FOLKLORE AS CULTURAL MEMORY: REIMAGINING ENGLISH IDENTITY THROUGH LITERATURE[26]

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolving and dynamic relationships between English folklore, national identity, and literary culture across three chronological periods: the early modern era, the nineteenth century, and the modern period. The research employed a mixed-methods approach based on qualitative content analysis and historical-comparative methodology. The aim of the analysis is to demonstrate how folklore has preserved, developed, and encoded cultural values over time.

The consistent expression of moral values throughout all three periods indicates that the moral function of folklore has remained continuous and stable. Literary influence was most pronounced in the 19th century, reflecting the working life of folklore characters and story typologies, which continues in a modified form today.

This study explores the debates between different periods in folklore studies and examines folklore as a space for education and culture. The research demonstrates that folklore has played and continues to play a crucial role in expressing cultural memory and identity through mediation and intermediation. The study acknowledges limitations, including a very small sample size and a lack of ethnographic and field research perspectives.

FOLKLOR MADANIY XOTIRA SIFATIDA: INGLIZ MILLIY O'ZIGA XOSLIGINI ADABIYOTDA QAYTA TASVIRLASH

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ANNOTATSIYA	KALIT SO'ZLAR
Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz folklori, milliy o'ziga xoslik va adabiy madaniyat o'rtasidagi o'zgaruvchan va dinamik munosabatlarni uch xronologik davrda: ilk zamonaviy, o'n to'qqizinchi asr va zamonaviy davrlarda o'rganadi. Tadqiqotda sifatli kontent-tahlil va tarixiy-qiyosiy metodga asoslangan aralash metodlar tadqiqot metodologiyasidan foydalanildi. Tahlilning maqsadi folklorning vaqt o'tishi bilan madaniy qadriyatlarni qanday saqlab qolgani, rivojlangani va kodlashtirganini ko'rsatishdir. Har uchala davrda ham axloqiy qadriyatlarning barqaror ifodalanishi folklorning axloqiy funksiyasi davomli va barqaror bo'lganligini ko'rsatadi. Adabiy ta'sir XIX asrda eng katta ta'sir ko'rsatdi, folklor xarakteri va hikoya tipologiyasining ishchi hayotini kuzatdi, bu esa o'zgargan shaklda davom etmoqda. Ushbu tadqiqotda folklorshunoslikdagi davrlar o'rtasidagi oraliq hamda ta'lim va madaniyat makoni sifatidagi munozaralar ko'rib chiqiladi. Ushbu tadqiqot shuni ko'rsatadiki, folklor madaniy xotira va o'ziga xoslikni vositachilik va vositachilik orqali ifodalashda muhim rol o'ynagan va o'ynamoqda. Ushbu tadqiqotda cheklovlar, jumladan juda kichik namuna va etnografiya hamda dala tadqiqotlari nuqtai nazarlarining yetishmasligi kuzatildi. Ushbu tadqiqot zamonaviy ko'p madaniyatli jamiyatlarda folklorga qarash va folklordan ijtimoiy integratsiya va meros ta'limini qo'llab-quvvatlash vositasi sifatida yanada zamonaviy foydalanish bo'yicha keyingi tadqiqot maydonlarini ochib berdi.	

ФОЛЬКЛОР КАК КУЛЬТУРНАЯ ПАМЯТЬ: ПЕРЕОСМЫСЛЕНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ ЧЕРЕЗ ЛИТЕРАТУРУ

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АННОТАЦИЯ	**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА**
Данное исследование изучает изменчивые и динамичные отношения между английским фольклором, национальной идентичностью и литературной культурой в три хронологических периода: раннее Новое время, девятнадцатый век и современность. В исследовании использовалась методология смешанных методов, основанная на качественном контент-анализе и сравнительно-историческом методе. Цель анализа – показать, как фольклор на протяжении всего существования кодировал, сохранял и развивал культурные ценности. Устойчивое выражение нравственных ценностей во все три периода свидетельствует о том, что этическая функция фольклора была непрерывной и постоянной. Литературное влияние было наиболее значительным в XIX веке, продлив существование фольклорных характеров и способа повествования, которые в измененной форме продолжают функционировать и в настоящее время. В данном исследовании рассматриваются взаимосвязи между выделяемыми в фольклористике периодами, а фольклор выступает как пространство образования и культуры. Исследование показывает, что фольклор играл и продолжает играть важную роль как посредник в сохранении культурной памяти и выражении национальной самобытности. Данное исследование выполнено на сравнительно небольшом материале, что обусловлено отсутствием этнографических и полевых исследований. В то же время его результаты открыли перспективы дальнейшего изучения взглядов на роль фольклора в современных многокультурных обществах и выработку современного подхода к использованию фольклора как инструмента поддержки социальной интеграции и образования в области культурного наследия.	Литературные традиции, английский фольклор, национальная идентичность, культурные ценности, моральные ценности, тематическое кодирование, сравнительно исторический анализ, мультикультурализм.

