

**WOMEN'S WRITING IN RUSSIAN AND UZBEK LITERATURE OF THE XX–XXI CENTURIES: GENDER, BODY, FREEDOM***Buzrukova Kamilla Djmalovna**Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the characteristics of women's writing in Russian and Uzbek literature of the XX–XXI centuries, including the representation of the body, gender, and freedom. The analysis is based on a comparative methodology and takes into account the differences in the cultural, historical, and social contexts of the two peoples.

**Keywords:** women's writing; female subjectivity; corporeality; gender; cultural trauma; memory; freedom; Uzbek literature; Russian literature; post-Soviet culture; comparative literary studies; body and culture.

**Аннотация.** В работе рассматриваются особенности женского письма в русской и узбекской литературе XX–XXI вв., включая репрезентацию тела, гендера и свободы. Анализ основан на сопоставительной методологии и учитывает различия в культурных, исторических и социальных контекстах двух народов.

**Ключевые слова:** женское письмо; женская субъектность; телесность; гендер; культурная травма; память; свобода; узбекская литература; русская литература; постсоветская культура; сопоставительное литературоведение; тело и культура.

Women's writing in twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature represents a significant cultural phenomenon situated at the intersection of personal experience, national tradition, and historical trauma. It emerges as an autonomous artistic practice associated with the search for female subjectivity, new forms of corporeal representation, and ways of articulating inner freedom. The concept of *écriture féminine*, introduced by Hélène Cixous, became a starting point for theoretical approaches that interpret women's writing as a form of resistance to patriarchal norms of language and culture. In contemporary literary studies, this concept unites categories of corporeality, emotionality, and self-understanding, giving the study of women's writing an interdisciplinary character.

Female subjectivity manifests itself primarily through a specific type of artistic discourse oriented toward inner experience, sensitivity, and the disruption of traditional logical and hierarchical narrative structures. Julia Kristeva emphasizes that women's writing is capable of dismantling linear forms of speech and introducing new principles of textual organization. This explains the tendency of women's writing toward fragmentariness, polyphony, confessional modes, and corporeal metaphors. Within comparative literary studies, women's literature is examined as part of broader anthropological and cultural processes in which the body, memory, trauma, and freedom become key elements of artistic self-expression.

In women's writing, the body functions as a source of experience, a bearer of memory, an object of cultural control, and a space of inner freedom. Luce Irigaray defines the body as the first language of women through which subjectivity is articulated. These processes should be considered within the context of transformations of modern society and changes in mechanisms of identity formation, as emphasized by Anthony Giddens. Therefore, corporeality in women's literature is not merely the depiction of physiology but a means of articulating spiritual experience, emotional tension, and psychological protest. In the Russian tradition, corporeality most often appears as a space for the search for truth and self-knowledge, whereas in Uzbek culture it is closely connected with practices of social control shaped by the concept of *uyat* (shame).

Russian women's literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries developed against the backdrop of profound historical upheavals. During the Silver Age, Marina Tsvetaeva and Anna Akhmatova formed a model of a female voice grounded in individualism, emotional intensity, and strong lyrical subjectivity. In the Soviet period, women's writing acquired a hidden character: micro-narratives, diaristic forms, and intimacy became strategies of resistance to official discourse. The post-Soviet era brought thematic freedom and an expansion of artistic practices. Russian women's prose increasingly addresses corporeal trauma, domestic violence, historical memory, and psychological crisis. Works by Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, and Svetlana Alexievich create new strategies for representing women's experience, combining documentary elements, emotional tension, and philosophical reflection.

Uzbek women's literature developed within the interaction of traditional Islamic culture, the Soviet modernization project, and post-Soviet transformation. In the twentieth century, Zulfiya and Saida Zunnunova created the image of a woman-fighter, combining national ethics, a sense of duty, and personal sensitivity. Their texts form a model of women's memory in which individual experience is closely connected with collective and national values. The contemporary stage is characterized by attempts to overcome the taboo status of themes such as the body, violence, sexuality, freedom, and religious restrictions. Twenty-first-century authors—Mehri Obid, Saodat Kamalova, and Zumrad Muhammad—introduce narrative lines previously excluded from public discourse, thereby breaking a centuries-old tradition of silence.

Corporeality occupies a special place in the comparison of the two literary traditions. In Russian literature, the body is understood as an archive of personal and family memory, a space of truth, and a source of inner freedom. In the works of Maria Stepanova, Elena Pechorskaya, and Tatyana Latinskaya, the body becomes an artistic instrument for recording historical and personal trauma. In Uzbek literature, the female body is often portrayed as an object of social and moral control related to issues of honor, gender, and religious norms. Contemporary women writers strive to restore the body's subjectivity, transforming it into a sign of protest, inner struggle, and spiritual self-assertion.

The theme of freedom also acquires different semantic meanings in the two cultural traditions. In Russian literature, freedom is understood as an existential choice associated with overcoming trauma, mastering one's own voice, and searching for a new identity. In Uzbek literature, freedom is primarily interpreted as a social and civil right: the opportunity to speak, receive education, control one's own body, and resist traditional pressure. This difference is explained not only by historical and cultural circumstances but also by the specific gender systems of Russia and Uzbekistan.

Comparative analysis allows for identifying several key differences. Women's writing in both cultures represents an attempt to form a new model of female identity, yet the paths of its realization differ. Russian literature tends toward experimental forms, genre expansion, and documentary writing, whereas the Uzbek tradition employs lyricism, symbolism, and figurative forms that enable engagement with themes not yet fully legitimized in society. Corporeality in Russian literature is predominantly philosophical, while in Uzbek literature it is social and normative. Freedom in Russian texts has an internal nature, whereas in Uzbek texts it is socio-political.

