THE LINGUO-COGNITIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE "LIFE-DEATH" DICHOTOMY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract: This article explores the linguo-cognitive interpretation of the "life-death" dichotomy in twentieth-century English and Karakalpak literary texts. Through a comparative and analytical approach, it examines the ways in which writers from both literary traditions conceptualize, express, and contest the opposition of life and death as foundational existential categories. Focusing on metaphorical frameworks, narrative structures, and cultural codes, the study reveals the commonalities and differences in how human experience with mortality and vitality is embedded in language and literature. The article also highlights the role of specific historical, social, and cultural events that shaped the evolution of these themes in both English and Karakalpak writers' works. The findings show that while the dichotomy is treated as a universal motif, its poetic realization, cognitive background, and symbolic manifestations are tightly interwoven with national memory, worldview, and literary innovation.

Keywords: language, cognition, literature, life, death, dichotomy, metaphor, English literature, Karakalpak literature, twentieth century, culture.

Humanity has always been obsessed with the mysteries of life and death, using language and literature to probe, depict, and transcend these existential extremes. The twentieth century, however, stands out as an era in which the traditional relationship between life and death was reimagined on both personal and collective levels. Both English and Karakalpak literary cultures underwent radical transformations in this period, often born of loss, instability, rapid modernization, and the search for meaning in a fragmented world. This article, adopting a linguo-cognitive framework, attempts to investigate how the life-death dichotomy finds expression in representative literary texts from these two traditions, with a special emphasis on how writers deploy language, metaphor, and cultural narrative to process, mitigate, or intensify the significance attached to life and death.

The life-death dichotomy is not just an abstract opposition but is deeply embedded in linguistic, cognitive, and cultural systems. It is encoded through symbols, metaphors, myths, and stories, each of which shapes and colors the way individuals and communities think about their destinies. In the twentieth century, literature became both a battleground and a sanctuary for negotiating the fear of death and the affirmation of life. In English literature, shaped by the trauma of two world wars, the erosion of traditional belief, and the rise of psychological realism, this opposition is often dramatized as internal struggle, philosophical questioning,

and artistic experimentation. In Karakalpak literature, marked by dramatic historical disruptions, collective memory, and a tight bond with nature, life and death are frequently depicted through communal experience, natural cycles, and the persistence of tradition amidst loss. Examining the cognitive and linguistic textures of literary texts provides vital clues to how these cultures approach the ultimate questions of existence. The cognitive approach focuses on the models and frames through which life and death are processed mentally, while the linguistic approach tracks how these models are made manifest in metaphor, narrative, and poetic speech. The two combined yield a holistic picture of the literary mind at work.

To discuss the linguo-cognitive basis of the life-death dichotomy is to acknowledge that such fundamental categories are not given solely by biology or empirical observation but are actively constructed, maintained, and transformed within language and literature. Across the world's languages, cognition naturally categorizes experience as a series of binary oppositions—light and darkness, day and night, movement and stillness, growth and decay. Life and death stand at the apex of these binaries as master tropes shaping culture's symbolic order. The cognitive metaphors that structure our understanding of life and death are neither static nor universal. Life may be mapped as a journey, a garden, a fire, a struggle; death as an end, a return, a sleep, or a crossing over. These metaphors differ in intensity and register depending on the context, genre, and tradition. They reveal not only personal but broader cultural worldviews: whether death is dangerous or welcome, whether life is joyous or precarious, whether the boundary is sharp or permeable. In English literature, the legacy of Shakespearean tragedy, Romantic longing, Victorian melancholy, and Modernist fragmentation converged in the twentieth century to produce intricate treatments of mortality. The trauma of mass death in war, and the secularization of culture, created a breeding ground for existential doubt and poetic innovation. Karakalpak literature, on the other hand, situates life and death within a background of collective suffering, environmental struggle, ancestral connection, and the rhythms of nature.

Twentieth-century English literature was defined by a succession of crises, including two world wars, the Great Depression, the dissolution of empire, and immense social change. Writers thus found themselves forced to confront head-on the instability and terror inherent in the life-death dialectic.