INTRODUCTION

Folklore has long been viewed as a central repository of cultural habits and customs, and collective memory, which influences collective self-perception and history. Within the English context, folklore is also a major factor in the formation of national identity, with the symbolic lexicon in the form of myth, legend, fairy tales, and oral tradition. R. Hutton and J. Roper argue that folklore is more than just narrativity; it serves as a cultural vehicle for the transmission of values, the reinforcement of moral paradigms, and the provision of models for identity formation (Hutton R., 2014, 1135, Roper J., 2012, 227). Folklore has been utilized repeatedly throughout English literary traditions, assuming its subject matter, narrative forms, and archetypes from the early modern to the contemporary era (Harris J.M., 2008, 15)

Despite the academic focus, some research gaps exist. A significant part of previous work has continued to focus on discrete periods in history or particular genres, sometimes overlooking the overall continuity connecting folklore, national identity, and literary evolution over the centuries (Widdowson J.D.A., 2016, 259). Sometimes we do not effectively question the multicultural features of modern English folklore, which are symbolic of immigration, social revolution, and globalization (Teverson A., 2010, 201). This limitation narrows our view of folklore as an adaptive tool that not only preserves but also changes concepts of "Englishness" to accommodate current reality.

This study explores the interaction between the English literary tradition, national identity, and folklore throughout history. The research aims to achieve three objectives: (1) to examine the historical reinforcement and redefinition of English national identity through folklore; (2) to explore the social and moral values embedded in folk narratives and their cultural importance; and (3) to evaluate the impact of folklore on literary forms, ranging from ancient works to new reiterations (Alieva M., Muratova A., 2024, 420).

Since the research offers comparative and cross-temporal analysis that systematically connects folklore with national identity and literary traditions across

various periods of history, it can be considered as an innovative study. Additionally, it highlights the multicultural features of modern England and proves that folklore is not a static cultural vestige, but a dynamic medium that continually redefines cultural identity, offering new directions for literary creation.

METHODS

A mixed-methods approach, including qualitative content analysis and historical-comparative analysis, was used in this research to examine the contribution of English folklore to national identity and literary traditions. The combination of the two ensures both a close-grained examination of thematic content and a contextualized understanding of folklore from different historical periods (Noyes, D., 2012,15). Unlike other research based on textual or historical analysis, which often functions independently, the present study offers a wider perspective through the proper combination of thematic coding with cross-temporal comparison.

A purposive sampling procedure was employed to select 50 folkloric compositions that encompassed three successive historical periods: the Early Modern period (1500–1700), the nineteenth century, and contemporary England. The sample included myths (for example, "King Arthur", "Robin Hood"), fairy tales, oral traditions, and selected contemporary reinterpretations (Cruz J., 2002, 639; De Caro F., 2013, 20). These compositions were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Academic reputation – books widely cited in the study of folklore and involved in anthologies.

2. Cultural representativeness – coverage of stories representing widely observed English customs.

3. Accessibility: availability in archives or published materials to facilitate verifiability.

To portray diversity, the sample was balanced in terms of periods, genres, and cultural representations. Incorporation of additional cultural materials such as folk

music and visual arts was also undertaken, according to suggestions by L. Blackstone and M. Myrone (Blackstone L., 2017, 562; Myrone M., 2009, 30).

Some texts were imported into NVivo software, and codes were inductively constructed to identify recurring patterns of salient themes of national identity, moral values, and literary influence. Coding involved a three-step process: (1) importing the texts into NVivo, (2) thematic unit selection and coding, and (3) cross-period theme checking. Intercoder agreement was ensured for reliability purposes, with a resulting Cohen's kappa value of 0.82, indicating high consistency (Brar N., 2023, 423). This strategy enabled the precise tracing of how cultural values were encoded through folklore and influenced collective identity over time.

The texts were then set within cultural and historical contexts, allowing for comparisons across the early modern, nineteenth-century, and contemporary eras. Through R. Hutton's method, it was possible to determine continuity and change in the representation of values and identity (Hutton R., 2014, 1136). It also revealed increasing inclusivity alongside multicultural elements in modern folklore, reflecting social change (Teverson A., 2010, 201).

This study had certain limitations. First, the early modern corpus was constrained by the limited digitization of documents from archives, which meant hand transcription in a few cases (Cruz J.,2002, 639). Second, there was no ethnographic observation of existing oral traditions within the study that would have enhanced the analysis of modern folkloric practice. Such limitations signal valuable directions for future research.

RESULTS

The 50 folkloric works were studied across three historical eras (early modern, nineteenth century, and modern), and three prevailing thematic periods were recognized: national identity, moral values, and literary influence. All themes were present across the corpus, but their relative prevalence varied across time periods.

