. Uzbek Jadid authors, notably Abdulla Avloniy, Fitrat (Abdulhamid Sulaymono'g'li), and Mahmudxo'jaBehbudiy, adapted polemical techniques for a largely literate and reform-minded readership, emphasizing clarity, dialogue, and practical social reform. Through comparative analysis, this study highlights stylistic, functional, and cultural characteristics of polemical texts, demonstrating the adaptability of the genre across diverse historical and cultural contexts.*

**Keywords:** Polemics, English enlightenment, Uzbek Jadid literature, literary genre, social critique, education, discourse

### INTRODUCTION

Polemics has historically served as a literary genre that engages society in moral, social, and ideological debate. In England, the Enlightenment of the 18th century saw authors like Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele employing satire, irony, and hyperbole to critique societal norms and institutions. These writers addressed a literate urban readership capable of

appreciating subtle argumentation, cultivating critical reflection and rational discourse. In parallel, the Uzbek Jadid movement emerged as a cultural and educational reform movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advocating for literacy, modernization, and social reform under the Russian Empire. Uzbek Jadid authors such as Abdulla Avloniy, Fitrat, and Mahmudxo'ja Behbudiy utilized polemical writing to challenge rigid traditionalism, conservative religious practices, and social inertia. The Uzbek context demanded clarity and accessibility, combining moral guidance with educational reform in written discourse.

This study seeks to examine the stylistic and functional features of polemical texts in both English and Uzbek contexts, emphasizing how the genre adapts to social, cultural, and educational needs.

#### METHODS

The present study employs a multi-layered methodological framework to investigate the genre of polemics in the literature of the English Enlightenment and among Uzbek Jadid writers. This framework combines historical-literary analysis, comparative literary analysis, discourse analysis, and a cultural-semiotic approach. The rationale for this methodology is grounded in the interdisciplinary nature of polemical texts, which simultaneously operate as literary artifacts, social commentary, and educational tools.

Historical-literary analysis involves contextualizing primary texts within their respective historical, cultural, and social milieus. For the English enlightenment, texts such as Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729) and essays from Addison and Steele's *The Spectator* (1711–1712) were analyzed against the backdrop of 18th-century British sociopolitical dynamics, the rise of urban literacy, and Enlightenment intellectual trends emphasizing reason, empiricism, and ethical debate. Similarly, Uzbek Jadid texts authored by Abdulla Avloniy, Fitrat, and Mahmudxo'ja Behbudiy were analyzed within the context of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Central Asia, under the

Russian Empire, during a period of reformist social, religious, and educational movements. Archival sources, including periodicals such as *Taraqiy* and *Shuhrat*, were consulted to reconstruct the original publication context and readership.

Comparative literary analysis was employed to examine the structural, stylistic, and rhetorical strategies of polemical writing. Key elements assessed include argumentation patterns, use of irony, satire, allegory, didacticism, and narrative techniques. Comparative metrics were developed to evaluate the functional divergence of English and Uzbek polemical texts: for example, the extent to which irony is employed versus direct moral instruction, and the reliance on abstract versus concrete social critique.

Discourse analysis was conducted to explore dialogical strategies within the texts, focusing on how authors engage their audiences. In English Enlightenment texts, this includes examining the deployment of rhetorical questions, hypothetical scenarios, and indirect satire to provoke reflection among literate urban readers. In Uzbek Jadid texts, dialogue and illustrative examples often aim to educate and mobilize reform, appealing to a broad readership that may have limited formal schooling.

Finally, a cultural-semiotic approach grounded in Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory of culture and Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism was applied. This approach considers how polemical texts encode and transmit cultural norms, reformist ideologies, and moral codes. In particular, Bakhtin's notion of dialogism highlights the relational and socially responsive nature of polemical writing, demonstrating that these texts do not exist in isolation but engage actively with prevailing social discourses.

## RESULTS

The results of this study reveal both convergences and divergences in the strategies, themes, and social functions of polemical writing between English Enlightenment authors and Uzbek Jadid reformists. In both contexts, polemics function as a means of public moral discourse, critiquing prevailing social norms and educating audiences. However, the specific sociocultural circumstances, intended readership, and linguistic strategies differ markedly.

