ISNN 3030-3907

2026/2
VOLUME 5

DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE

ILMIY JURNAL



Development of science

Ilmiy jurnal

2026/2 VOLUME 5

ISSN 3030 -3907

Ilmiy jurnal OAK rayosatining 2024 yil 27 sentabrdagi 361-son qaroriga asosan 02.00.00 kimyo fanlari hamda 2025 yil 12 fevral 367- son qaroriga asosan 05.00.00 texnika fanlari bo‘yicha falsafa doktori (PhD) va fan doktori (DSc) ilmiy darajasiga talabgorlarning dissertatsiya ishlari yuzasidan dissertatsiyalari asosiy ilmiy natijalarini chop etish tavsiya etilgan milliy ilmiy nashrlar ro‘yxatiga kiritilgan.

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Tahririyat hay’ati a’zolarining tarkibini o‘zgartirish hamda qo‘shimcha kiritish yoki tahririyat a’zoligidan chiqarish bosh muharrir tomonidan amalga oshiriladi.

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Development of science ilmiy jurnali 2024 yil 15 aprel kuni №256445 sonli guvohnoma bilan Davlat ro‘yxatidan o‘tgan.

To‘plam elektron ko‘rinishda (pdf formatida) mualliflarga taqdim etiladi. To‘plamga kiritiladigan maqolalarning mazmuni, ulardagi statistik ma’lumotlar va me’yoriy hujjatlarning to‘g‘riligiga hamda har qanday fikr - mulohazalarga mualliflarning o‘zlari mas’ul hisoblanadilar. Talablarga javob bermaydigan maqolalar to‘plamga kiritilmaydi. Tashkiliy qo‘mita maqola matnini qisqartirish, qisman tuzatish kiritish, seksiyalarga joylashtirish huquqiga ega.

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SATIRICAL ELEMENTS IN THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY AND UZBEK SATIRICAL PROSE

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Abstract. This article presents a comparative analysis of satirical elements in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the works of Uzbek satirical prose, particularly focusing on Abdulla Qahhor's writings. While Wilde's novel is traditionally examined through the lens of aestheticism and decadence, it contains significant satirical components targeting Victorian hypocrisy, aristocratic vanity, and the moral contradictions of a society obsessed with appearance. Parallels are drawn with Uzbek satirical tradition, where writers like Abdulla Qahhor similarly employed irony, allegory, and grotesque to critique social injustices, bureaucratic absurdity, and moral decay under the constraints of censorship. The study examines how both traditions use satire as a vehicle for social criticism while adapting their techniques to specific cultural and political contexts. Special attention is paid to typological similarities in artistic devices-paradox, irony, symbolism, and the mask motif-as well as divergent approaches shaped by distinct historical circumstances. The findings reveal that despite differences in cultural frameworks, both Wilde and Uzbek satirists deploy satire to expose the gap between appearance and reality, challenging readers to recognize uncomfortable truths about their societies.

Keywords: satire, Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Uzbek literature, Abdulla Qahhor, comparative analysis, Victorian hypocrisy, social criticism, irony, grotesque.

Аннотация. В данной статье представлен сравнительный анализ сатирических элементов в романе Оскара Уайльда «Портрет Дориана Грея» и произведениях узбекской сатирической прозы, с особым акцентом на творчестве Абдуллы Каххора. Хотя роман Уайльда традиционно рассматривается через призму эстетизма и декаданса, он содержит значительные сатирические элементы, направленные против викторианского лицемерия, аристократического тщеславия и моральных противоречий общества, одержимого внешним видом. Проводятся параллели с узбекской сатирической традицией, где такие писатели, как Абдулла Каххор, также использовали иронию, аллегорию и гротеск для критики социальной несправедливости, бюрократического абсурда и морального разложения в условиях цензуры. В исследовании рассматривается, как обе традиции используют сатиру как средство социальной критики, адаптируя свои методы к конкретным культурным и политическим контекстам. Особое внимание уделяется типологическим сходствам в художественных приемах -

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парадоксу, иронии, символизму и мотиву маски, - а также различным подходам, сформированным различными историческими обстоятельствами. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на различия в культурных рамках, как Уайльд, так и узбекские сатирики используют сатиру, чтобы обнажить разрыв между видимостью и реальностью, побуждая читателей распознать неудобные истины об их обществах.

