WORLD SCIENCE PUBLISHING
LONDON LTD
LONDON
London International Monthly Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation

THE CHRONOTOPE OF VIRTUAL REALITY IN UZBEK AND WESTERN PROSE: COMPARATIVE FEATURES OF SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS

Ergasheva Aziza Erkin qizi
Lecturer at Tashkent University of Humanities
Graduate of the Master's Program at New Uzbekistan University
DOI:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23063681

Abstract: The concept of chronotope, introduced into literary theory by Mikhail Bakhtin, provides an effective methodological framework for examining the interaction of spatial and temporal dimensions in narrative discourse. In contemporary literary studies, the development of digital culture and virtual environments has expanded the traditional understanding of literary space and time. This thesis examines the chronotope of virtual reality in Uzbek and Western prose from a comparative perspective, focusing on the transformation of spatial organization, temporal experience, narrative immersion, and the relationship between physical and imagined environments. The study combines Bakhtinian chronotope theory with approaches to narrative temporality, digital poetics, electronic literature, and virtual narrative experience. Western prose and digital narrative practices demonstrate an increasing tendency toward fragmented, multidimensional, interactive, and non-linear spatial-temporal structures. Uzbek prose, while historically grounded in culturally specific concepts of place, memory, community, and historical time, increasingly encounters digital forms of narration and new modes of spatial representation. The comparative analysis indicates that virtuality does not eliminate the traditional chronotope but transforms its mechanisms: physical space may become simulated space, chronological sequence may become nonlinear, and the reader may assume a more active role in constructing narrative space-time. The thesis argues that the virtual chronotope represents a significant development in contemporary narratology while retaining important connections with traditional literary models.

Keywords
chronotope, virtual reality, Uzbek prose, Western prose, digital literature, narrative space, narrative time, digital poetics, virtual chronotope, comparative literature, narratology, electronic literature

Introduction

The relationship between time and space constitutes one of the fundamental problems of literary theory. Mikhail Bakhtin defined the chronotope as the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships artistically expressed in literature [1, pp. 84–85]. His concept demonstrates that time and space should not be examined as completely independent categories because their interaction determines the organization of narrative events, characters, genres, and meanings.

The concept has acquired new significance with the development of digital technologies. Contemporary electronic literature, interactive fiction, computer games, hypertext narratives, and virtual environments have created narrative structures in which the reader can experience space through navigation and, in some cases, influence the sequence of events [2, pp. 1–7]. Marie-Laure Ryan emphasizes immersion and interactivity as central dimensions of contemporary virtual narrative experience [3, pp. 14–17].

The problem is particularly relevant for comparative literary studies because different literary traditions organize narrative space and time according to historically and culturally specific principles.

© 2026 London International Monthly Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation. All Rights Reserved.

Uzbek prose contains strong connections between geographical space, historical memory, family, community, cultural traditions, and social experience. Abdulla Qodiriy's historical novels, for example, construct narrative space through the interaction of individual experience and historical reality [4, pp. 117–122]. Western prose, especially modernist, postmodernist, and contemporary experimental writing, has extensively developed fragmented, subjective, nonlinear, and multilayered representations of time and space.

The emergence of virtual reality introduces another transformation. Virtual space may reproduce physical environments, construct completely imaginary worlds, or combine multiple spatial levels. Similarly, virtual narrative time may remain chronological, become cyclical, or develop through branching and interactive sequences. Therefore, the virtual chronotope should be understood not simply as a technologically produced setting but as a new configuration of narrative time-space.

Methodology

The thesis employs comparative-literary, narratological, and chronotopic approaches. Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope serves as the primary theoretical framework [1, pp. 84–258]. Ricoeur's theory of narrative temporality is used to examine the relationship between temporal experience and narrative configuration [5, pp. 3–30; 6, pp. 7–29]. Genette's distinction between story time and discourse time provides an additional methodological basis for examining anachrony, duration, frequency, and narrative order [7, pp. 21–32].

The analysis also draws upon scholarship concerning electronic literature and digital poetics. Katherine Hayles demonstrates that electronic literature cannot be understood simply as conventional literature transferred to a digital screen because digital textuality changes the material and operational conditions of reading [8, pp. 3–7]. James O'Sullivan similarly emphasizes that digital literary forms should be examined according to their own formal and technological characteristics [9, pp. 1–18].

