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**THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASES OF  
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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents a comprehensive examination of the theoretical foundations, methodology, and research approaches of comparative literature (comparativism). Drawing on both classical and contemporary scholarly sources, the study analyses the historical formation of comparative literary studies from its origins in nineteenth-century European philology through its contemporary global manifestations. The article systematically addresses the objects, tasks, and key stages of comparative analysis; the relationship between the historical-comparative and contrastive methods; the role of typological similarities and interliterary relations in understanding literary development; and the position of translation within comparative literary inquiry. Special attention is devoted to the concept of world literature as articulated by Goethe and reinterpreted by modern scholars including David Damrosch, Franco Moretti, and Pascale Casanova, as well as to the tension between Eurocentric paradigms and multicultural approaches to literary history. The study concludes that comparative literature, far from being a narrow technical discipline, constitutes an indispensable framework for understanding the global dynamics of artistic thought, cultural exchange, and literary influence across historical periods and civilizational boundaries.

**KEYWORDS**

Comparative literature, comparativism, historical-comparative method, contrastive method, typology, interliterary relations, world literature, translation studies, poetics, multiculturalism, Eurocentrism, literary influence.

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## QIYOSIY ADABIYOTSHUNOSLIKNING NAZARIY- METODOLOGIK ASOSLARI

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### ANNOTATSIYA

### KALIT SO‘ZLAR

Ushbu maqolada qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslik (komparativistika) fanining nazariy asoslari, metodologiyasi va tadqiqot yondashuvlari atroflicha tahlil etiladi. Tadqiqotda klassik va zamonaviy ilmiy manbalarga tayanilgan holda, qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslikning XIX asr Yevropa filologiyasida vujudga kelishidan to uning hozirgi zamon global ko‘rinishlarigacha bo‘lgan tarixiy shakllanish bosqichlari o‘rganiladi. Maqolada qiyosiy tahlilning obyekti, vazifalari va asosiy bosqichlari; tarixiy-qiyosiy va chog‘ishtirma metodlarning o‘zaro munosabati, shuningdek adabiy taraqqiyotni tushunishda tipologik o‘xshashliklar hamda adabiyotlararo aloqalarning o‘rni va tarjimaning qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslikdagi mavqeyi izchil yoritiladi. Shuningdek, Gyote tomonidan ilgari surilgan hamda David Damrosh, Franko Moretti va Paskal Kazanova kabi zamonaviy olimlar tomonidan qayta talqin qilingan jahon adabiyoti konsepsiyasiga, yevropatsentrik paradigmalardan va adabiyot tarixiga oid multikultural yondashuvlar o‘rtasidagi ziddiyatga alohida e‘tibor qaratiladi. Tadqiqot qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslik tor ixtisoslikdagi fan bo‘libgina qolmay, balki turli tarixiy davrlar va sivilizatsiyalar kesimida badiiy tafakkur, madaniy almashinuv hamda adabiy ta‘sirning global dinamikasini anglash uchun ajralmas asos ekani haqidagi xulosa bilan yakunlanadi.

Qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslik, komparativistika, tarixiy-qiyosiy metod, chog‘ishtirma metod, tipologiya, adabiyotlararo aloqalar, jahon adabiyoti, tarjimashunoslik, poetika, multikulturalizm, yevropatsentrizm, adabiy ta‘sir.