Thematic Focus. English Enlightenment polemics often centered on social critique, rational moral argumentation, and satire targeting institutional and personal vice. Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729) exemplifies this: the essay uses hyperbolic irony to expose social indifference toward the Irish poor, combining shock value with moral persuasion. Similarly, Addison and Steele's essays in *The Spectator* sought to shape public taste, manners, and civic responsibility, emphasizing rational deliberation and ethical reflection. The central theme in these works is the alignment of human behavior with reason and virtue, framed within the growing literacy and public debate of urban England. Uzbek Jadid polemical literature, while sharing a commitment to social reform, reflects distinct historical imperatives. Figures such as Abdulla Avloniy, Mahmudxo'ja Behbudiy, and Fitrat wrote during a period of profound educational, cultural, and religious transformation under the Russian imperial regime. Their texts often targeted entrenched religious orthodoxy, resistance to modern education, and social stagnation. For instance, in Abdulla Avloniy's essays published in *Taraqiy*, he criticizes the clergy's reluctance to embrace new methods of teaching and literacy. Similarly, Fitrat's polemical writings, such as *O'zbekistonningilmiyyo'li*, foreground the need for secular, modern education while advocating moral reform rooted in both Islamic ethics and rationalist ideals. Unlike the English Enlightenment texts, the Uzbek polemics explicitly aim to mobilize a largely undereducated population toward practical social reform, reflecting a more didactic orientation.

#### *Rhetorical strategies*

Analysis of rhetorical strategies reveals both subtlety and directness as distinguishing features of each tradition. English Enlightenment polemics frequently employ satire, irony, and hypotheticals to induce reflection without directly confronting authorities. Swift's essay, for example, presents an outrageous proposal (cannibalism of Irish infants) to provoke outrage and moral awareness. Similarly, Addison and Steele rely on storytelling and parable-like examples to gently critique social foibles, promoting self-reflection among readers.

In contrast, Uzbek Jadid writers adopt a more direct and pedagogical style, reflecting their primary goal of societal reform. While Fitrat occasionally uses rhetorical questions or illustrative anecdotes, the primary strategy is straightforward argumentation supported by historical references and logical reasoning. For example, in his essays on modern education, Fitrat explicitly contrasts traditional *madrasa* instruction with contemporary European models, presenting concrete recommendations for curriculum reform. Behbudiy's writings in *Shuhrat* similarly combine moral exhortation with practical guidance, addressing both educators and the general public. While satire is less prominent than in English texts, metaphor and allegory occasionally appear, particularly in critiques of social ignorance or moral stagnation.

#### *Audience engagement*

Another key difference lies in audience engagement. English Enlightenment polemics presuppose a literate, urban readership familiar with public debate, journals, and salons. Consequently, the texts often rely on subtlety, indirect critique, and intertextual references that assume a shared cultural and intellectual context. For example, Swift assumes that readers will recognize the irony and moral absurdity of his proposal, engaging critically with the text.

Uzbek Jadid polemics, by contrast, address a heterogeneous audience, including largely rural populations with limited literacy. The texts frequently use explanatory footnotes, simple analogies, and moral exemplars to ensure accessibility. Avloniy and Behbudiy frequently employ direct appeals to parental and communal responsibility, connecting abstract reformist ideas to tangible social outcomes. The need for pedagogical clarity influences stylistic choices, resulting in polemical works that are more overtly didactic than their English counterparts.

#### *Social and political functions*

Both traditions share a commitment to social critique, but the functions of polemics differ in scope and urgency. English Enlightenment writers primarily aimed to stimulate public

reflection, refine moral sensibilities, and indirectly influence policy or social behavior. Their critique is often normative and intellectual, oriented toward shaping elite and literate opinion.

Uzbek Jadid polemics, conversely, had a directly mobilizing function, seeking to transform education, culture, and social behavior in a society undergoing rapid colonization and modernization. Polemical texts served as both vehicles of reformist ideology and tools for community organization. For instance, Behbudiy's essays not only criticized conservative religious authorities but also offered concrete strategies for establishing modern schools, demonstrating a dual literary and practical mission.