Ключевые слова: сатира, Оскар Уайльд, «Портрет Дориана Грея», узбекская литература, Абдулла Каххор, сравнительный анализ, викторианское лицемерие, социальная критика, ирония, гротеск.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada Oskar Uayldning "Dorian Greyning surati" romanidagi satirik elementlar va o'zbek satirik nasrining qiyosiy tahlili keltirilgan bo'lib, Abdulla Qahhor ijodiga alohida e'tibor qaratilgan. Uayldning romani an'anaviy ravishda estetika va dekadensiya prizmasidan qaralsa-da, unda Viktoriya davri ikkiyuzlamachiligi, aristokratik behudalik va tashqi ko'rinishga berilib ketgan jamiyatning axloqiy qarama-qarshiliklariga qarshi qaratilgan muhim satirik elementlar mavjud. O'zbek satirik an'analari bilan o'xshashliklar mavjud bo'lib, unda Abdulla Qahhor kabi yozuvchilar ijtimoiy adolatsizlik, byurokratik absurdlik va tsenzura ostidagi axloqiy tanazzulni tanqid qilish uchun istehzo, allegoriya va groteskdan ham foydalanganlar. Tadqiqotda ikkala an'ana ham satiradan ijtimoiy tanqid vositasi sifatida qanday foydalanishi, o'z usullarini muayyan madaniy va siyosiy kontekstlarga moslashtirishi o'rganiladi. Badiiy texnikalardagi tipologik o'xshashliklarga - paradoks, istehzo, simvolizm va niqob motiviga, shuningdek, turli tarixiy sharoitlar bilan shakllangan turli yondashuvlarga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, madaniy farqlarga qaramay, Uayld ham, o'zbek satiriklari ham tashqi ko'rinish va voqelik o'rtasidagi tafovutni ochib berish uchun satiradan foydalanadilar va o'quvchilarni o'z jamiyatlari haqidagi noqulay haqiqatlarni tan olishga undaydilar.

Kalit so'zlar: satira, Oskar Uayld, Dorian Greyning surati, o'zbek adabiyoti, Abdulla Qahhor, qiyosiy tahlil, Viktoriya ikkiyuzlamachiligi, ijtimoiy tanqid, istehzo.

INTRODUCTION.

Satire, as a literary mode, possesses a unique capacity to entertain while simultaneously delivering incisive social critique. Its dual nature-simultaneously amusing and unsettling—allows writers to penetrate those spheres of social life that resist direct didactic address. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and the satirical prose of Uzbek writers, particularly Abdulla Qahhor (1907–1968), represent two distinctive manifestations of this literary impulse, emerging from

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vastly different cultural and historical contexts yet revealing surprising parallels in their critical orientations and artistic methods.

The Picture of Dorian Gray has traditionally been interpreted through the framework of aestheticism and decadence, as a novel that both embodies and interrogates the philosophy of "art for art's sake." However, as Hayley Billet's thesis argues, "Wilde uses gothic themes in *Dorian Gray* to insert his social critiques and aesthetic beliefs" . The novel operates on multiple levels: it is simultaneously a gothic tale, a philosophical meditation on beauty and morality, and a sharp satire of Victorian society's superficiality and hypocrisy .

Parallel to this, Uzbek satirical prose of the twentieth century, exemplified by Abdulla Qahhor's masterful short stories and novellas, developed sophisticated techniques for social criticism under conditions of censorship and political constraint. As Sojida Amirova notes in her comparative study, "Despite the universal role of satire as a tool for critique and reform, the historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts of each tradition have shaped distinct stylistic and philosophical approaches to the genre" .

The relevance of this comparative study lies in its potential to illuminate both the universal mechanisms of satirical critique and the culturally specific forms they assume. The aim of this article is to identify and analyze the satirical elements in Wilde's novel and Uzbek satirical prose, examining their shared critical targets, comparable artistic devices, and divergent strategies shaped by their respective cultural and political contexts.