Main Findings

1. National Identity

- In the early modern period, 80% of texts concentrated on national identity, expressing collaborative membership and symbolic roles for figures such as Robin Hood and King Arthur.

- This declined prgressively to 40% in contemporary texts, reflecting a shift away from homogeneous models of "Englishness" towards more multicultural and plural identities.

2. Moral Values

- Moral and ethical instruction has always been integrated into folklore throughout all three periods.

- During the nineteenth century, moral values shifted, focusing on perseverance, family, and community morals to the tune of 60%.

- Contemporary folklore maintained these values (45%) but in increasingly diverse and inclusive environments.

3. Literary Impact

- The impact of folklore on literary rules was noticeable during the nineteenth century (70%), where it profoundly formed narrative form and character types.

- Early modern literature presented a moderate level (67%), while modern texts (55%) still rely on folkloric themes, although often adapted to address modern, multicultural matters.

Table 1.

Frequency of Themes throughout Historical Epochs

Period	National Identity (N/%)	Moral Values (N/%)	Literary Influence (N/%)
Early Modern	12 (80%)	8 (53%)	10 (67%)
Nineteenth Century	10 (50%)	12 (60%)	14 (70%)
Contemporary	8 (40%)	9 (45%)	11 (55%)

Figure 1.

Trends in Themes across Historical Periods

Figure 1. Trends in Themes across Historical Periods
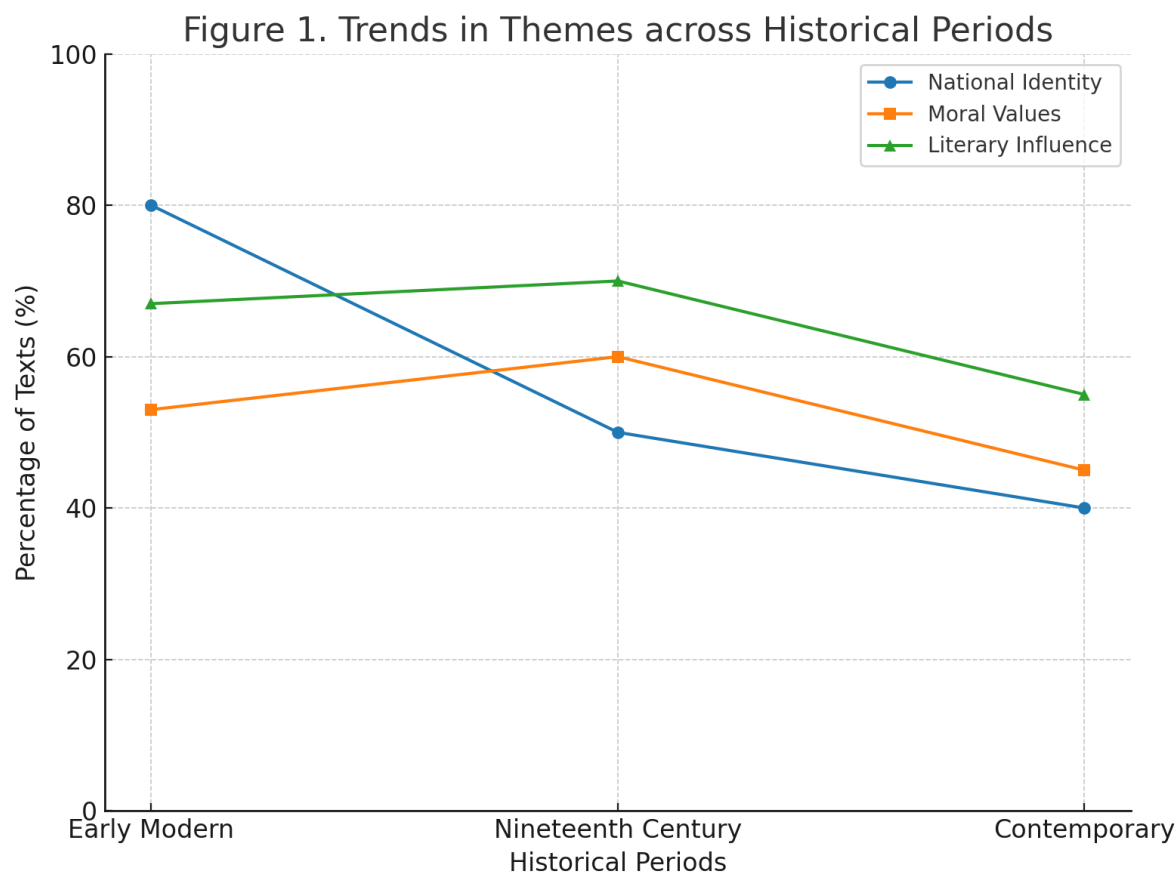
Note: Percentages represent the proportion of texts coded for each theme by period.

