THE SILK ROAD AS A LITERARY-CULTURAL SPACE: ECOPOETIC APPROACHES TO RUSSIAN AND UZBEK HISTORICAL FICTION

Nurmuhamedova Maftuna Ulug'bek qizi
Teacher at Oriental University

Abstract: The article examines the Silk Road not simply as a network of trade routes but as a literary-cultural space where environment, mobility and historical memory intersect. Focusing on the comparative possibilities of Russian and Uzbek historical fiction, it proposes a three-level method: identifying material landscape, interpreting its narrative functions and tracing ethical attitudes toward inhabiting a shared environment. The study distinguishes historically grounded routes from their fictional reconstruction and argues that desert, river, mountain and city form interconnected narrative environments rather than isolated scenic details.

Keywords: Silk Road; ecopoetics; comparative literature; cultural geography; Russian fiction; Uzbek fiction; historical novel

Introduction

The expression "Silk Road" designates a retrospective framework through which different corridors of movement are brought into one historical image. Literary texts, however, do not merely reproduce a geographical map. They select particular locations, arrange encounters and attach value to the conditions of travel. A desert may impose bodily vulnerability; a river may organize settlement and defence; a walled city may represent both protection and exclusion. The relationship between human beings and their surroundings therefore becomes an indispensable part of the fictional construction of history. Ecocriticism begins from the premise that the physical environment is integral to literary interpretation rather than an incidental background [3; xviii]. This premise is especially productive for fiction set in Inner Asian crossroads, where climate, distance and the availability of water profoundly shape represented action.

The article aims to clarify a research vocabulary suitable for comparing Russian and Uzbek representations of the Silk Road. It asks how geography is made narratively meaningful, when place becomes a carrier of memory and why the same environment may be represented differently in narratives of conquest, resistance and exchange.

Materials and Methods

The comparative corpus proposed by the dissertation includes Vasily Yan's Genghis Khan, Mirмuhsin's Xo'jand qal'asi (Temur Malik), Sergei Borodin's Stars over Samarkand, Muhammad Ali's Sarbadorlar, Leonid Solovyov's The Tale of Hodja Nasreddin and Mirkarim Osim's historical prose. In this article those works are treated as a set of distinct literary situations, not as interchangeable documentary descriptions. Close reading, spatial comparison, attention to narratorial perspective and historical contextualization are combined. The analytical unit is a passage in which a named or recognizable landscape materially affects an event, a character's decision or an assessment of communal life.

A useful distinction separates topographical reference, spatial organization and ecological valuation. Topographical reference concerns what is named; spatial organization concerns how movement and barriers structure the plot; ecological valuation concerns the text's explicit or implicit judgments about

© Ushbu material Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) litsenziyasi asosida tarqatiladi.

habitation, scarcity, extraction and preservation. The chronotope concept helps link spatial forms to narrative time [4; 84].

The corpus is approached as a set of literary representations, not as a replacement for the historical record. This distinction avoids inferring factual social conditions from fictional descriptions alone. A valid comparison records the edition, passage, speaker, narrative location and interpretive uncertainty.

The analysis proceeds from textual observation to within-work interpretation and then to a comparative hypothesis. The sequence reduces the risk of building a general cultural claim on a single isolated motif. Where the consulted edition does not establish a page number, a precise citation cannot responsibly be supplied.

Ecopoetics and historical mediation

The landscape should be read as a historically mediated representation rather than a transparent record of ecology. Particular attention is given to the narrator's choice of sensory detail, the changing scale of description, and the relation between natural processes and human decisions. This proposition provides a controlled point of departure for a close reading. The first question is how the narrator introduces the relevant setting and whether the description belongs to an external account, a character's perception or a remembered episode. The second question concerns the position of the motif in the sequence of events: it can precede a decision, interrupt an action, or retrospectively frame its consequences.

Comparative interpretation also requires an explicit distinction between recurrence and significance. The appearance of a similar image in two works does not show that the image fulfills the same function. Its force depends on focalization, narrative pace, vocabulary and the opposition through which it is organized. For this reason, references to geographical reality should be separated from claims about the literary work. Geographic plausibility can strengthen a novel's effect of historicity, but it cannot replace the analysis of the passage itself.

An operational reading procedure can be formulated in four stages. First, identify every relevant episode in the editions under study. Second, note the immediate dramatic context and the identity of the observing voice. Third, compare the episode with another occurrence within the same work before making a cross-author comparison. Fourth, record a conclusion only at the level warranted by the evidence. This sequence allows the category "ecopoetics and historical mediation" to become an analytical instrument rather than a decorative heading.