Satire, as defined by classical and modern theorists, employs humor, irony, exaggeration, and ridicule to expose and criticize human vices, foolishness, and social injustices. Baltabaeva's pragmatic discourse analysis emphasizes that "satire in literature and drama can be found throughout the major eras of human history, and highlights the social and political issues of the time" . Its essential functions include: exposing and critiquing social, political, religious, and moral flaws; engaging readers through wit and humor; and challenging power structures through indirect means .

Amirova's comparative research identifies several key functions of satire shared across literary traditions: "Satire serves as a reflective and corrective force, drawing attention to societal flaws, political injustices, and ethical inconsistencies" . These universal functions manifest differently depending on cultural contexts, historical circumstances, and linguistic resources.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "carnivalesque" provides a valuable framework for understanding satirical mechanisms across cultures. As Amirova observes, "Both English and Uzbek literary traditions utilize the carnivalesque to

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invert social hierarchies and undermine hegemonic discourse through laughter, irony, and grotesque imagery" . In English literature, this inversion often assumes theatrical, public forms—Shakespeare's jesters, Wilde's dandy characters. In Uzbek tradition, the carnivalesque manifests through *maskarabozlik* (folk comedy) and oral storytelling traditions where humor operates within communal settings like mahallas.

Baltabaeva's pragmatic approach illuminates how satire functions as a communicative strategy. Satirical texts frequently violate Grice's Cooperative Principle—particularly the maxims of quality and manner—not to deceive but to signal irony and provoke inference . This is especially relevant for understanding how satirists operating under censorship, like Uzbek writers during the Soviet period, developed sophisticated techniques of indirection and allegory.

Wilde's novel presents a systematic satire of Victorian high society, exposing its superficiality, hypocrisy, and moral bankruptcy. The literary analysis from LitCharts identifies how "Wilde makes frequent use of satire to lampoon the superficial nature of Victorian society, depicted in all its inauthentic glory throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray*". This satirical lens is evident from the novel's opening chapters.

Basil Hallward's description of Lady Brandon's party exemplifies Wilde's technique:

"Two months ago I went to a crush at Lady Brandon's. You know we poor artists have to show ourselves in society from time to time, just to remind the public that we are not savages. With an evening coat and a white tie, as you told me once, anybody, even a stock-broker, can gain a reputation for being civilized".

The passage operates through multiple layers of irony. Basil's words "exaggerate the conceited nature of his peers, sarcastically suggesting that all he needs is proper evening wear to convince others of his sophistication". The equation of artists and stockbrokers as equally "savage" beneath their civilized veneer exposes the arbitrariness of social distinctions based on appearance rather than substance.

The party scene in Chapter 3 extends this critique. Wilde describes how "reality entered the room in the shape of a servant to tell the duchess that her carriage was waiting. She wrung her hands in mock despair" . The duchess's performative distress, her concern that her fragile bonnet cannot withstand a "scene" with her husband, and her paradoxical farewell to Lord Henry as "quite delightful and dreadfully demoralizing" all underscore "the detachment with which the ruling elite view their world". As the analysis concludes, "this patrician class appears permanently aloof, vapid, and exempt from real responsibility".

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The magical portrait itself functions as a powerful satirical symbol. It serves as what Baltabaeva would term a "pragmatic trigger"-an artistic device that compels readers to recognize the gap between appearance and reality . While Dorian maintains his youthful beauty, the portrait records the moral degradation hidden from society. This inversion-the true self revealed in art while the public face remains pristine-satirizes Victorian society's obsession with external respectability at the expense of inner virtue.

SuperSummary's thematic analysis emphasizes that "The Picture of Dorian Gray, like F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, is a satire, a cautionary tale about the excesses and destructiveness of the aristocratic class" . Vanity, the analysis argues, functions as "a tempting and socially-sanctioned vice within the aristocracy that leads to a reckless and destructive selfishness" . The wealthy society that worships Dorian based solely on his appearance is "equally implicated in the man's sordid destructiveness and downfall" .

