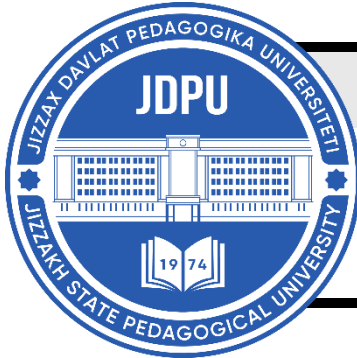


MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –
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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE LEXICAL-SEMANTIC AND
SYMBOLIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONCEPTS OF "LIFE" AND "DEATH":
A STUDY OF JOHN DONNE'S HOLY SONNET 10: "DEATH, BE NOT PROUD",
DYLAN THOMAS'S "DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT", AND
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Tashkent, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: death, life, John Donne, Dylan Thomas, Erkin Vohidov, metaphysical poetry, modernist poetry, symbolic expression, philosophical imagery, Uzbek literature, aesthetic analysis, literary comparison.

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Abstract: This article analyzes the philosophical and symbolic interpretations of the concepts of life and death in literary works, with a particular focus on John Donne's "Holy Sonnet 10: Death, Be Not Proud" and Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night." Additionally, it examines the reflection of life and death in Uzbek literature through Erkin Vohidov's poem "Inson" (Human). The study explores how death is depicted in literary works, its aesthetic and philosophical meanings, and the symbolic expressions of life and death in various cultural contexts. John Donne's metaphysical poetry, which portrays death as "defeated," and Dylan Thomas's modernist approach, urging resistance against death, are compared with the philosophical imagery in Uzbek poetry. The article discusses the distinctive features of literature across different eras and cultures, as well as their shared philosophical motifs.

Introduction

The concepts of "life" and "death" are among the most ancient and complex notions in human thought, encompassing not only biological phenomena but also philosophical, religious, and aesthetic interpretations. These concepts are central themes that continuously prompt reflection on questions about the meaning of life, the essence of existence, and the destiny of humanity. As human cultures have evolved, the interpretations of these two concepts have grown increasingly intricate: in Eastern philosophy, life is often viewed as a journey toward spiritual perfection and harmony with the universe, while Western philosophy tends to analyze the dichotomy between life and death, focusing on human will and the existential dread of being.

Literature, particularly poetry, is one of the most impactful and aesthetically expressive domains for these concepts. In poetry, "life" often symbolizes beauty, hope, and exploration, while "death" represents loss, transience, and sometimes salvation or liberation. In religious and philosophical poetry, these themes acquire profound symbolic layers, reflecting the endless quests of human consciousness. Thus, "life" and "death" are not mere lexical units but form a complex system of meanings and symbols. Their semantic scope extends beyond denotative meanings to include connotative, symbolic, and poetic dimensions.

This article is based on an analysis of three significant poetic works: John Donne's "Death, Be Not Proud" (Holy Sonnet 10) and Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" from English literature, and Erkin Vohidov's philosophical poem "Inson" (Human) from Uzbek literature. The study examines how the concepts of "life" and "death" are expressed through lexical tools and symbolic imagery in these works, comparing their commonalities and differences within the contexts of Western and Central Asian cultures.

The primary aim of the article is to compare the lexical-semantic and symbolic characteristics of "life" and "death," analyzing their poetic expressions within cultural contexts to understand their representation in literary thought. Additionally, the article seeks to address the following research questions:

- How are the concepts of "life" and "death" expressed through lexical units in Western and Uzbek literature?
- What symbolic imagery is used to convey these concepts in the works?
- How do these images serve the philosophical worldviews in each literary tradition?
- How do the symbols of "life" and "death" differ and align across cultural contexts?

By addressing these questions, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the universal and localized interpretations of "life" and "death" at the intersection of literary studies, linguistics, and cultural studies.

Materials and methodology

This study employs a qualitative analysis approach to explore the lexical-semantic and symbolic characteristics of "life" and "death." The primary objective is to determine how these concepts are expressed through linguistic units in poetic texts and to identify their cultural and philosophical layers. Consequently, linguistic analysis was conducted within a literary context, considering not only the dictionary meanings of words and symbols but also their connotative and symbolic significance.

Three significant poetic works were selected for analysis:

1. John Donne - "Death, Be Not Proud (Holy Sonnet 10):" As a representative of 17th-century English religious-philosophical poetry, Donne approaches the theme of death from the perspective of spiritual liberation and Christian metaphysics.