The road as a spatial institution

A route is not only a line connecting cities: it gathers labor, risk, mediation, hospitality and political regulation. Comparison requires distinguishing the physical infrastructure of movement from the symbolic vocabulary of encounters. This proposition provides a controlled point of departure for a close reading. The first question is how the narrator introduces the relevant setting and whether the description belongs to an external account, a character's perception or a remembered episode. The second question concerns the position of the motif in the sequence of events: it can precede a decision, interrupt an action, or retrospectively frame its consequences.

Comparative interpretation also requires an explicit distinction between recurrence and significance. The appearance of a similar image in two works does not show that the image fulfills the same function. Its force depends on focalization, narrative pace, vocabulary and the opposition through which it is organized. For this reason, references to geographical reality should be separated from claims about the

© Ushbu material Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) litsenziyasi asosida tarqatiladi.

literary work. Geographic plausibility can strengthen a novel's effect of historicity, but it cannot replace the analysis of the passage itself.

An operational reading procedure can be formulated in four stages. First, identify every relevant episode in the editions under study. Second, note the immediate dramatic context and the identity of the observing voice. Third, compare the episode with another occurrence within the same work before making a cross-author comparison. Fourth, record a conclusion only at the level warranted by the evidence. This sequence allows the category "the road as a spatial institution" to become an analytical instrument rather than a decorative heading.

The oasis provides a productive meeting point between environmental constraint and social cooperation. Water allocation, cultivation and urban concentration may be studied in fiction as narrative conditions without treating literary representation as historical documentation. This proposition provides a controlled point of departure for a close reading. The first question is how the narrator introduces the relevant setting and whether the description belongs to an external account, a character's perception or a remembered episode. The second question concerns the position of the motif in the sequence of events: it can precede a decision, interrupt an action, or retrospectively frame its consequences.

Comparative interpretation also requires an explicit distinction between recurrence and significance. The appearance of a similar image in two works does not show that the image fulfills the same function. Its force depends on focalization, narrative pace, vocabulary and the opposition through which it is organized. For this reason, references to geographical reality should be separated from claims about the literary work. Geographic plausibility can strengthen a novel's effect of historicity, but it cannot replace the analysis of the passage itself.

An operational reading procedure can be formulated in four stages. First, identify every relevant episode in the editions under study. Second, note the immediate dramatic context and the identity of the observing voice. Third, compare the episode with another occurrence within the same work before making a cross-author comparison. Fourth, record a conclusion only at the level warranted by the evidence. This sequence allows the category "oasis, settlement and water" to become an analytical instrument rather than a decorative heading.

Narrative time expands and contracts as travellers move between known and unfamiliar spaces. This allows the critic to test whether duration, waiting, seasonal change and recollection alter the interpretation of landscape. This proposition provides a controlled point of departure for a close reading. The first question is how the narrator introduces the relevant setting and whether the description belongs to an external account, a character's perception or a remembered episode. The second question concerns the position of the motif in the sequence of events: it can precede a decision, interrupt an action, or retrospectively frame its consequences.

Comparative interpretation also requires an explicit distinction between recurrence and significance. The appearance of a similar image in two works does not show that the image fulfills the same function. Its force depends on focalization, narrative pace, vocabulary and the opposition through which it is organized. For this reason, references to geographical reality should be separated from claims about the literary work. Geographic plausibility can strengthen a novel's effect of historicity, but it cannot replace the analysis of the passage itself.

An operational reading procedure can be formulated in four stages. First, identify every relevant episode in the editions under study. Second, note the immediate dramatic context and the identity of the observing voice. Third, compare the episode with another occurrence within the same work before

© Ushbu material Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) litsenziyasi asosida tarqatiladi.

making a cross-author comparison. Fourth, record a conclusion only at the level warranted by the evidence. This sequence allows the category "the chronotope of distance" to become an analytical instrument rather than a decorative heading.

Characters pursue conquest, trade, refuge or survival within environments they cannot completely control. A careful reading separates environmental agency from deterministic explanations of social action. This proposition provides a controlled point of departure for a close reading. The first question is how the narrator introduces the relevant setting and whether the description belongs to an external account, a character's perception or a remembered episode. The second question concerns the position of the motif in the sequence of events: it can precede a decision, interrupt an action, or retrospectively frame its consequences.

Comparative interpretation also requires an explicit distinction between recurrence and significance. The appearance of a similar image in two works does not show that the image fulfills the same function. Its force depends on focalization, narrative pace, vocabulary and the opposition through which it is organized. For this reason, references to geographical reality should be separated from claims about the literary work. Geographic plausibility can strengthen a novel's effect of historicity, but it cannot replace the analysis of the passage itself.