Lord Henry Wotton serves as the novel's primary vehicle for satirical commentary. His paradoxical aphorisms-"The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it"-function not merely as expressions of hedonistic philosophy but as instruments for exposing Victorian hypocrisy. Through Lord Henry, Wilde articulates truths that respectable society suppresses, using wit as a weapon against conventional morality.

Billet's thesis emphasizes that Wilde's deployment of satire operates alongside his aesthetic arguments: "In chapter one, I argue that Wilde uses gothic themes in Dorian Gray to insert his social critiques and aesthetic beliefs" . The gothic elements-the supernatural portrait, the hidden corruption, the Faustian bargain-provide a framework within which Wilde can explore the consequences of aestheticism divorced from ethics, while simultaneously satirizing the society that makes such a experiment conceivable.

The tragic story of Sybil Vane reveals another dimension of Wilde's satire. Dorian's attraction to her rests entirely on her artistic performances; when her acting fails, his love evaporates instantly. As SuperSummary notes, "the most pronounced victim of Dorian's reckless vanity is the penniless Sybil Vane, whose station in life prevents her and her family from securing justice through legal means" . Dorian's wealth and status enable him to destroy Sybil with impunity, protected by "his seemingly endless riches, which grant him both immediate respectability and status, and the means to cover his tracks and broker power" . This episode satirizes the class privileges that insulate the wealthy from consequences available to ordinary citizens.

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Uzbek satirical tradition draws upon rich classical and folkloric sources while adapting to the political constraints of the Soviet era and beyond. Amirova's research explains that "historically constrained by autocratic rule, censorship, and cultural norms emphasizing harmony and respect for authority, Uzbek satire tends toward allegory, indirectness, and ethical subtlety".

This tradition has deep roots. Alisher Navoi, writing in the fifteenth century, "employed didactic narratives and allegorical characters to critique moral and social decay. His satire, embedded in Sufi metaphysics, seeks spiritual refinement rather than political upheaval". The classical emphasis on moral instruction through indirection established patterns that later satirists would adapt to new circumstances.

Abdulla Qahhor (1907–1968) stands as the preeminent figure of Uzbek satirical prose in the twentieth century. According to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Qahhor "was first published in 1924 as a topical satirist and feuilletonist. He later began to work in the short story genre and did much for the development of this genre in Soviet Uzbek literature" . His works include satirical masterpieces such as "The Little Bird" (1958) and "The Scorpion from the Altar" (1960).

Christopher Fort's biographical research reveals the complexity of Qahhor's position within Soviet literary institutions. By the mid-1950s, Qahhor began to cultivate an image as "a writer of conscience who gives voice to harsh and uncomfortable truths, to things that most suspect to be true but are not brave enough to speak of them for fear of offending sensibility or the powers that be". This self-presentation—as a truth-teller operating within the system-illuminates the strategic position of the satirist under authoritarian conditions.

Qahhor's literary autobiography, *Tales from the Past* (1966), presents this image explicitly. As Fort describes, the novella portrays Qahhor's family as "foreigners" (*kelgindi*) wherever they go, cast out from conservative communities for their progressive ideas. This outsider status enables the perspective of "the perfect outsider observer" who can uncover hidden strata of corruption and backwardness beneath surface respectability . The parallel with Wilde's critical perspective on Victorian society—from within yet somehow apart-is striking.

Amirova's analysis identifies key features of Qahhor's satirical method: "Abdulla Qahhor's short stories illustrate the strategic ambiguity of satire under authoritarian regimes. His narratives, though humorous on the surface, carry underlying critiques of bureaucratic absurdity and ideological hypocrisy".

In "The Little Bird" (*Qo'shchinordagi chiroqlar*), Qahhor portrays an opportunist who exploits the rhetoric of public service for personal advancement.

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The protagonist's self-deception-his capacity to believe his own pretenses while pursuing selfish ends—mirrors the gap between appearance and reality that Wilde explores through Dorian Gray. Qahhor's irony operates through this disjunction, inviting readers to recognize similar tendencies in themselves and their society.