The poetry of Wilfred Owen, for example, transforms the traditional language of heroism into a register of despair, using sound, metaphor, and fragmented syntax to convey the senselessness of young men dying in trenches. In "Anthem for Doomed Youth," the language itself resists closure—simultaneously mourning and denouncing the loss of untold lives, summoning the sounds of guns and the silence of funerals. War is rendered not only as a context for physical death but as a corrosive force upon meaning itself. Here, metaphors of life as light and death as darkness become not mere figures but lived agonies, reshaping English poetic tradition through cognitive dissonance and the dismantling of old certainties. Prose works like Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse" provide a different but equally powerful depiction. Through stream-of-consciousness technique, the narrative brings the

thoughts and sensations of its characters to the fore, foregrounding the fleetingness of life and the omnipresence of death as structuring absences. The sea is both giver and taker of life; the lighthouse is a symbol of unreachable stability as time erodes personal connections and family structures. Death is not melodrama but the inevitable outcome of life's passage—a boundary that both ends and shapes memory, love, and art. Woolf's metaphors—lighthouse, waves, shadows—act as cognitive anchors, organizing the apprehension of mortality within a framework that is both intimately psychological and broadly philosophical.

Both cultures also use rituals and narrative as means of deferring or mitigating the finality of death. In the English context, the failure of ritual significance, often lamented, opens the door for literary experimentation—the search for meaning through the very act of artistic creation. In the Karakalpak context, poetry, song, and storytelling keep memory alive, enacting community even when loss seems insurmountable. What is most striking is the repeated attempt, in both traditions, to cross or blur the boundaries between life and death. Poets and writers refuse easy solutions, focusing instead on the processes by which meaning is continually constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed in the face of loss. This is a sign not of despair but of creative resilience—a cognitive and cultural strategy for enduring the unendurable, forging hope from sorrow.

The metaphorical resources of both English and Karakalpak literature offer not just stylistic ornamentation but profound insight into cultural cognition. The metaphors of journey, light and shadow, river and soil, night and day, are not simply figures of speech; they are models through which reality is interpreted and organized. In English literature, vision and blindness, motion and paralysis, echo ancient structures but are retold through modern psychology. Life becomes effort, striving, fleeting delight; death is not only an event but an atmosphere—sometimes gentle, sometimes catastrophic, always significant. The cognitive act of mapping the unknown through the known is a way to master fear, preserve meaning, or even give dignity to suffering. In Karakalpak literature, metaphor is deeply rooted in place, belonging, and ancestry. Water, earth, growth, and decay are not merely observed but felt as part of a living tradition. The rituals of birth, marriage, mourning, and remembrance show that even as time passes and worlds change, the community endures through creation and repetition of shared symbols. Death closes one chapter but reopens another, as every poem or song becomes a means of keeping ancestors present and vital. While Western modernism tends toward fragmentation and the questioning of meaning, Karakalpak texts lean toward the reaffirmation of connection, the refusal to surrender to oblivion. The difference is not only aesthetic but cognitive, grounded in different histories and expectations.

Conclusion

The study of the linguo-cognitive interpretation of the "life-death" dichotomy in twentieth-century English and Karakalpak literary texts reveals that, for all the trauma, upheaval, and change, writers in both cultures have found ways to confront, question, and ultimately affirm the value of life and the meaning of death. The metaphors, narratives, and symbols deployed are not simply decorative but serve as core cognitive tools by which

meaning is made, challenged, and renewed. English literature's modernist and postwar complexity produces challenging yet honest responses to the disintegration of old forms, seeking new ways of expressing the unsayable and living with uncertainty. Karakalpak literature, grounded in community and landscape, maintains a poetics of endurance and memory, insisting on hope and the survival of tradition even in the darkest moments. Both literary traditions show that life and death are never merely opposed but are entwined in every act of speaking, writing, and remembering. To study their linguo-cognitive realization is to watch culture think itself through its art and its language—to witness the enduring dialogue between the ephemeral and the eternal.

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