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**АННОТАЦИЯ****КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА**

В статье представлен всесторонний анализ теоретических основ, методологии и исследовательских подходов сравнительного литературоведения (компаративистики). Опираясь на классические и современные научные источники, исследование прослеживает историческое становление сравнительного литературоведения — от его истоков в европейской филологии XIX века до современных глобальных проявлений. В статье последовательно рассматриваются объекты, задачи и ключевые этапы компаративного анализа; соотношение историко-сравнительного и сопоставительного методов; роль типологических схождений и междисциплинарных связей в понимании литературного развития, а также место перевода в системе компаративистских исследований. Особое внимание уделяется концепции мировой литературы, сформулированной Гёте и переосмысленной современными учёными, в том числе Дэвидом Дамрошем, Франко Моретти и Паскаль Казановой, а также напряжению между европоцентристскими парадигмами и мультикультурными подходами к истории литературы. Исследование приводит к выводу, что сравнительное литературоведение — это отнюдь не узкая специальная дисциплина, а незаменимая основа для понимания глобальной динамики художественной мысли, культурного обмена и литературного влияния в разные исторические периоды и за пределами цивилизационных границ.

Сравнительное литературоведение, компаративистика, историко-сравнительный метод, сопоставительный метод, типология, междисциплинарные связи, мировая литература, переводоведение, поэтика, мультикультурализм, европоцентризм, литературное влияние.

## INTRODUCTION

Comparative literature occupies a singular position within the modern humanities. Unlike national philologies, which concentrate their energies on the cultural production of a single linguistic community, comparative literature aspires to a genuinely transnational and transhistorical perspective, examining literary phenomena across languages, traditions, civilizations, and epochs. Its ambition, as René Wellek and Austin Warren famously put it, is to study "literature without regard to linguistic, national, or political boundaries" (Wellek & Warren, 1949, 46). This scope makes comparative literature at once the most demanding and the most intellectually rewarding of literary disciplines.

The emergence and consolidation of comparative literature as an academic discipline reflects a broader intellectual movement that gathered force in nineteenth-century Europe. The Romantic celebration of cultural diversity, coupled with the practical demands of an increasingly interconnected world, created fertile ground for cross-cultural literary inquiry. Thinkers from Herder to Goethe, from the Grimm brothers to Veselovsky, contributed to a vision of literary history as a shared human inheritance rather than the exclusive property of any single nation or tradition. This vision was codified into institutional form – professorships, journals, scholarly associations – in the second half of the nineteenth century and continued to develop through the twentieth century into its present globalized shape.

The relevance of comparative literary study has only intensified in the twenty-first century. Globalization has produced new patterns of literary circulation, translation, and reception that can only be understood through comparative frameworks. At the same time, political and cultural pressures – the rise of nationalist ideologies, debates over decolonization and the literary canon, the proliferation of postcolonial and world-systems approaches – have forced the discipline to interrogate its own assumptions with unprecedented rigor. What counts as literature? Whose literature counts? How does power shape the circulation of texts across linguistic borders? These questions, which lie at the heart of contemporary comparative scholarship, demand theoretical clarity as much as empirical breadth.

In the context of Uzbekistan and Central Asian literary scholarship, comparative literature holds additional strategic importance. The region's cultural heritage – encompassing the achievements of Alisher Navoi, Ibn Sina, Al-Biruni, Ahmad Yassavi, and a host of other thinkers and poets – represents a major contribution to world intellectual history that has frequently been marginalized in Eurocentric literary histories. Developing a rigorous national tradition of comparative literary studies is therefore not merely an academic exercise but a cultural and political necessity: it enables Uzbek scholars to claim their rightful place

within global scholarly conversation, to present their literary heritage on its own terms, and to engage critically with dominant Western paradigms.

The present article pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it traces the historical formation of comparative literary studies from its European origins to its contemporary global configurations. Second, it systematically examines the key theoretical and methodological concepts that define the discipline, including comparative analysis, typology, interliterary relations, translation, and world literature. Third, it reflects on the specific challenges and opportunities facing comparative literary scholarship in the Uzbek context, with reference to the newly published textbook by U. Jurakulov, G. Khalliyeva, and A. Qosimov, *Comparative Literary Studies* (Tashkent, 2025), which provides both the primary empirical material and the broader intellectual framework for the present discussion.