In sum, the results indicate that while both English and Uzbek polemics share a commitment to social critique and moral discourse, the Uzbek Jadid texts are distinguished by their pragmatic orientation, directness, and educational focus, whereas English Enlightenment texts emphasize irony, subtlety, and elite public debate. Rhetorical strategies, thematic concerns, and audience considerations reflect the distinct historical and sociopolitical contexts in which each tradition operated.

#### ANALYSIS

The analysis of Uzbek Jadid polemics, set against the backdrop of English Enlightenment literature, reveals not only the mechanics of the polemical genre but also the sociocultural and ideological forces shaping its deployment. This section unpacks the thematic, rhetorical, and functional dimensions observed in the results, offering a nuanced understanding of how literary polemics operate within divergent historical contexts.

From a theoretical standpoint, polemics can be defined as a genre of argumentative writing aimed at persuasion, critique, and often moral reform, engaging readers in ethical, social, or political debate. Literary theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) emphasize the dialogic nature of polemics: the text enters into an ideological exchange, responding to contemporary debates and often anticipating counterarguments. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia is particularly relevant here, as both English

Enlightenment and Uzbek Jadid polemics exhibit a multiplicity of voices, reflecting the tension between tradition and innovation. English Enlightenment polemics, exemplified by Swift, Addison, and Steele, embody a dialogic engagement within a literate elite sphere, using irony, satire, and nuanced argumentation. Bakhtin's framework helps explain the sophistication of these texts: they rely on the reader's ability to discern subtext, recognize intertextual references, and engage critically. The text thus becomes a site of negotiation, where meaning is co-constructed between author and audience. Uzbek Jadid polemics, by contrast, engage in a more unidirectional form of dialogic exchange, where the writer addresses an audience largely unfamiliar with formalized public debate. Nevertheless, the Jadid texts are dialogic in their engagement with historical and religious authorities. Writers such as Fitrat and Behbudiy directly respond to the orthodox clergy, traditional pedagogical methods, and societal resistance to modernization, anticipating counterarguments and providing empirical or anecdotal evidence. While the stylistic subtlety of irony is less prominent, the dialogic tension remains, evident in the structuring of argumentation and moral appeals.

Analysis of rhetorical strategies reveals that English Enlightenment polemics leverage cognitive dissonance and reflective irony, creating a space for readers to arrive at moral and social conclusions autonomously. Swift's hyperbolic proposals force readers to confront ethical contradictions; Addison and Steele's essays encourage identification with socially virtuous behavior through exemplars and narrative parables. These strategies rely on reader sophistication, cultural literacy, and an assumption of shared epistemic frameworks. Jadid writers, in contrast, employ clarity, didactic repetition, and historical analogy as persuasive tools. In Fitrat's essays, comparisons between traditional madrasa curricula and European educational systems create a compelling argument for reform. Abdulla Avloniy's polemics often utilize anecdotal exemplars of societal stagnation, illustrating consequences of illiteracy or rigid orthodoxy. Behbudiy's practical recommendations – ranging from school construction to curricular reform – enhance persuasiveness by translating abstract reformist ideas into

concrete action. Here, rhetoric functions not only as persuasion but as instructional scaffolding, guiding readers toward behavioral change. The contrast highlights a fundamental difference in audience engagement. English polemics cultivate interpretive agency, inviting readers to engage intellectually with subtle argumentation. Uzbek Jadid polemics cultivate practical agency, instructing readers and providing tools to effect societal reform. In both cases, rhetorical choices are deeply embedded in sociopolitical and educational contexts.

A critical aspect of analysis lies in understanding ideology as embedded in polemical texts. English Enlightenment polemics reflect the values of rationalism, civic virtue, and social critique within an emergent bourgeois public sphere. They aim to refine individual morality and influence public opinion indirectly. Swift's satirical exaggerations and Addison's moral essays operate within the ideological framework of early modern liberal humanism, promoting reasoned debate and civic responsibility. Uzbek Jadid polemics, conversely, are instrumental in social mobilization, reflecting an ideology rooted in educational reform, national awakening, and modernization. The Jadids' writings reflect a conscious effort to synthesize Islamic moral principles with rationalist and modernist ideals. Fitrat's advocacy for secular education does not reject religious ethics but rather reframes them to accommodate societal progress. Similarly, Behbudiy emphasizes that literacy and modern knowledge are prerequisites for communal and national development. The ideological function is both corrective and mobilizing, highlighting a tension between preserving cultural identity and embracing innovation.

