



NATURE AS EXISTENTIAL DISCOURSE: A COGNITIVE AND SYMBOLIC ANALYSIS OF NATURE METAPHORS IN TUNGI NIGOH

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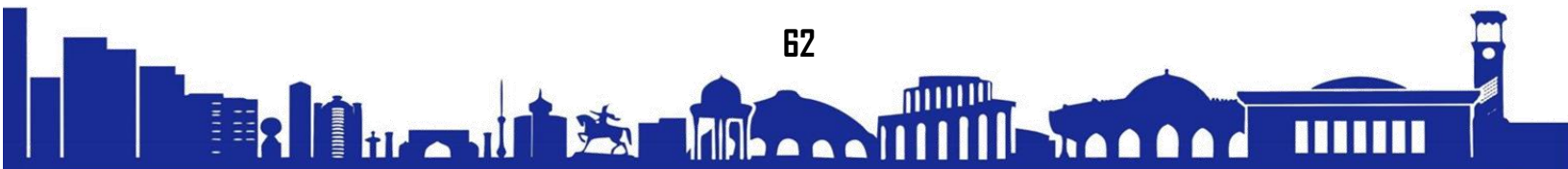
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Abstract. This article presents an extended investigation of nature metaphors in “Tungi Nigoh” by Erkin Vohidov. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, hermeneutics, and symbolic-structural analysis, the study examines how the poetic imagery of night, stars, forest, sky, and silence functions as an integrated existential system. The findings demonstrate that natural imagery in the poem operates as a cognitive framework for articulating introspection, ontological anxiety, spiritual longing, and epistemological inquiry. Rather than functioning as decorative poetic embellishment, nature metaphors structure the philosophical architecture of the text. The research contributes to international discussions in cognitive poetics and Central Asian literary studies by positioning Vohidov’s metaphorical discourse within broader existential and symbolic traditions.

Key words: Erkin Vohidov, Tungi Nigoh, conceptual metaphor theory, existential poetics, symbolism, Uzbek literature, cognitive stylistics, nature imagery.

Introduction. Modern Uzbek poetry of the twentieth century developed as a synthesis of national identity, philosophical reflection, and symbolic expression. Among its most intellectually complex representatives stands Erkin Vohidov, whose lyrical works demonstrate an advanced interplay between emotional intensity and metaphysical depth. His poem Tungi Nigoh (“The Night Gaze”) exemplifies this synthesis through its dense and multilayered nature imagery.

Although Vohidov’s poetry has been examined in relation to patriotism, spirituality, and moral consciousness, insufficient attention has been devoted to the structural role of metaphor in shaping his philosophical discourse. This study aims to





fill this gap by offering a comprehensive IMRAD-based analysis of nature metaphors in Tungi Nigoh.

The study addresses the following research questions:

How are nature metaphors constructed linguistically and conceptually in Tungi Nigoh?

What existential and psychological meanings are encoded in these metaphors?

How does the symbolic system of nature structure the philosophical architecture of the poem?

The working hypothesis proposes that nature metaphors in Tungi Nigoh serve as cognitive and existential mapping devices that transform physical landscape into ontological reflection.

Literature Review.

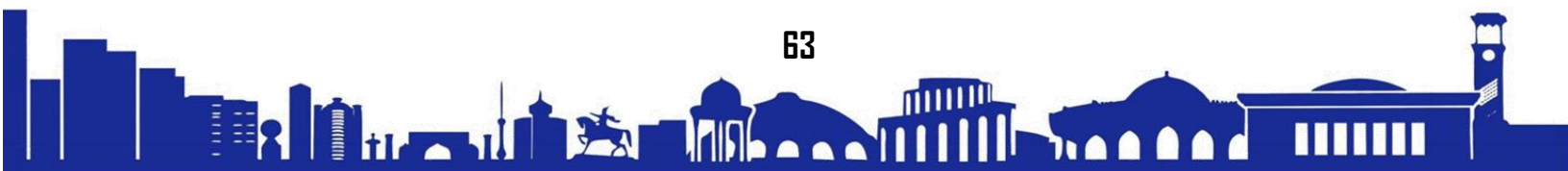
1. Metaphor in Cognitive and Literary Theory. Contemporary metaphor studies, especially following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptualize metaphor not merely as rhetorical ornamentation but as a fundamental mechanism of human cognition. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) argues that abstract domains (life, emotion, identity) are structured through concrete experiential domains (space, light, movement, nature).

In literary discourse, scholars such as Ricoeur (1977) emphasize metaphor's productive function in generating new meaning. Within cognitive poetics, metaphor becomes a mental mapping process enabling readers to conceptualize existential and emotional states.