2. Dylan Thomas - "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" A 20th-century modernist poem that expresses the struggle for life and defiance against death.

3. Erkin Vohidov - "Inson" (Human): Selected as one of the most profound philosophical poems in Uzbek literature addressing life and death. Although Vohidov does not have a specific poem titled "Life and Death", the poem "Inson" deeply explores these concepts symbolically and spiritually.

The selection of these poems was based on the following criteria:

- The prominence of "life" and "death" as central themes;
- The works' representation of different cultural and historical contexts (Western and Central Asian literary traditions);
- Their high degree of symbolic expression, linguistic richness, and poetic structure.

The analysis was conducted using the following approaches:

- Lexical-Semantic Analysis: Words, phrases, antonyms, metaphors, epithets, and other stylistic devices related to "life" and "death" in each poem were identified, and their contextual meanings were analyzed. For example, the words "Death" and "Night" were examined as symbols of cessation and salvation in one poem, and as representations of dread and struggle in another.

- Symbolic Analysis: Poetic imagery, religious or philosophical symbols, and natural imagery were interpreted in the context of their cultural traditions. For instance, in Donne's

work, death is seen as part of a divine plan, while in Thomas's, it is a force to be resisted. In Vohidov's poem, death is portrayed as a philosophical trial in the path of humanity.

- Comparative Analysis: The expressive means of these concepts in the three works were compared, analyzing the aesthetic and philosophical perspectives on life and death in Western and Uzbek literature. The historical-cultural contexts, religious-philosophical foundations, and literary traditions of each author were considered.

Direct quotations from the works were extracted based on linguistic criteria to identify the primary poetic directions of these concepts. This approach ensured the analysis was grounded in concrete sources, enhancing the reliability of the findings.

Results

The findings reveal that the concepts of "life" and "death" are expressed through diverse lexical-semantic tools and symbolic imagery in the three poetic works analyzed. Each author approaches these themes from distinct philosophical and cultural perspectives, resulting in notable differences in their interpretations.

John Donne: "Death, Be Not Proud" (Holy Sonnet 10). In Donne's sonnet, rooted in metaphysical poetry traditions, death is interpreted not merely as a physical end but as a spiritual state. Death is personified, endowed with human attributes, yet this anthropomorphism exposes its weakness. Lexically, terms like "mighty and dreadful" reflect the conventional perception of death, which Donne rejects. He refers to death as a "slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men," negating its perceived power.

Metaphorically, death is described as a "short sleep" ("One short sleep past, we wake eternally"), portraying it as a transitional phase to eternal life rather than a fearsome end. The concluding line, "Death, thou shalt die," serves as the symbolic pinnacle of spiritual triumph over death. Donne's approach is deeply tied to Christian eschatology, advocating fearlessness in the face of death and spiritual superiority.

Dylan Thomas: "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night". Thomas's villanelle vividly captures the tension between life and death. Lexically, phrases like "good night" and "the dying of the light" provide a poetic yet stark depiction of death. While "good night" superficially suggests a serene or sacred state, the poem's overall tone rejects this image. The repeated line, "Rage, rage against the dying of the light," demands active persistence in life. Symbolically, life is represented as "light" and death as "darkness," forming a clear antithesis. The phrase "Burn and rave at close of day" emphasizes the importance of action, spiritual struggle, and willpower

even in life's final moments. Thomas's perspective aligns with existentialism, portraying death as inevitable yet urging resistance through the assertion of life's value.

Erkin Vohidov: "Inson" (Human). Vohidov's "Inson" is a pinnacle of Uzbek philosophical lyricism. Rather than directly addressing "life" and "death," it explores these concepts through the essence, responsibility, and inner struggles of humanity. Lexically, "life" is associated with divine grace, high responsibility, and human dignity, as seen in lines like "Sulton o'zing, xoqon o'zing" (You are the sultan, you are the ruler), linking life to human agency and power. Death, though not explicitly named, is implied through images like "bu jahon ayvoniga arqon o'zing, vayron o'zing" (you are the rope, you are the ruin of this world's porch), hinting at the destructive aspect of existence. Symbolically, Vohidov views life and death as matters of free will, moral choice, consciousness, and faith. The poem emphasizes that the meaning of human life is shaped by actions, values, and thoughts: "Mash'ali fikrat - sening, ham changali vahshat - sening" (The torch of thought is yours, as is the claw of savagery). Here, the dual nature of life - good and evil, creation and destruction - is tied to human will. This philosophy aligns with Uzbek literary traditions, emphasizing both individual and collective responsibility.