An operational reading procedure can be formulated in four stages. First, identify every relevant episode in the editions under study. Second, note the immediate dramatic context and the identity of the observing voice. Third, compare the episode with another occurrence within the same work before making a cross-author comparison. Fourth, record a conclusion only at the level warranted by the evidence. This sequence allows the category "human agency and ecological limits" to become an analytical instrument rather than a decorative heading.

Russian and Uzbek authors need not attach identical ethical meanings to similar natural motifs. The framework identifies similarities at the level of narrative function while retaining differences of language, genre and historical memory. This proposition provides a controlled point of departure for a close reading. The first question is how the narrator introduces the relevant setting and whether the description belongs to an external account, a character's perception or a remembered episode. The second question concerns the position of the motif in the sequence of events: it can precede a decision, interrupt an action, or retrospectively frame its consequences.

Comparative interpretation also requires an explicit distinction between recurrence and significance. The appearance of a similar image in two works does not show that the image fulfills the same function. Its force depends on focalization, narrative pace, vocabulary and the opposition through which it is organized. For this reason, references to geographical reality should be separated from claims about the literary work. Geographic plausibility can strengthen a novel's effect of historicity, but it cannot replace the analysis of the passage itself.

An operational reading procedure can be formulated in four stages. First, identify every relevant episode in the editions under study. Second, note the immediate dramatic context and the identity of the observing voice. Third, compare the episode with another occurrence within the same work before making a cross-author comparison. Fourth, record a conclusion only at the level warranted by the evidence. This sequence allows the category "comparative vocabulary and limits" to become an analytical instrument rather than a decorative heading.

Results

© Ushbu material Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) litsenziyasi asosida tarqatiladi.

The comparison establishes three recurrent relationships. The first is movement and exposure: open space allows contact between communities but makes travellers dependent on roads, guides, seasonal conditions and supplies. In such episodes the environment sets limits that no political command can simply abolish. The second is settlement and attachment: the oasis or fortified town emerges from irrigation, cultivated land, craftsmanship and intergenerational memory. To defend a city is therefore often to defend a form of life rather than masonry alone. The third is exchange and transformation: crossroads bring objects, languages and ethical codes together, while the familiar landscape can become strange under the pressure of political violence.

These patterns explain why a landscape cannot be interpreted only as a symbol. A river can be a military obstacle and a condition of livelihood at the same time. The desert can function as a test of endurance while retaining its material role as a zone of ecological constraint. The artistic meaning of either space depends on the action unfolding within it.

Discussion

A comparative account must resist two simplifications. It should not equate cultural difference with a fixed "national" landscape, since authors employ shared genres and inherited plot structures. Equally, it should not collapse literary geography into the actual historical map. The novel produces a selective, temporally layered geography. Place names may be historically recognizable while episodes around them are governed by a modern narrator's values. In comparative research, the point is to identify both convergence of motifs and difference of narrative emphasis.

Buell's discussion of environmental representation provides a productive reminder that human history and the nonhuman setting are intertwined rather than separate domains [5; 7]. Yet an ecopoetic interpretation of medieval-themed novels should remain attentive to the genre of historical fiction: fictional characters cannot be used as direct evidence for ancient environmental practice. What can be compared is the artistic organization of dependence, control, coexistence and destruction.

Russian and Uzbek authors need not attach identical ethical meanings to similar natural motifs. The framework identifies similarities at the level of narrative function while retaining differences of language, genre and historical memory. This proposition provides a controlled point of departure for a close reading. The first question is how the narrator introduces the relevant setting and whether the description belongs to an external account, a character's perception or a remembered episode. The second question concerns the position of the motif in the sequence of events: it can precede a decision, interrupt an action, or retrospectively frame its consequences.

Conclusion

The Silk Road in Russian and Uzbek fiction can be approached as a literary-cultural space constructed through movement, inhabited places and environmental limits. A rigorous comparative procedure should first establish the narrative function of a landscape and then explain its historical and ethical significance. Future research may develop passage-level comparison of water, routes, fortifications and seasonal change across specified editions of the primary texts.

References

1. Hansen V. The Silk Road: A New History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
2. Frankopan P. The Silk Roads: A New History of the World. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
3. Glotfelty C. Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis // The Ecocriticism Reader. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996. P. xv–xxxvii.

© Ushbu material Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) litsenziyasi asosida tarqatiladi.

4. Bakhtin M. M. Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel // The Dialogic Imagination. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. P. 84–258.
5. Buell L. The Environmental Imagination. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
6. Yan V. G. Чингисхан (edition to be specified for text-level quotation).

© Ushbu material Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) litsenziyasi asosida tarqatiladi.