### MAIN PART

The term "comparative" entered European intellectual discourse gradually. It appeared in France in the early nineteenth century, gained purchase in English scholarly usage, was institutionalized in German tradition through dedicated publications, and entered Russian scientific vocabulary through the work of Alexander Veselovsky. But the practice of comparison is of course far older than the name. Aristotle's *Poetics* – still the foundational text of Western literary theory – rests on systematic comparison: it distinguishes tragedy from comedy, epic from drama, and analyses literary forms in terms of their distinguishing features. "Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life" (Aristotle, 335 BCE/1895, 8). This comparative logic, embedded in the earliest reflection on literature, would eventually generate an entire discipline.

The intellectual preconditions for modern comparative literature crystallized in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. German Romanticism played a decisive role. Johann Gottfried Herder challenged the Enlightenment tendency to measure all cultures against a single universal standard, arguing instead for the irreducible particularity of each national spirit (*Volksgeist*). Yet his celebration of cultural diversity was inseparable from a belief in shared humanity, and this dual commitment – to particularity and universality simultaneously – would become the defining tension of comparative literary thought. Goethe carried this logic further when he coined the term *Weltliteratur* in the 1820s, envisioning a transnational republic of letters in which works from different traditions would enter into productive dialogue. Goethe was influenced by his wide reading in Persian, Chinese, and Arabic poetry; his *West-Eastern Divan* (1819) is itself a work of comparative literature avant la lettre. As Susan Bassnett observes, Goethe's concept was fundamentally optimistic: it assumed that great works could transcend their originating cultures and speak to universal human concerns (Bassnett, 1993, 17).

The nineteenth century also witnessed the emergence of comparative linguistics, which provided both a methodological model and an institutional precedent for comparative literary studies. Franz Bopp, Rasmus Rask, and Jacob Grimm demonstrated the power of systematic comparison applied to linguistic data, reconstructing ancestral languages and establishing genetic relationships among language families. Their success encouraged literary scholars to ask whether analogous methods might shed light on literary history. Theodor Benfey's discovery that many European folk narratives derived from Indian originals – announced in his 1859 edition of the *Panchatantra* – was a landmark in this process, suggesting that comparative literary inquiry could yield empirically grounded, falsifiable results (Guillén, 1993, 42).

Within Russian scholarship, comparative literary studies became closely identified with the figure of Alexander Nikolaevich Veselovsky (1838–1906), perhaps the most systematically minded comparatist of the nineteenth century. Veselovsky spent years studying in Italy and Germany, absorbing the latest European philological methods, before returning to Russia to build a synthetic approach that combined historical breadth with theoretical ambition. His masterwork, *Historical Poetics*, written over several decades and published posthumously in definitive form in 1940, argued that literary development should be understood in relation to broader social and historical processes. Literature, for Veselovsky, was not an autonomous domain but a reflection of evolving social consciousness, shaped by specific historical contexts and continuously enriched by cross-cultural contact (Veselovsky, 1989, 405).

Veselovsky's methodological contribution was twofold. First, he developed the concept of the "wandering plot" (*бродячий сюжет*), demonstrating through meticulous analysis that narrative motifs migrate across cultures, languages, and centuries, constantly adapting to new environments while retaining recognizable structural cores. This insight anticipated by several decades the comparative mythology of Vladimir Propp and the structuralist narratology of the mid-twentieth century. Second, Veselovsky insisted that literary comparison must be historically grounded: similarities between literary phenomena do not necessarily imply direct borrowing or shared genetic origin; they may also reflect parallel responses to comparable social and cultural conditions. This distinction between contact-based and typological similarity would become one of the organizing principles of the discipline. M.G. Bogatkina rightly notes that contemporary comparatist methodology continues to rely on the traditions established by Veselovsky's comparative-historical school (Bogatkina, 2004, 75).