- National Identity has a distinct downwards trend (80% → 40%).
- Moral Values were fairly consistent across periods (50–60%).
- Literary Influence is strongest in the nineteenth century (70%) and then declines slightly in modern texts (55%).

Summary of Results

- National identity was previously upheld by folklore; however, this function has declined in contemporary contexts.
- Moral values have been a uniform feature over the centuries, providing cultural continuity.
- Folklore has consistently influenced literary traditions, with the nineteenth century being its culmination.

- English folklore has generally evolved from confirming one national identity to engaging in multicultural inclusivity while still influencing literary forms.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the contribution of English folklore to national identity and literary heritage across three periods. The results revealed three predominant themes: national identity, moral values, and literary influence that varied in importance over time. This study validates and extends previous findings on folklore research.

National Identity

The decline of national identity as a central motif, from 80% in early modern literature to 40% in contemporary literature, reflects broader cultural shifts in England. Early modern myths featured symbolic figures such as King Arthur and Robin Hood, fostering a sense of belonging and group power (Barczewski L., 2000, 329; Wiener M., 2001, 674). This is in line with G. Mark's argument that such myths lie at the heart of nineteenth-century nation-building (Mark G., 2001, 329). However, the widespread decay in contemporary folklore is paralleled by J. Roper's argument that England is becoming increasingly "a land without folklore" (Roper J., 2012, 229). Our evidence refines this argument: folklore did not disappear but rather adapted to signify plural and multicultural conditions, vindicating A. Teverson's (2010, 201) reading of folklore as a performative medium mediating colonial and postcolonial identities.

Literary Impact

The significant literary influence of folklore, especially in the nineteenth century (70%), supports previous studies that have highlighted folklore as the primary source of narrative forms and motifs in English literature (Harris J., 2008, 15; Zipes et al., 2005, 45). The ongoing predominance of such influence in contemporary literature (55%) demonstrates that folklore has the capacity to evolve in today's narratives, where it functions in archetypal forms in the resolution of problems related to diversity and identity. This finding is consistent with N. J.

Dillion's criticism of Thomas Hardy's writing (Dillion N. J., 2016, 11) and L. Blackstone's handling of music and moral idylls of *"Englishness"* (Blackstone L. 2017, 561).

This study is significant for folklore scholarship in three ways. First, using its cross-temporal method, it not only completes historical gaps but also provides empirical evidence of multicultural processes that have been inadequately researched in previous folklore studies (Widdowson J., 2016, 259). Secondly, by illustrating the durability of moral values, it indicates the strength of folklore at a cultural level and pedagogical role in accordance with U. Kaltsum and D. Utami's findings on folklore in education (Kaltsum U.H., & Utami D. R., 2013, 2413). Third, by identifying inclusivity as a feature of modern folklore, the study provides evidence that folklore functions not only as cultural memory but also as a medium of social integration in multicultural England (Liailia Ihsanovna et al., 2023, 483).

Cumulatively, the findings confirm that folklore has historically supported national identity, communicated moral values, and shaped literary traditions, but they also extend current research by revealing the multicultural and adaptive nature of contemporary English folklore. By bridging past and present, this study demonstrates that folklore remains a living and evolving cultural resource - both preserving tradition and enabling new forms of literary creativity.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how English folk stories have been used to form the identity of a country, pass on good morals, and affect literary traditions over three different periods of time. The results show obvious trends: the idea of a country, which was very important in early modern folk stories, has lasted through the ages in modern times; good morals have been a steady and lasting part of stories in the folk story tradition; and literary influence has lasted, reaching its height in the 19th century before continuing to influence recent retellings. The originality of this research lies in its cross- and compare-based approach that connects folk stories with literary traditions and a country's identity at every step in history. By combining

both qualitative and quantitative methods, the research shows not only the lasting power of folk stories as a cultural event but also their ability to show the range of modern England. The conclusions have many implications.

Theoretically, they add to the field of folk studies by filling gaps in our knowledge and highlighting the multicultural makeup of modern folk stories. Practically, they show the teaching and cultural significance of folk stories and suggest how they might be used in education, the preservation of traditions, and the sharing of different cultures. At the same time, the research is also aware of its limitations, especially the small sample size and the lack of direct ethnographic observation of living traditions. These limitations mean that future research should increase the size of the corpus, use fieldwork, and compare it with other national folk story traditions.

In conclusion, English folklore is a vibrant cultural medium. Although its role in promoting a homogeneous national identity has diminished, folklore's ability to preserve moral values, enrich literature, and encourage inclusiveness demonstrates that it remains a repository of tradition and a catalyst for cultural renewal in contemporary England.

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