

TRADITIONS AND MODERNITY CONFLICT IN UZBEK  
AND WESTERN LITERATURE

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**Abstract.** This article explores how the conflict between inherited tradition and disruptive modernity becomes a major engine of plot, character formation, and ethical debate in Uzbek and Western literary texts. Using Uzbek Jadid-era prose as a cultural “laboratory” of social change and comparing it with European modern drama and Anglo-Irish modernist fiction, the study shows that tradition is rarely a simple “enemy,” and modernity is rarely a clean “solution.” Instead, writers stage modernity as an experience of acceleration, uncertainty, and moral risk, while tradition functions as both shelter and constraint.

**Keywords:** tradition, modernity, Uzbek Jadid prose, social realism, modern drama, modernist novel, identity, cultural change.

## INTRODUCTION

In literature, tradition and modernity do not meet like two polite neighbors; they collide like two trains that both insist they have the right of way. That collision is rarely only “about ideas.” It becomes material: in who gets educated, who marries whom, who speaks in public, what is considered shameful, and what is suddenly called “progress.” In Uzbek prose, especially the early novel tradition, the reform-minded imagination often tests itself against family structure, customary authority, and moral codes that claim timelessness. Abdulla Qodiriy’s *O‘tkan kunlar* presents social life as a system where personal love and private virtue are constantly negotiated with communal expectation and inherited norms [1]. What looks like a domestic story turns into an argument about economic relations, marriage customs, and the costs of “doing the new” inside an old social grammar.

Western literature stages a similar conflict, but with different historical pressures and artistic tools. Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (published and performed in 1879) compresses a society-wide debate into a living room, where the drama of marriage becomes a drama of autonomy and moral agency [3].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A key shared feature of Uzbek and Western texts is their use of the family as a “mini-state.” The family concentrates power relations, rules of speech, gender roles, and economic duty into a space where conflict becomes unavoidable and emotionally legible. In *O‘tkan kunlar*, the tension between reformist aspirations and established

custom is not presented as a neat philosophical dispute; it is dramatized through everyday choices that carry social consequences [1]. The novel's realism matters here: realism refuses to let characters escape into slogans. Modernity is not only "new schools" or "new trade"; it is also jealousy, rivalry, fear of dishonor, and the destabilization of familiar hierarchies. Tradition, meanwhile, is not only oppression; it is also a language of belonging, ritual coherence, and moral certainty. The clash is tragic precisely because both sides can claim some legitimacy, and the text forces the reader to feel the moral cost of transition rather than merely approve it.

Cho'pon's *Kecha va kunduz* sharpens the same dilemma through the optics of social awakening and inner vulnerability. The very framing—night and day—suggests not just time passing but a struggle over perception: what can be seen, spoken, and desired once new horizons open [2]. Here modernity often arrives as a demand for self-recognition: the individual begins to experience personal dignity and emotional truth as values that may contradict inherited expectations. Yet the text does not present the "new" as painless. Modernity in such prose frequently produces a double exposure: characters see the old world's injustices more clearly, but they also lose the comforting illusion that social order is naturally fair. The result is a distinctive emotional palette—hope mixed with disorientation—where the conflict becomes psychological as much as social.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Ibsen's strategy is brutally efficient: he turns tradition into a social script and then makes the protagonist read it aloud, realize it is not her own, and decide what to do next. *A Doll's House* is a masterclass in how modern drama converts abstract norms into dialogue, gesture, and silence [3]. The "traditional" role is not defended by villains; it is defended by normal people who believe they are decent. That is why the conflict bites: modernity arrives not as an invading army but as a sudden moral awakening—an insistence that a person is not a function. When the protagonist challenges the marriage script, the play suggests that modernity is not simply rebellion; it is a redefinition of responsibility, including responsibility to oneself. In this sense, modernity appears as a new ethical horizon, but it also carries the terror of social exile and uncertainty.

Joyce relocates the battleground from the household to the self. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, tradition operates through religion, community expectation, and inherited language habits, while modernity is the decision to claim artistic and intellectual autonomy [4]. The conflict becomes stylistic: Joyce's evolving narrative voice mirrors the protagonist's shifting consciousness, showing modernity as a transformation in how experience is organized and narrated. This is where a broader theory of modernity helps: Marshall Berman describes modernity as an experience of powerful change that is simultaneously thrilling and destructive, producing new

freedoms while dissolving stable forms of life [5]. Read through this lens, Uzbek realist novels and Western modernist texts appear less opposed than parallel: both register modernization as an uneven process that generates contradictions inside intimate life, not only in public institutions.

### **CONCLUSION**

The tradition–modernity conflict in Uzbek and Western literature is not a simple scoreboard where one side “wins.” Its deeper function is artistic and cultural: it creates situations where characters must actively choose what kind of person they will be, and where communities must confront the price of change. Uzbek prose often externalizes the conflict through social realism—family, custom, economic life—showing how modernization cuts into everyday moral routines [1], [2]. Western texts frequently intensify the conflict through dramatic confrontation and interior consciousness, exposing how tradition can be internalized as guilt, fear, or duty, and how modernity can be experienced as both emancipation and vertigo [3], [4]. Across these works, tradition can preserve meaning but also restrict life; modernity can open possibility but also shatter coherence. The most persuasive texts refuse propaganda and instead portray transition as a human drama with mixed outcomes, where “progress” is not a slogan but a struggle, and identity emerges as a hybrid of memory and invention.

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