2. Nature Imagery in Symbolist and Existential Poetry. In European and Eastern poetic traditions, nature often operates as a symbolic mediator between the external world and human consciousness. Romantic poetry frequently equates landscape with subjectivity, while Symbolist literature transforms natural elements into metaphysical codes.

Existential poetry utilizes darkness, silence, and cosmic imagery to represent alienation, transcendence, and ontological questioning. Such traditions provide a comparative framework for understanding Vohidov's imagery.

3. Research on Erkin Vohidov Scholarly discussions of Erkin Vohidov typically highlight his ethical philosophy and national spirit. However, systematic cognitive-





stylistic analysis of Tungi Nigoh remains limited. This article extends existing scholarship by integrating metaphor theory with existential literary analysis.

Methodology Research Design. This study employs a qualitative interpretative research design grounded in cognitive poetics and hermeneutic literary analysis. The research is exploratory and descriptive in nature, aiming to uncover the structural and philosophical functions of nature metaphors in Tungi Nigoh. Since the object of analysis is a poetic text, the methodology prioritizes depth of interpretation over quantitative measurement.

The study integrates three complementary analytical frameworks:

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Hermeneutic-phenomenological interpretation

Symbolic-structural literary analysis

The combination of these approaches allows for both linguistic precision and philosophical depth.

Corpus and Data Selection

The primary corpus consists exclusively of the poem Tungi Nigoh by Erkin Vohidov. The poem was selected based on the following criteria:

High concentration of natural imagery

Existential and introspective thematic orientation

Representative status within Vohidov's lyrical works

The unit of analysis includes:

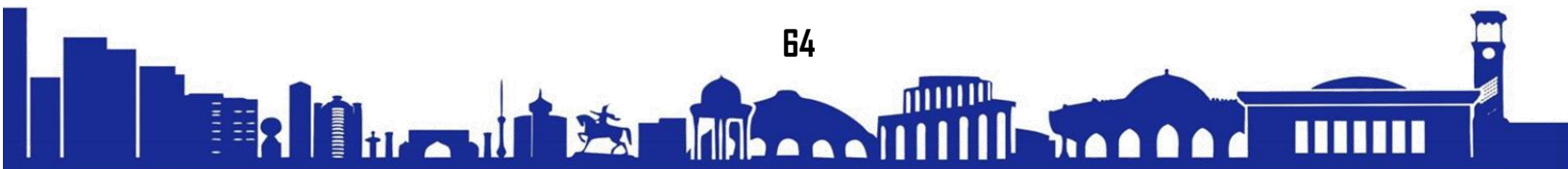
Lexical items denoting natural phenomena (e.g., night, stars, forest, sky, silence).

Metaphorical constructions involving nature

Contextual semantic clusters surrounding natural imagery

Recurrent symbolic motifs. All metaphorical expressions were extracted manually through close reading. Analytical Procedure. The analysis was conducted in four systematic stages:

Stage 1: Identification of Metaphorical Expressions. All references to natural elements were identified and categorized. Special attention was given to figurative usage rather than literal description. Expressions were classified according to their semantic and symbolic function.





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Stage 2: Conceptual Mapping. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), metaphorical mappings were reconstructed. Each metaphor was analyzed in terms of:

Source domain (e.g., night, forest, stars)

Target domain (e.g., consciousness, hope, existential doubt)

Cognitive mapping structure

For example:

NIGHT → EXISTENTIAL UNCERTAINTY

STAR → TRANSCENDENTAL TRUTH

FOREST → PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY

This stage clarified how abstract philosophical meanings are structured through concrete natural imagery.

Stage 3: Hermeneutic Interpretation. Following Ricoeur's hermeneutic model, metaphors were interpreted beyond their linguistic surface to uncover deeper ontological and existential implications. This stage involved:

Contextual reading within Uzbek poetic tradition

Consideration of philosophical undertones

Examination of symbolic coherence across the poem

The interpretative process remained text-centered while acknowledging broader literary frameworks.

Stage 4: Structural-Symbolic Integration. After identifying and interpreting individual metaphors, the study examined their interrelations. This stage aimed to determine whether nature images function independently or as an integrated symbolic system.