The results indicate:

- John Donne portrays death as a defeated force, a means to eternal life.
- Dylan Thomas depicts death as an enemy to be actively resisted.
- Erkin Vohidov symbolizes death as part of human choice, an internal factor in shaping life.

These differences are explained by the distinct philosophical and cultural frameworks of Western and Eastern literary thought, with each author reflecting their society's historical and philosophical views on life and death.

Discussion

The analysis of the three poets' works reveals that "life" and "death" are interpreted through varied lexical-semantic, symbolic, and cultural lenses. Each poem's approach to these concepts is closely tied to contemporary thought, religious beliefs, cultural values, and individual worldviews. This section provides a comparative discussion of these aspects.

In John Donne's "Death, Be Not Proud", death is lexically associated with powerlessness, subservience, and temporality. Expressions like "slave" and "short sleep" strip death of its conventional "mighty" and "dreadful" attributes. This perspective is rooted in Christian theology's concept of life after death, where death is merely a transitional state toward eternal salvation.

In Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night", death is expressed through highly poetic metaphors like "good night" and "the dying of the light," which present death as outwardly serene yet provoke a defiant stance. The repeated verb "rage" underscores the necessity of resisting death actively, reflecting the existential individualism prevalent in Western literature.

In Erkin Vohidov's "Inson", life and death are not explicitly named but are conveyed through symbolic and poetic imagery. Words like "sultan," "ruler," "ruin," and "thought" reflect humanity's responsibility, grandeur, and dual nature—constructive and destructive. Lexically, these images evoke the complex spiritual state between life and death.

Symbolic analysis shows that in Donne's poem, death is a transitional phase, a temporary pause aligned with Christian notions of spiritual awakening and eternal salvation. In Thomas's work, a clear binary opposition emerges: life as light and death as darkness, rooted in Western philosophical dualism (light vs. darkness, life vs. death, consciousness vs. oblivion). Thomas's rebellion seeks not to resolve this dichotomy but to prioritize life through active resistance.

In Vohidov's poem, life and death are not opposing forces but two facets of a whole. The human is depicted as a being who shapes their destiny, capable of both creation and destruction. This symbolic approach reflects Eastern thought's emphasis on balance, spiritual harmony, and responsible freedom.

In Donne and Thomas, death is an individual experience - overcome through faith in Donne's case and resisted through personal will in Thomas's. This reflects Western literature's individualistic approach, where individuals define their stance before life and death, expressing inner strength. In contrast, Vohidov's portrayal situates life and death within a collective and societal context, where human choices impact not only the individual but also society and humanity at large, aligning with Uzbek and Eastern traditions of spiritual unity and moral responsibility.

Despite these differences, all three authors acknowledge the sanctity of life and the inevitability of death. Donne overcomes it, Thomas resists it, and Vohidov sees it as a conscious choice and spiritual formation, reflecting universal human values across diverse cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the expression of "life" and "death" in English and Uzbek poetry - specifically in John Donne's "Death, Be Not Proud", Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That

Good Night”, and Erkin Vohidov’s “Inson” - through lexical-semantic and symbolic approaches. Each poet approaches these themes from distinct philosophical and poetic perspectives.

John Donne portrays death as a non-threatening spiritual state, a passage to divine truth, emphasizing the soul’s continuity. Dylan Thomas advocates resistance against death, highlighting human will and courage to cherish life’s every moment. Erkin Vohidov, in line with Uzbek literary traditions, ties life and death to spiritual responsibility, faith, and national ethos, viewing death as a path to true life.

The findings demonstrate that while Western and Uzbek poetry differ in their approaches to life and death, they share a common recognition of life’s immense value and death’s inevitability. Donne and Thomas interpret these concepts through Christian and existential lenses, while Vohidov employs Islamic and national-philosophical perspectives.

Through this analysis, the poets’ individual worldviews, cultural characteristics, and universal principles regarding life and death were elucidated. The study of symbols, metaphors, and poetic imagery provided a deep comparative exploration of their aesthetic interpretations.

Future research could explore these concepts in other literary-cultural contexts, particularly how they are expressed in other Eastern and Western traditions and how contemporary poetry addresses life and death. Such studies would strengthen intercultural understanding and deepen the exploration of global literary thought.

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