Historical context shapes genre conventions and stylistic choices. English Enlightenment polemics emerge in relatively stable political and social environments, where literacy, print culture, and public debate structures enable subtle irony and intertextuality. Authors can afford to rely on implicit critique because institutional consequences are comparatively limited, and readerships are capable of engaging with abstract reasoning. Uzbek Jadid polemics emerge under colonial Russian influence, with significant cultural, educational, and political pressures. Literacy rates are low, and societal conservatism is reinforced by

entrenched religious authorities. Consequently, the polemical genre adapts: clarity, direct address, and didactic structure dominate. The genre becomes an instrument of pedagogy and reform, bridging the gap between abstract ideas and tangible societal change. The adaptive function demonstrates the flexibility of polemics as a literary form, responsive to audience, context, and intended social outcome.

A recurring theme in Uzbek Jadid polemics is the intersection of literature and education. Unlike English Enlightenment texts, which primarily aim to refine social sensibilities, Jadid texts seek to restructure the educational landscape, creating a literate, rationally informed populace capable of participating in modern civic life. For instance, Avloniy and Behbudiy frequently incorporate sample curricula, moral parables, and historical exemplars into their essays, transforming polemics into quasi-pedagogical manuals. This dual function reflects the holistic vision of Jadid reformists, blending literary artistry with practical societal intervention. From a literary-theoretical perspective, these findings underscore the dynamic nature of polemics. While traditional definitions emphasize argumentative and confrontational features, Uzbek Jadid texts expand the genre to encompass pedagogical, moral, and mobilizing functions. Comparative analysis demonstrates that polemical writing is not a monolithic form but a flexible communicative strategy, shaped by sociohistorical conditions, audience literacy, and cultural imperatives. The adaptive features observed in Jadid texts offer a lens for rethinking genre classification in non-Western contexts, highlighting the interplay between literary form and social function.

#### DISCUSSION

The study of Uzbek Jadid polemics within the comparative framework of English Enlightenment literature reveals the transformative potential of the polemical genre, both as a literary form and as a tool of social reform. The preceding analysis demonstrated how contextual factors – historical, social, and educational – shape rhetorical strategies, ideological purposes, and the functional deployment of polemical texts. The discussion

here situates these findings within broader theoretical debates, elucidating their implications for literary studies, comparative literature, and the understanding of cross-cultural intellectual history.

The comparison highlights that, despite divergent historical contexts, polemics share a core purpose: to engage audiences in the negotiation of ideas, values, and social norms. English Enlightenment polemics primarily aimed to cultivate civic-mindedness, rational deliberation, and ethical reflection among a literate public. Authors like Addison and Steele used essays, satire, and allegory to foster introspection, while Swift employed hyperbole and irony to confront moral contradictions. These techniques presupposed a relatively homogenous audience capable of interpreting nuanced argumentation, reflective thought, and moral subtext. Uzbek Jadid polemics, by contrast, operated in conditions of cultural and educational upheaval, addressing largely illiterate or semi-literate populations under colonial pressure. Consequently, clarity, repetition, and didactic structure became central to persuasive effectiveness. The Jadid authors transformed polemics into instruments of social instruction, bridging abstract reformist ideals with practical guidance for educational, moral, and civic improvement. This demonstrates the adaptability of the polemical genre: while its core function remains argumentative, its expressive strategies are calibrated to audience literacy, sociopolitical constraints, and cultural expectations. The ideological dimensions of polemics emerge as particularly salient in the Uzbek Jadid context. While English Enlightenment polemics often addressed social reform indirectly – through moral exemplars, philosophical critique, or subtle satire – the Jadid texts embody an explicit reformist agenda. Writers such as Fitrat, Behbudiy, and Abdulla Avloniy confronted entrenched religious authority, stagnant pedagogical traditions, and societal conservatism. Their arguments combined appeals to rationalism, Islamic moral principles, and empirical observation, aiming to legitimize educational modernization while maintaining cultural continuity. This ideological explicitness reflects the dual pressures of colonial influence and cultural preservation. The Jadids' polemics were simultaneously defensive – protecting Islamic