The comparative dimension involves two interconnected areas: traditional and contemporary Uzbek prose, and Western prose and digital narrative traditions. The purpose is not to claim that all Uzbek or Western texts possess identical characteristics, but to identify typological tendencies in the representation of time and space.

Results

The analysis demonstrates several important characteristics of the virtual chronotope.

First, virtual space differs from conventional literary space through its potential for multidimensional organization. Traditional narrative generally describes space through language, whereas digital and virtual environments can make spatial organization perceptible through visual interfaces, navigation, hyperlinks, or simulated environments [2, pp. 15–22]. Consequently, the reader's relationship with narrative space may become more active.

Second, virtual narrative can transform chronological time. Traditional prose commonly establishes a sequence between narrated events, although modernist and postmodernist literature frequently disrupts chronological order. Digital narratives can extend this principle by allowing alternative sequences, repetitions, branching structures, and interactive progression [3, pp. 8–12].

Third, virtual chronotopes frequently combine several temporal layers. A digital narrative can simultaneously contain the historical time represented by the story, the fictional time experienced by characters, and the real time of the reader's interaction with the digital environment. This produces a multilayered temporal structure.

Fourth, the comparison with Uzbek prose reveals an important continuity. Even before digital technologies, Uzbek literary narratives frequently connected physical locations with historical and

© 2026 London International Monthly Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation. All Rights Reserved.

cultural memory. The chronotope of the house, city, road, marketplace, or historical landscape may function as a carrier of collective memory and identity. Research on Abdulla Qodiriy's prose, for example, identifies historical and folklore chronotopes as important elements of his artistic representation of reality [10, pp. 117–122].

Fifth, Western prose provides numerous examples of narrative experimentation with temporal order and spatial perception. Modernist writers developed techniques such as subjective temporality, interior monologue, fragmentation, and multiple perspectives. Digital literature extends these techniques by introducing hypertextual and interactive structures [8, pp. 7–14].

Analysis and Discussion

The comparative analysis indicates that the principal difference between conventional and virtual chronotopes concerns the degree of spatial and temporal mobility available within the narrative structure.

In Bakhtinian theory, the chronotope functions as an organizing principle through which narrative events become materially and conceptually representable [1, pp. 250–251]. The chronotope therefore has a structural function: it influences plot development, characterization, genre, and meaning. In virtual environments, this principle becomes particularly visible because spatial organization may directly affect the user's movement through the narrative.

The traditional literary reader generally receives spatial information through descriptive language. A virtual narrative can instead make space navigable. The distinction is important because navigation transforms space from an object of description into an environment of interaction. Ryan's analysis of narrative virtuality emphasizes precisely this relationship between immersion and interactivity [3, pp. 14–17].

The transformation of time is equally significant. Ricoeur argues that narrative configures human temporal experience through emplotment [5, pp. 52–87]. In conventional prose, even fragmented narratives remain mediated by textual organization. In interactive digital narratives, however, the sequence of events can partly depend on the reader's choices. This does not mean that all digital narratives are interactive, but interactivity creates a new possibility for temporal organization.

Genette's distinction between story and discourse is useful here. Narrative discourse may rearrange the chronological order of events through analepsis and prolepsis [7, pp. 35–85]. Digital narratives can intensify such rearrangement by enabling users to encounter narrative elements through different paths. Thus, the virtual chronotope can be considered an extension rather than a complete rejection of earlier narrative techniques.

The Uzbek context is especially significant because spatial and temporal organization in Uzbek prose is closely related to historical experience and cultural memory. Qodiriy's O'tkan Kunlar (Days Gone By), first published in the early twentieth century, represents a historical world through concrete social and geographical environments. Scholarship on Qodiriy identifies historical and folklore chronotopes as important components of his literary representation [10, pp. 117–122].

This traditional relationship between place and memory can be compared with the spatial logic of digital environments. In both cases, space is more than a physical background. It can preserve memory, organize social relations, and establish the conditions under which characters and events acquire meaning.

However, the virtual chronotope introduces a fundamental difference: the narrative environment can become computationally generated and potentially change in response to interaction. Digital literary scholarship therefore treats electronic literature as a form whose technological materiality is integral to its aesthetic organization [8, pp. 3–7].

© 2026 London International Monthly Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation. All Rights Reserved.