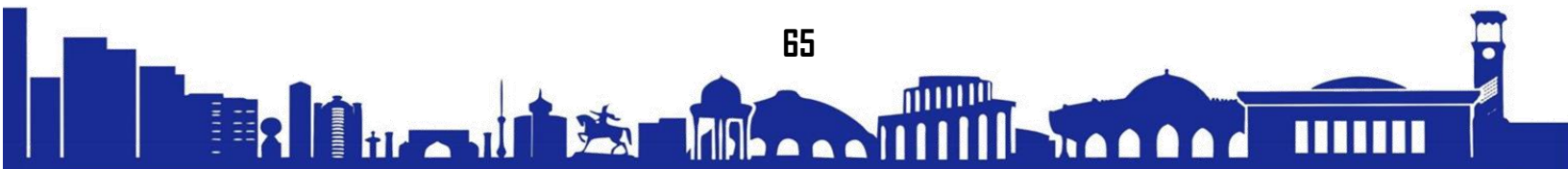
The analysis revealed a triadic symbolic structure:

Night (existential confrontation)

Stars (epistemological orientation)

Forest (psychological multiplicity)

These elements were examined as components of a unified semantic network rather than isolated figures. Reliability and Validity. To ensure methodological reliability:





The poem was reread multiple times to confirm consistency in metaphor identification. Interpretations were cross-checked against established theoretical frameworks in metaphor studies. Symbolic conclusions were derived strictly from textual evidence, avoiding speculative generalizations.

Validity was strengthened through:

Theoretical triangulation (CMT + hermeneutics + symbolic analysis)

Internal textual coherence analysis

Transparent analytical categorization

Research Limitations. The study is limited to a single poetic text and relies on qualitative interpretation. Quantitative corpus-based stylistic analysis was not applied. Additionally, reader-response perspectives were not included, as the focus remains on textual and conceptual structure.

Future research may incorporate comparative analysis with other Uzbek poets or employ computational stylistic tools to measure metaphor density and frequency.

Results.

1. Night as Ontological Arena. The dominant image in Tungi Nigoh is night. It operates as a multidimensional metaphor:

Psychological solitude

Epistemological uncertainty

Existential confrontation

Night represents a liminal space between awareness and mystery. Conceptually, the mapping EXISTENCE IS NIGHT structures the poem. Darkness does not merely describe physical absence of light; it encodes ambiguity, doubt, and inner turbulence.

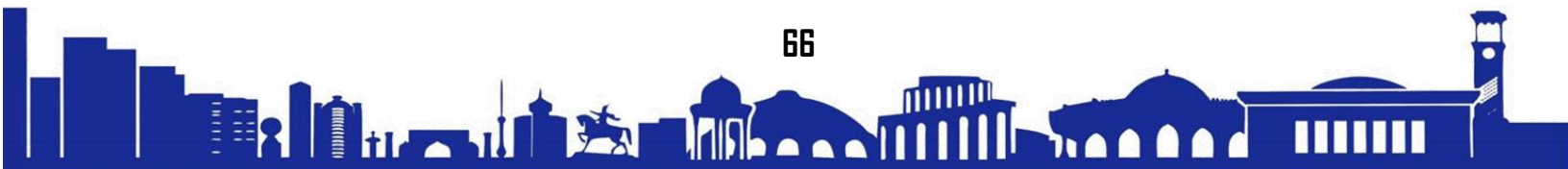
Silence intensifies this symbolism. The absence of sound reflects introspective depth, transforming the poem into a meditative dialogue between self and cosmos.

2. Stars as Epistemological Orientation. Stars introduce vertical transcendence into the horizontal spread of darkness. Their distance implies unattainable ideals; their light suggests persistent possibility.

Metaphorically:

HOPE IS LIGHT

TRUTH IS A STAR



Stars function as epistemological anchors. They orient the lyrical persona toward meaning without dissolving existential tension. The coexistence of darkness and starlight reflects dialectical balance.

3. Forest as Cognitive Labyrinth

The forest image constructs an interior topography of the psyche. Dense vegetation parallels layered consciousness.

Conceptual mapping:

MIND IS A FOREST

THOUGHT IS A PATH

The forest is neither purely threatening nor purely nurturing. It symbolizes ambiguity – growth intertwined with confusion. This duality mirrors existential struggle.

4. Sky as Infinite Consciousness. Beyond night and stars lies the sky, representing infinity and metaphysical expansion. The sky symbolizes the limitless dimension of human questioning.

Mapping:

CONSCIOUSNESS IS SKY

The sky's boundlessness intensifies the poem's philosophical scale.

5. Light-Darkness Dialectic. A central structural finding is the binary opposition between darkness and light. Rather than presenting conflict, the poem integrates them into a transformative cycle.

Darkness → Reflection

Light → Insight

This cyclical structure suggests existential growth rather than despair.