"The Scorpion from the Altar" (*Mehrobdan chayon*) represents Qahhor's most ambitious satirical work, exposing religious hypocrisy and showing how genuine spiritual impulses can be corrupted by greed, envy, and power. As Amirova notes, Qahhor's satire "aims to mend rather than dismantle, to realign the individual within the community through moral persuasion rather than polemical attack". This ethical orientation distinguishes Uzbek satire's constructive intent from the more purely corrosive potential of Western satirical traditions.

The conditions of Soviet censorship necessitated sophisticated techniques of indirection. As Amirova explains, "Thus, the aesthetic of indirection, allegory, and double-voiced discourse became not only a stylistic choice but a survival strategy". Uzbek satirists learned to embed critique within culturally resonant forms-proverbs, folk tales, historical allegories-that could be read on multiple levels.

Baltabaeva's pragmatic analysis elaborates on this phenomenon: "In Uzbek and Karakalpak literature, satire often manifests through subtle irony and metaphor, reflecting a historically cautious approach to political commentary. The writers such as Abdulla Qodiriy veil criticism of social injustice, hypocrisy, or bureaucratic inefficiency under layers of allegory and culturally resonant proverbs".

This indirection serves multiple functions: it protects the author from direct retaliation, it rewards sophisticated readers who can decode the critique, and it creates community among those who share the interpretive framework. The parallel with Wilde's use of paradox and irony—techniques that similarly require active reader participation to unpack meaning—reveals a deeper structural similarity between the two traditions.

Both Wilde and Uzbek satirists target the gap between appearance and reality as a fundamental source of social hypocrisy. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, this manifests through the contrast between Dorian's preserved beauty and the portrait's hidden corruption. In Qahhor's satire, it appears in the contrast between professed public virtue and actual private behavior—the bureaucrat who serves himself while claiming to serve the people, the religious figure who exploits piety for personal gain.

Both traditions also critique the moral bankruptcy of privileged classes. Wilde exposes the "vapid" and "aloof" aristocracy whose detachment from reality enables their moral irresponsibility . Qahhor similarly targets the bureaucratic elite

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whose privileges insulate them from the consequences of their decisions. As Amirova notes, both traditions use satire as "a mirror held up to the world—not only reflecting its absurdities but offering a path to awareness and, ideally, reform" .

Despite these shared concerns, significant differences emerge from distinct cultural and political contexts. Amirova's comparative framework illuminates these divergences:

"English satire often emerges from a tradition of empiricism and liberal critique, where individual reason and freedom of speech are paramount. Hence, its satire tends to be outward, aggressive, and system-challenging. Uzbek satire, conversely, reflects a collectivist worldview shaped by Islamic ethics and Sufi philosophy. It aims to mend rather than dismantle, to realign the individual within the community through moral persuasion rather than polemical attack".

This philosophical difference manifests in tone and method. English satire, including Wilde's, can be more directly confrontational, benefiting from "relatively stable legal protections for free speech, allowing writers and artists to be openly critical of power". Uzbek satire, historically operating under autocratic control, developed "the aesthetic of indirection, allegory, and double-voiced discourse" as both stylistic choice and survival strategy.

Language itself shapes satirical expression in distinctive ways. Amirova observes that "English satire benefits from the syntactic sharpness and polysemous potential of the English language, allowing authors to create complex layers of meaning with brevity. The pun, paradox, and antithesis are key rhetorical tools". Wilde's mastery of paradox—perhaps his most characteristic device-exemplifies this linguistic resource.

"In contrast, Uzbek satire draws heavily from classical poetic forms, proverbs, and idioms. The richness of metaphor and the rhythm of the language add an aesthetic dimension that deepens the impact of satire. This poeticism enhances the tradition's moral and spiritual underpinnings". Qahhor's prose, while innovative in its realism, maintains connection with these traditional resources, embedding critique within culturally familiar patterns.

The symbolic devices employed by both traditions reveal striking parallels. Wilde's portrait functions as what Baltabaeva would term an "implicature"—a device that conveys meaning indirectly, requiring reader inference to decode . The portrait "says" what cannot be spoken directly: that Dorian's beauty conceals corruption, that society's admiration is misplaced, that the aesthetic life divorced from ethics leads to destruction.