Subsequent Russian and Soviet scholars – including Viktor Zhirmunsky (1891–1971), Nikolai Konrad (1891–1970), Irina Neupokoeva, and Mikhail Bakhtin

– elaborated and transformed Veselovsky's legacy. Zhirmunsky, in particular, extended the comparative-historical method to the study of versification, stylistics, and genre, producing landmark studies of Alisher Navoi, Goethe, and Byron that exemplified what rigorous comparative analysis could achieve. His insistence that "examining a writer's work in relation to both national and international literary traditions that shaped it holds significant methodological value" remains a guiding principle of comparative literary inquiry (Zhirmunsky, 1979, 183).

*Objects of in* Comparative analysis differs from conventional literary analysis in a fundamental respect. Standard literary analysis examines a single work or author, identifying constituent elements and describing their interrelations. Comparative analysis extends this procedure by examining how comparable elements in different works or literary systems relate to one another, revealing both convergences and divergences that would be invisible from within any single tradition. As Claudio Guillén observes, comparison "does not explain the individual work but uses individual works as evidence for larger patterns" (Guillén, 1993, 15).

The objects of comparative literary analysis are conventionally classified into three broad categories: natural, social, and spiritual phenomena as these are represented and transformed within literary texts. Natural phenomena – landscapes, seasons, animals, elemental forces – acquire literary significance through their interaction with human consciousness and social life; no comparison of nature in literature can be fully disentangled from social perception and evaluation. Social phenomena – political systems, economic relations, class structures, gender hierarchies – constitute the broadest domain of comparative inquiry, precisely because they vary so dramatically across cultures and historical periods. Spiritual and ideological phenomena – religious beliefs, philosophical worldviews, aesthetic values, moral codes – represent the most subtle and complex objects of comparison, requiring that the analyst proceed with both interpretive sensitivity and conceptual precision (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 36).

Within this framework, N. I. Konrad identified five major dimensions of comparative literary analysis that have proved durably influential: comparison of literatures sharing historical connections; analysis of typological similarities among genetically unrelated literary traditions; study of literature across different temporal and spatial contexts; comparison of structurally parallel phenomena lacking direct genetic relation; and examination of international literary interactions and their dynamics. Each of these dimensions requires different methodological instruments and generates different kinds of insight.

Scholarly literature identifies five interrelated functions that comparative analysis performs simultaneously. The **epistemological function** concerns the acquisition of new knowledge: comparative work generates information about each

object that would not be available from its isolated study, clarifies the nature of interaction between comparable literary phenomena, and – when conducted with sufficient systematic rigor – can yield insight into the developmental trajectories of the phenomena across time. The **logical function** governs the application of reasoning within the comparative process: literary phenomena must be compared on compatible bases, irrelevant factors must be excluded, and apparent contradictions must be examined rather than suppressed, since seemingly opposing literary elements often reveal underlying structural similarities.

The **methodological function** involves the application and development of research tools: comparative analysis does not merely apply pre-existing methods but refines and extends them through practice, expanding both knowledge of the literary object and practical understanding of the analytical process. The **axiological function** concerns evaluation: any comparative examination ultimately produces judgments about the significance and value of literary phenomena, highlighting both convergences and divergences, enriching theoretical understanding, and potentially offering insights for broader cultural or scholarly questions. Finally, the **empirical function** is oriented toward practical application – comparative inquiry becomes genuinely productive when it contributes to real-world intellectual or cultural problem-solving (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 42).

The historical-comparative method remains the central analytical instrument of comparative literary studies, enabling scholars to examine both common and distinctive features of literary phenomena in connection with their historical development. Its theoretical foundations can be traced to Aristotle's *Poetics*, where systematic comparison serves as the basis for a typology of literary forms. In its fully developed modern form, the method encompasses several distinct operations: comparison between works of world literature and national literary traditions; analysis of texts produced within specific historical periods; examination of works belonging to a single literary tradition; situating national literature within the broader context of world literary processes; tracing similarities and differences within literary evolution; and analysing the aesthetic development of individual writers across different stages of their careers (Zhirmunsky, 1979, 183).