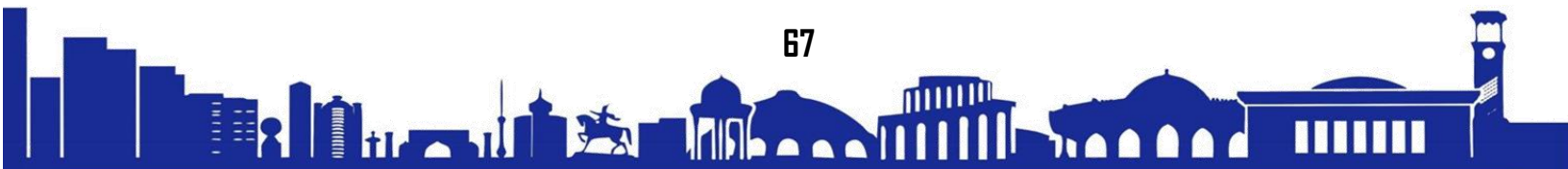
Discussion. The analysis confirms that nature imagery in Tungi Nigoh operates as a unified symbolic system. Night, stars, forest, and sky collectively construct an existential landscape.

1. Cognitive Function. Metaphors serve as conceptual frameworks organizing abstract thought. They transform emotional states into spatial and visual forms, enabling cognitive accessibility.

2. Philosophical Implications. The poem reflects existential themes:

Isolation

Freedom





Search for meaning

However, unlike nihilistic existentialism, Vohidov integrates spiritual optimism through persistent starlight symbolism.

3. Cultural Dimension. While resonating with global poetic traditions, the imagery remains culturally grounded. Uzbek poetic heritage frequently associates night with contemplation and divine reflection.

4. Structural Integrity. Nature metaphors are not ornamental; they structure the poem's architecture. Each image interacts within an interconnected semantic network.

Theoretical Implications. This study demonstrates the applicability of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Central Asian poetry. It also expands existential literary analysis beyond Western frameworks, showing how non-Western poetic traditions articulate universal ontological concerns.

Limitations. The research is limited to qualitative interpretation of a single poem. Future research may incorporate corpus stylistics or comparative studies with other Uzbek poets.

Conclusion. This extended analysis confirms that nature metaphors in Tungi Nigoh are central to its existential discourse. Through symbolic constructions of night, stars, forest, and sky, Erkin Vohidov transforms landscape into ontology.

Nature functions as:

Emotional projection

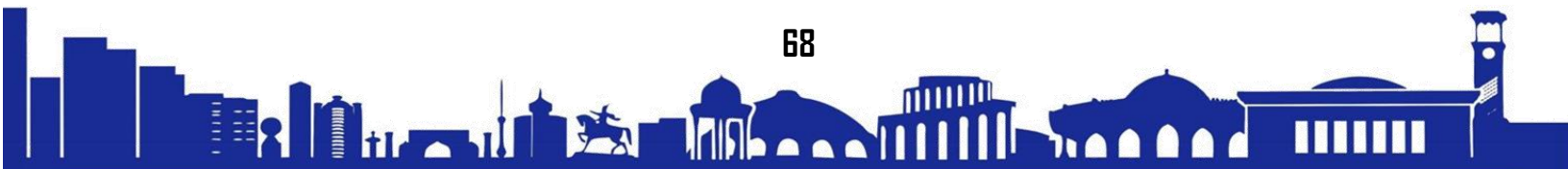
Cognitive structuring device

Philosophical mediator

The poem ultimately portrays existence as a dynamic interplay between darkness and illumination. Through metaphorical language, Vohidov articulates a profound meditation on human consciousness, hope, and the search for meaning.

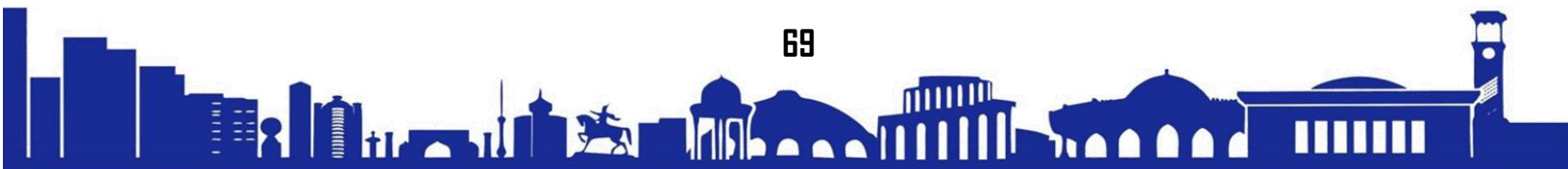
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