In contemporary humanities, women's writing is regarded as one of the most significant instruments for the formation of female subjectivity and the rethinking of freedom. Unlike patriarchal forms of literary expression, women's writing creates its own system of meanings in which freedom is understood not only as a social or political category but primarily as an inner state emerging through language, body, memory, and emotional expression. It becomes a specific mode of existence in culture, where a woman does not reproduce imposed roles but develops her own path, her own word, and her own identity.

Through writing, women reclaim a voice that for centuries was either silenced or interpreted by men, producing an effect of "double alienation"—from the body and from language. Freedom

manifests itself in the very act of speaking, as the ability to name lived experience becomes a way of overcoming silence and long-standing cultural prohibitions. Marina Tsvetaeva, for instance, turns writing into an act of liberation: “I must speak the word—otherwise it will burn me from within.” Her voice breaks the tradition of female modesty, replacing it with passion and absolute sincerity. In Akhmatova’s poetry, freedom is expressed through the ability to preserve dignity under historical violence: “And I pray not for myself alone...,” transforming her word into a space of spiritual resilience resistant to the dictates of the era.

The body plays a crucial role in women’s writing, as women experience freedom and unfreedom simultaneously through it. While traditional culture treated the female body as an object of control, women’s literature transforms it into a speaking subject. In Lyudmila Petrushevskaya’s prose, the body becomes an indicator of social suffering: the heroines of *Time: Night* live under pressure from poverty, violence, and emotional dependence, and their corporeal experiences express pain that cannot be conveyed through rational language. Maria Stepanova’s *In Memory of Memory* presents the body as an archive of generations, a space where not only personal but also чужой (inherited) experience is deposited: “My body remembers those whom I do not remember.” Such an understanding of corporeality constitutes a fundamental feature of women’s writing, where the body is not a physical object but an emotional, historical, and cultural center of subjectivity.

In Uzbek literature, corporeality has a different character. Here freedom is most often expressed as resistance to cultural and social norms regulating women’s behavior and limiting their right to self-expression. The concept of *uyat* (shame) forms a rigid system of bodily control, and therefore verbalizing corporeal experience in writing becomes an act of courage and transgression. In Mehri Obid’s poetry, the heroine’s body becomes a space of protest: “My body is not your land.” This line is not merely a declaration but a challenge to collective morality. In Saodat Kamalova’s prose, the bodily trauma of female characters (“her arms were covered with bruises—and no one asked why”) becomes part of social normality, and the act of recording this pain transforms silence into voice.

Women’s writing dismantles the patriarchal model of language, creating an alternative mode of expression. Traditional literary discourse often relies on a logic of power, hierarchy, and rigid structure. Women’s writing proposes a fluid, associative, and fragmentary language in which emotions and images have equal value with rational constructions. It frequently disrupts conventional genre forms, combining poetry and prose, inner monologue and external narration. This linguistic freedom is evident, for example, in Virginia Woolf’s use of stream of consciousness to convey the multilayered nature of women’s experience, or in the work of Uzbek poet Zumrad Muhammad, who employs intuitive, almost mystical imagery to express anxiety and inner search: “She walked through the night street, and each step was her own shadow.”

Emotionality in women’s writing also performs a liberating function. In societies with strong patriarchal norms, women were historically deprived of the right to express intense emotions—anger, despair, protest, sexual desire, or pain. In literature, these feelings gain legitimacy and become the basis for new models of subjectivity. Russian and Uzbek women’s prose of the twenty-first century presents emotion as an act of truth: heroines are no longer afraid to cry, scream, doubt, or violate expectations. In Lyudmila Ulitskaya’s texts, a heroine declares, “I am not obliged to be strong all the time,” and this admission of vulnerability becomes an act of inner freedom. In contemporary Uzbek prose, emotional expression serves as resistance to social silence: a woman who speaks about pain violates the moral code of silence and thus experiences liberation.

Silence, as a paradoxical category, plays a dual role in women’s writing: on the one hand, it is a product of cultural violence; on the other, it becomes an artistic device for expressing the unspeakable. Nineteenth-century women’s literature was permeated by hidden forms of writing—diaries, letters, confessional texts. In the twentieth century, silence became part of

trauma, and in the twenty-first century it became part of protest. A woman who utters “no” for the first time does so through writing. In Mehri Obid’s line “freedom begins with one frightening word: ‘no’,” this formula becomes central to the understanding of liberation in Uzbek women’s literature.

Thus, freedom in women’s writing is understood as a process of returning voice, body, language, emotions, and memory to women. Writing becomes a space of inner formation where a woman gains the opportunity to construct her own identity based on personal experience rather than cultural expectations. Through text, she creates a new subjectivity independent of traditional norms and notions of “female destiny.” This freedom does not come from outside—it is created from within, in the moment of writing, in confrontation with one’s own pain, in overcoming silence, and in articulating what was previously concealed. Women’s writing becomes not only a literary phenomenon but also a form of cultural resistance, a mode of social action, and a mechanism for transforming female identity. Through writing, women recreate themselves—and this constitutes the deepest understanding of freedom at the core of women’s literary tradition of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Women’s writing in Russian and Uzbek literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a significant cultural phenomenon reflecting profound transformations of identity, memory, and social structure. The female voice becomes a space of dialogue between the personal and the collective, tradition and modernity, body and culture. Comparative study of these processes reveals universal mechanisms of artistic expression of women’s experience while simultaneously highlighting the uniqueness of each cultural tradition.

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