A fundamental distinction within historical-comparative methodology separates **genetic** from **typological** approaches. The genetic or historical-genetic approach investigates literatures sharing common origins or belonging to closely related cultural traditions, tracing lines of actual influence and borrowing. The comparative-typological approach, by contrast, focuses on identifying shared structural features across literatures regardless of genealogical connection – recurring themes, archetypal characters, genres, literary movements – whose similarity arises not from contact but from parallel responses to comparable social

and historical conditions. Both approaches are legitimate and productive, but they answer different questions and require different evidentiary standards (Wellek & Warren, 1949, 47).

The distinction between genetic and typological similarity was central to the theoretical debates that shaped comparative literature in the twentieth century. Critics of the purely genetic approach – associated primarily with the French school of comparative literature as represented by Fernand Baldensperger and Paul Hazard – argued that it reduced literary study to a hunt for sources and influences, neglecting the aesthetic dimension of literary works and their capacity to transcend their origins. Defenders of the typological approach – most notably the Czech scholar Dionyz Dyurishin and the Soviet scholars Zhirmunsky and Konrad – argued that cross-cultural structural similarities are at least as significant as genetic connections, since they reveal the universal patterns underlying cultural particularity (Dyurishin, 1979, 123).

**The contrastive method**, while closely related to the historical-comparative approach, serves a distinct analytical purpose: it is primarily oriented toward identifying differences between philological phenomena rather than similarities. Where historical-comparative analysis seeks to explain why literatures sharing common origins or similar historical conditions resemble one another, contrastive analysis asks why they differ – what makes each tradition irreducibly particular, what distinguishes one national literature from another even when both respond to the same universal themes.

Practical examples of contrastive literary analysis predate its theoretical formalization by centuries. Alisher Navoi's *Muhakamat al-Lughatayn* ("Judgement of the Two Languages," 1499) – a systematic comparison of Persian and Turkic literary languages – is a sophisticated exercise in contrastive philology that anticipates many of the concerns of modern contrastive linguistics and stylistics. In the nineteenth century, I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay provided a more rigorous theoretical basis for contrastive analysis, and his work was subsequently developed by a distinguished line of scholars including E.D. Polivanov, L.V. Shcherba, and S.I. Bernstein. According to R. Rasulov, the contrastive method involves the comparison of two or more related or unrelated languages or literary phenomena without focusing on their historical origin or genetic development; unlike the comparative-historical approach, it does not rely on diachronic analysis but instead emphasizes structural and functional distinctions (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 101).

Much of the most productive work in comparative literature is conducted at the level of poetics – the systematic study of the formal and structural elements through which literary works achieve their effects. The concept of poetics was first articulated in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which classified literature into three principal

forms (epic, lyric, and drama) and analysed each in terms of its distinctive artistic characteristics: mimesis, plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle (Aristotle, 335 BCE/1895, 23). Following this foundational work, elaborated accounts of poetics emerged in both Eastern and Western scholarly traditions, including the *Divānī Lughat-it-Türk* and the rich Persian-language tradition of *'ilm-i badī'* (the science of rhetorical figures).

Modern literary scholarship distinguishes five major types of poetics. **General poetics** studies the criteria of art common to all literatures – creative principles, authorial position, the universal conditions of literariness. **Descriptive poetics** examines the process of creation of specific works and the artistic world of particular writers. **Normative poetics** addresses the prescriptive question of how works of art ought to be written, functioning as the theoretical basis of literary criticism. **Theoretical poetics** is directly related to the theory of literature, illuminating the theoretical dimensions of specific literary phenomena – psychology in a novelist's work, form and content in a poet's verse. **Historical poetics** studies the genesis of all artistic elements, revealing the artistic world and skills of authors in connection with the historical-literary process and the spirit of the time. Zhirmunsky formulated the programme of historical poetics concisely: it is a "science that studies poetry at the level of art" (Zhirmunsky, 1977, 15), and his conviction that "the science of literature develops under the sign of poetics" remains as relevant today as when it was first advanced.