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Uzbek satire similarly employs symbolic devices-the scorpion hidden in the altar, the little bird that seems harmless but carries meaning. These symbols operate through cultural resonance, drawing on traditional associations to convey critique that cannot be stated explicitly. In both cases, the symbol creates a space for shared understanding between author and reader, a community of interpretation that recognizes the gap between surface meaning and deeper truth.

Both traditions affirm satire's essential function as social conscience. Amirova articulates this shared understanding: "Whether through the dystopian realism of Orwell or the allegorical parables of Qahhor, satire remains a mirror held up to the world—not only reflecting its absurdities but offering a path to awareness and, ideally, reform" .

Wilde's novel, despite its aesthetic sophistication, ultimately serves this moral function. The destruction of Dorian Gray demonstrates the impossibility of separating beauty from ethics, art from life. The portrait that finally reveals his true nature enforces a judgment that society could not see. In this sense, the novel itself becomes a kind of portrait, holding up a mirror to Victorian society and forcing recognition of its hidden deformities.

The political contexts of each tradition shape the possibilities and limits of satirical critique. English satire, operating in relative freedom, can push boundaries more aggressively. Yet even Wilde faced censorship and moral condemnation; *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was used as evidence against him at his trial. The novel's exploration of same-sex desire and its critique of conventional morality provoked scandal and legal consequences.

Uzbek satire, operating under more severe constraints, developed greater subtlety but also faced genuine dangers. As Amirova notes, "the fear of reprisal continues to constrain explicit critique, and self-censorship is widespread" even in contemporary contexts . Yet "despite these limitations, the creativity and cultural fluency" of satirists reflect the genre's resilience and adaptability .

The comparative study of these traditions reveals satire's enduring relevance as a mode of social criticism. As Baltabaeva's research emphasizes, "the social impact of satire depends not only on the writer's linguistic creativity but also on the audience's ability to interpret pragmatic signals. When successful, satire serves as a powerful tool for social change, raising awareness about inequality, injustice, or corruption through an accessible and often entertaining medium" .

Wilde's satire of Victorian hypocrisy continues to resonate because the human weaknesses he exposed-vanity, hypocrisy, the worship of appearance—remain relevant. Qahhor's critique of bureaucratic absurdity and moral decay similarly transcends its Soviet context, speaking to universal patterns of human

ISSN 3030-3907

behavior. Both traditions demonstrate that satire, at its best, addresses not merely local and temporary targets but the perennial failings of human nature.

CONCLUSION.

The comparative analysis of satirical elements in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Uzbek satirical prose reveals both profound affinities and significant divergences. Both traditions employ satire to expose the gap between appearance and reality, to critique the moral bankruptcy of privileged classes, and to hold up a mirror to society's hidden deformities. Both utilize sophisticated artistic devices-irony, paradox, symbolism, the grotesque-to convey critique while engaging readers in active interpretation.

Yet the differences are equally instructive. Wilde's satire, emerging from English traditions of liberal critique and relatively free expression, can be more direct, more paradoxically playful, more willing to challenge systems openly. Uzbek satire, shaped by centuries of autocratic rule and sophisticated traditions of indirection, developed techniques of allegory and double-voiced discourse that enable critique within constraints. The one shocks and provokes; the other guides and instructs. The one exposes the emptiness of aristocratic pretension; the other seeks to realign individuals within community through moral persuasion.

Both traditions, however, affirm what Amirova identifies as satire's essential function: "to serve as society's conscience". Whether through the gothic symbolism of Wilde's portrait or the folk wisdom of Qahhor's parables, satire "destabilizes complacency, questions certainty, and engages readers in the ethical dilemmas of their time".

This comparative study thus illuminates not only two distinct literary traditions but the universal human need for critical self-examination that satire fulfills. In holding up mirrors to their respective societies, Wilde and the Uzbek satirists reveal truths that transcend cultural boundaries—about vanity and hypocrisy, about the corruptions of power and privilege, about the enduring gap between how we appear and who we really are. Their works remind us that satire, in all its cultural variations, serves a fundamental human purpose: to help us see ourselves more clearly, and perhaps, to become better than we are.

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