Recent scholarship on Uzbek digital literature also indicates that digital technologies are becoming increasingly relevant to Uzbek literary criticism, electronic libraries, interactive narratives, and digital humanities [11]. This development creates opportunities for applying chronotopic theory to Uzbek digital texts while also raising methodological questions concerning the relationship between traditional literary categories and technologically mediated forms.

A comparative approach should therefore avoid a simplistic opposition between "Western" and "Uzbek" literature. Both traditions contain considerable internal diversity. Western literature has developed multiple models of spatial and temporal experimentation, while Uzbek literature includes historical, psychological, modernist, postmodern, and increasingly digital forms. The virtual chronotope should consequently be approached as a transnational phenomenon whose specific manifestations depend upon cultural, linguistic, technological, and historical contexts.

One particularly important characteristic is the coexistence of physical and virtual space. A contemporary narrative may begin in a recognizable physical environment and subsequently move into a digital or imagined environment. Such movement creates a threshold chronotope in which the boundaries between actual and simulated worlds become narratively significant. Bakhtin's discussion of the threshold as a chronotopic category provides a useful conceptual basis for examining such transitions [1, pp. 399–402].

The same principle applies to temporal transitions. Digital narratives may connect historical memory with present-day interaction and imagined futures. The result is a layered chronotope in which past, present, and possible futures can coexist within one narrative structure.

Conclusion

The comparative study of Uzbek and Western prose demonstrates that the chronotope remains a productive category for understanding contemporary transformations of narrative space and time. Virtual reality does not abolish traditional literary chronotopes; rather, it modifies their mechanisms and expands their possibilities.

The principal characteristics of the virtual chronotope include multidimensional space, potentially nonlinear time, interaction between physical and simulated environments, and increased reader participation. Western digital literature has developed these possibilities through hypertext, interactive fiction, literary games, and other electronic forms. Uzbek literature, meanwhile, provides a strong cultural and historical basis for understanding how space functions as a carrier of memory, identity, and social experience.

The comparative perspective suggests that the transition from conventional to virtual narrative should be understood as a transformation of literary mediation rather than a complete break with the past. Traditional categories such as the road, house, city, threshold, historical landscape, and journey continue to function, but they may acquire digital and interactive dimensions.

Consequently, the virtual chronotope represents an important field for contemporary comparative narratology. Its study can contribute to the development of Uzbek digital literary criticism while placing Uzbek literary experience within broader international discussions of digital poetics, electronic literature, narrative theory, and virtuality.

References

1. Bakhtin, M. M. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press, 1981, pp. 84–258.

© 2026 London International Monthly Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation. All Rights Reserved.

2. Ryan, M.-L. Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 1–22.
3. Ryan, M.-L. Narrative as Virtual Reality 2: Revisiting Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015, pp. 3–32.
4. Merhan, A. "Abdulla Qodiriy'nin Tarihsel Romanları." Çukurova University Journal of Social Sciences Institute, 2007, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 329–342.
5. Ricoeur, P. Time and Narrative, Volume 1. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. University of Chicago Press, 1984, pp. 3–30, 52–87.
6. Ricoeur, P. Time and Narrative, Volume 2. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 7–29, 61–153.
7. Genette, G. Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Cornell University Press, 1980, pp. 21–32, 35–85.
8. Hayles, N. Katherine. Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary. University of Notre Dame Press, 2008, pp. 1–14.
9. O'Sullivan, J. Towards a Digital Poetics: Electronic Literature & Literary Games. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 1–18.
10. Karimova, N. "Folklore Chronotope in the Works of Abdulla Kadiri." Scientific Reports of Fergana State University, 2022, pp. 117–122.
11. Ibragimova, B. "The Role and Problems of Digital Literature in Uzbek Literary Criticism." Multidisciplinary Journal: Fundamental Research Scientific Journal, 2025, Vol. 1, No. 9, pp. 23–27.
12. Valijonova, X. O. "The Evolution of Uzbek Literature in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities." Zamonaviy Ilm-Fan va Tadqiqotlar: Muammo va Yechimlar, 2025, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 34–38.
13. Hayles, N. Katherine. "Electronic Literature: What Is It?" The Electronic Literature Organization, 2007, pp. 1–9.
14. Aarseth, E. J. Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 1–23.
15. Landow, G. P. Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, pp. 1–32.
16. Murray, J. H. Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace. Updated edition. MIT Press, 2017, pp. 1–28.

© 2026 London International Monthly Conference on Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation. All Rights Reserved.