#### ***Typological Similarities: Dyurishin's Framework***

Within comparative literary studies, the concept of **typology** designates the identification of structural parallels among literary traditions that lack direct genetic connection – traditions whose language, history, and culture may be entirely different, yet which exhibit comparable literary phenomena. Typological analysis plays a crucial role in understanding the general processes that operate in world literature and in illuminating the conditions under which inter-literary relations emerge (Dyurishin, 1979, 87).

The Slovak scholar Dionyz Dyurishin, the most systematic theorist of literary typology, identifies three principal categories of typological similarity. **Socio-typological similarities** arise when comparable social conditions generate comparable ideological and philosophical content in literary works. The embedded social and ideological factors – the author's philosophical views on the period, the social system, the moral issues of the age – are reflected in the ideological content of literary works in structurally similar ways across different traditions. **Literary-typological similarities** are based on purely literary phenomena: shared generic conventions, stylistic orientations, ideological and psychological dimensions, character types, compositional structures, narrative patterns, systems of imagery,

and expressive devices. **Psychological-typological similarities** reflect the individual psychological tendency of creative persons to produce works of a particular kind – a spiritual affinity in the nature of authors from different traditions that leads to structurally comparable literary products. A celebrated example is the parallel between Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1943) and Chingiz Aitmatov's *The White Ship* (1970): despite their cultural and linguistic distance, both works share a structural focus on the spiritual experience of a child protagonist navigating an incomprehending adult world (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 135).

Translation is among the oldest of human cultural practices. One of the earliest known written translations was produced by the Roman playwright Livius Andronicus, who rendered Homer's *Odyssey* from Greek into Latin in the third century BCE, thus initiating the long tradition of cross-linguistic literary mediation that would eventually carry the works of Navoi, Pushkin, Goethe, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy around the world. Early reflections on translation theory appeared in Cicero's *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, where the Roman orator insisted that translation should convey meaning rather than merely reproduce form – a principle that continues to animate the theoretical debate between "literal" and "free" translation two millennia later (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 73).

Contemporary translation theory distinguishes between general and specific approaches. General theory seeks to identify universal principles applicable across language pairs; specific theory concentrates on the linguistic features involved in translation between particular languages. Several conceptual models are widely discussed in the literature. The **transformative model** examines structural adaptation when transferring meaning between languages. The **semantic model** focuses on preserving the meaning of the source text. The **situational model** emphasizes contextual and cultural conditions. The **communicative model** highlights adaptation to the cultural expectations of the target audience. Each model captures important dimensions of the translation process, and each can be productively applied within a comparative literary framework.

Translation may also be analysed through four linguistic dimensions: lexical-semantic (the preservation of conceptual content), phraseological (the rendering of idiomatic expressions and cultural specificity), grammatical (structural compatibility between languages), and stylistic (the maintenance of emotional tone and authorial voice). Achieving adequacy in translation requires balancing fidelity to the original with communicative effectiveness – integrating referential elements, pragmatic features, and grammatical structures appropriate to the target language. In poetic translation, rhythmic correspondence adds an additional layer of complexity, since maintaining the tonal and structural harmony of the original contributes to artistic authenticity.

The concept of *Weltliteratur* – world literature – is simultaneously one of the most productive and most contested in the comparatist's lexicon. Goethe introduced the term in the 1820s, employing it primarily as an analytical tool for reflecting on literary exchange. His vision was influenced by Herder's concept of humanity, which emphasized diversity within a shared cultural horizon: global literary interaction, in this view, contributes to the gradual formation of a universal human culture without erasing the distinctive features of national traditions. Jerome David's important study *Goethe's Ghosts: The Transformations of World Literature* (2011) demonstrates that Goethe's concept has generated an astonishing variety of interpretations – the "classical" Goethe who accepts world literature as a collection of immortal works; the "strategic" Goethe who analyses unequal cultural exchange among national literatures; and the "comparatist" Goethe who builds bridges between traditions otherwise separated by language and geography (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 155).