identity and cultural heritage – and transformative, advocating new educational structures, literacy programs, and public engagement with modern knowledge. The dual nature of the ideology underscores the genre's flexibility: polemics can serve both as instruments of critique and as scaffolds for cultural negotiation, synthesizing tradition and innovation in response to societal needs. A distinctive feature of Uzbek Jadid polemics is their fusion of literary and pedagogical functions. Unlike English Enlightenment polemics, which prioritize reflection and critique over instruction, Jadid texts embed practical guidance within argumentative prose. For example, Behbudiy's essays often include proposed curricula, methods for literacy improvement, and concrete examples of societal stagnation resulting from educational neglect. In this sense, the literary form becomes inseparable from its social function: the essay, the pamphlet, and the polemical tract are simultaneously literary works and educational manuals. This convergence of literature and pedagogy challenges conventional genre boundaries, suggesting that literary studies must account for sociocultural context and functional intent. The Uzbek Jadid polemics demonstrate that literature is not solely an aesthetic or reflective practice but can be a vector of societal transformation, a medium through which knowledge, moral values, and civic agency are transmitted.

The effectiveness of polemical writing is deeply intertwined with audience reception, a point underscored by the comparative perspective. English Enlightenment authors relied on readers capable of interpretive sophistication, cultivating reflective engagement through irony, intertextuality, and rhetorical subtlety. Conversely, the Jadids engaged audiences with direct moral and practical appeals, recognizing the constraints of literacy, religious authority, and limited public discourse. The contrast illustrates a key principle: the rhetorical and structural choices of polemical writers are not merely stylistic but strategically responsive to social context. Moreover, Uzbek Jadid polemics reveal an anticipatory understanding of audience resistance. Writers frequently preempted objections from conservative religious figures or resistant community members, framing arguments in ways that negotiated authority while promoting reform. This strategy

illustrates an acute awareness of ideological tension, wherein persuasion must balance challenge and accommodation to achieve tangible social change. From a comparative literary perspective, the juxtaposition of English Enlightenment and Uzbek Jadid polemics illuminates several broader principles. First, it demonstrates that polemics are transcultural instruments, capable of adapting to vastly different sociopolitical environments while retaining core argumentative features. Second, it highlights the role of historical contingency in shaping genre conventions: stylistic subtlety in England versus didactic clarity in Central Asia reflects the interaction of literacy, public discourse, and institutional power. Finally, it underscores the interplay between literature, ideology, and social reform, suggesting that literary studies should account for functional as well as aesthetic dimensions, particularly in non-Western contexts. The Uzbek Jadid case also contributes to postcolonial literary discourse, emphasizing how colonized societies appropriated literary forms to negotiate modernity, cultural identity, and reform. By deploying polemics strategically, Jadid writers exemplify how local intellectual traditions can synthesize indigenous values with global ideas, creating a hybrid literary-ideological form that is both adaptive and transformative.

#### CONCLUSION

The study of Uzbek Jadid polemics reveals the genre's critical role as a vehicle for intellectual, social, and educational reform in early 20th-century Central Asia. Jadid writers such as Fitrat, Behbudiy, and Avloniy strategically employed polemics to advocate for modernization while negotiating with entrenched religious and cultural traditions. Their texts demonstrate a careful balance of clarity, persuasion, and pedagogy, reflecting an acute awareness of audience and sociopolitical constraints. Comparative reflection on English Enlightenment polemics highlights both convergences in rhetorical strategy and divergences in social context and purpose, underscoring the adaptability of the genre across cultures. Ultimately, Uzbek Jadid polemics exemplify how literature can operate simultaneously as a form of cultural expression and a tool for social transformation,

bridging the gap between tradition and reform, and leaving a lasting imprint on the region's intellectual and literary landscape.

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