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the debate about world literature was reinvigorated by a series of ambitious theoretical interventions. Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (1999, English translation 2004) proposed a sociological model of world literary space as a field structured by unequal relations of symbolic power, in which Paris functions as a "Greenwich meridian" of literary prestige, and authors from peripheral traditions must negotiate the terms of their access to international recognition. Casanova's approach, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, illuminates the political economy of literary circulation but has been criticised for its residual Eurocentrism (Casanova, 2004, 26).

Franco Moretti's *Distant Reading* (2013) proposed a more explicitly systemic approach, arguing that world literature should be studied not through close reading of individual masterworks but through quantitative analysis of large literary corpora. Moretti's "tree and wave" metaphor captures the dual mechanism of literary change: divergent evolution within isolated traditions (the tree) and the rapid diffusion of formal innovations across connected literary systems (the wave) (Moretti, 2013, 67). His approach has proved enormously influential, generating the field of computational literary studies, while also attracting criticism for its potential to reduce complex cultural phenomena to statistical patterns.

David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* (2003) offers a more empirically grounded and theoretically flexible account. For Damrosch, world literature is best understood not as a fixed canon of great works but as a mode of circulation and reading: "Works become world literature by being read as world literature" (Damrosch, 2003, 5). This definition is elegantly non-prescriptive: it focuses on the processes by which texts travel across linguistic and cultural

boundaries, gain new readers, and acquire new meanings in their new contexts. It also allows for a genuinely pluralistic approach to the canon, accommodating contributions from non-European traditions that Eurocentric accounts have systematically marginalized.

Alongside the concept of world literature, the study of interliterary relations constitutes a major domain of comparative inquiry. N. I. Konrad identifies five principal forms of interliterary interaction. First, literary communication may occur through direct acquaintance with original works: readers and scholars engage with texts in the source language. Second, translation represents a major channel of literary exchange, allowing works to enter new cultural spaces through the mediating role of the translator. Third, the treatment of shared themes across literary traditions constitutes a form of interliterary engagement: the *khamisa* tradition linking Nizami, Amir Khusraw Dehlavi, and Alisher Navoi exemplifies how a common generic framework can generate creative dialogue across cultural boundaries. Fourth, literary influence may appear as national adaptation, in which narratives originating in one context are reinterpreted to suit the intellectual and aesthetic expectations of another audience – what Konrad describes as the transformation of borrowed material in accordance with local cultural perception. Fifth, universal narrative motifs circulating across cultures constitute another level of literary interconnectedness (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 126).

Zhirmunsky adds an important historical dimension to this framework, noting that "literary relations and influences constitute a historical category, manifested in different historical conditions at different levels of intensity and in different forms" (Zhirmunsky, 1979, 216). This observation is crucial: interliterary relations are not static structures but dynamic processes, shaped by the changing power relations, cultural prestige hierarchies, and institutional arrangements that govern literary circulation at any given historical moment. Understanding these dynamics requires that comparative analysis be attentive not only to textual features but also to the social and institutional contexts within which literary exchange occurs.

The tension between Eurocentric and multicultural approaches to literary history is one of the most consequential debates in contemporary comparative literary studies. Eurocentrism – the tendency to evaluate all cultural production against European standards, to privilege European literary traditions over others, and to treat the European Renaissance as the unique origin point of modernity – has distorted literary history in ways that scholars are only now fully reckoning with. As Susan Bassnett observes, the early history of comparative literature was deeply implicated in European imperial culture, and the discipline's claims to universality frequently masked a parochial European perspective (Bassnett, 1993, 30).

The multicultural critique of Eurocentrism has taken several forms within comparative literary studies. One influential strand, drawing on postcolonial theory, has focused on recovering literary traditions marginalized or suppressed by European colonialism, insisting on their independent artistic value and their contribution to world literary heritage. Another strand, associated with world-systems approaches, has used economic and sociological models to analyse the global literary field as a structure of unequal exchange in which peripheral traditions are systematically disadvantaged.

The contrast between the scholarly approaches of V. M. Zhirmunsky and N. I. Konrad to Alisher Navoi and the Renaissance provides a revealing case study in this debate. Zhirmunsky's comparative analysis of Navoi and the Italian Renaissance humanists – Dante, Leonardo da Vinci, Petrarch – while intellectually sophisticated, implicitly measured the achievements of Timurid Central Asian culture against a European standard. Konrad's approach, by contrast, drew explicitly on the conceptual resources of multiculturalism: he compared episodes in Navoi's *Layla and Majnun* with Tristan and Isolde and with Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, emphasizing the universality of Navoi's poetry and arguing that "no nation has the right to consider itself superior to others" (Jurakulov et al., 2025, 142). This principle of international equality, embedded in Konrad's comparativist practice, represents an important alternative to the centrist logic that has too often shaped world literary studies.

The multicultural turn in comparative literature has had significant implications for the study of Central Asian literary heritage. Scholars such as G. Khalliyeva have demonstrated the importance of examining the reception of Uzbek classical literature in Russian orientalist scholarship of the twentieth century, showing both the genuine scholarly achievements of figures such as E.E. Bertels and the ideological constraints that shaped their interpretations. Khalliyeva's research on Bertels and Malekhova's differing approaches to Navoi's *Lisan al-Tayr* illustrates how comparative analysis of scholarly interpretations can itself become a methodologically productive form of comparativism, revealing not only the multiple dimensions of a great literary work but also the conditions that govern scholarly understanding (Khalliyeva, 2018, 177).

### CONCLUSION

This article has examined the theoretical foundations, methodology, and contemporary challenges of comparative literary studies across several interconnected dimensions. The historical analysis has shown that comparative literature emerged from the confluence of Romantic philosophy, nineteenth-century philological science, and the practical demands of an increasingly interconnected world, consolidating into a recognized academic discipline through the contributions

of scholars from Veselovsky and Zhirmunsky to Wellek and Warren, and from Dyurishin and Konrad to Damrosch, Moretti, and Casanova.

The theoretical analysis has identified several key conclusions. First, comparative literature's ambition to study literary phenomena without regard to national or linguistic boundaries does not eliminate the importance of national traditions; on the contrary, rigorous comparison requires deep knowledge of the particular cultural contexts that shape individual works. Second, the distinction between genetic and typological approaches to literary similarity is not merely technical but reflects substantive theoretical commitments about the nature of literary history and the mechanisms of cultural change. Third, translation occupies a uniquely important position within comparative literary studies, functioning simultaneously as an object of analysis, a mechanism of interliterary exchange, and a practical instrument of cultural mediation.

Fourth, the concept of world literature, far from being a settled category, remains the site of active theoretical contestation, with different scholars emphasizing different aspects of its meaning – a canon of great works, a mode of circulation, a field of unequal symbolic exchange, a space of dialogue among national traditions. This very contestation is productive: it forces comparatists to reflect on their assumptions and to develop more nuanced accounts of how literary value is produced and distributed in a global context. Fifth, the critique of Eurocentrism, which has been central to comparative literary theory since at least the 1980s, has opened new possibilities for the study of non-European literary traditions, including the rich heritage of Central Asian literature.

For Uzbek comparative literary scholarship, the road forward runs through theoretical deepening, institutional development, and sustained international dialogue. The resources for this project are rich: a great classical literary heritage, a growing community of skilled scholars, and the methodological tools of both Eastern and Western comparativist traditions. Comparative literary studies, in its fullest realization, is not merely a scholarly discipline but a practice of cultural humanism – a commitment to understanding the full range of human creative achievement across all the boundaries that history, geography, and language have erected.

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