

Date: 9th October-2026

ANIMAL CHARACTERS IN THE WORKS OF JACK LONDON AND NORMUROD NORQOBILOV: A COMPARATIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS

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Abstract: *This article offers a comparative analysis of animal characters in selected works by Jack London and Normurod Norqobilov. The study focuses on London's *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* and on Norqobilov's *Paxmoq*, *Changalzor iti*, and *Ovul oralagan bo'ri*. Rather than treating animals as decorative elements of landscape or as simple allegories of human behaviour, the article examines how they acquire narrative agency, respond to environmental pressure, and reveal the ethical quality of human actions. The comparison shows that both writers construct animals as developing literary subjects whose behaviour changes under the influence of experience and surroundings. At the same time, their artistic emphases are different. London foregrounds adaptation, instinct, hierarchy, freedom, and the tension between wilderness and civilisation, whereas Norqobilov gives particular weight to attachment, vulnerability, loyalty, loss, and moral responsibility toward living beings. The article argues that this difference is not a simple opposition between two national traditions; rather, it reflects two distinct ways of using animal experience to explore human conduct and the place of the non-human world in literature.*

Keywords: *Jack London, Normurod Norqobilov, animal character, animal agency, nature, adaptation, loyalty, human–animal relationship, comparative literature.*

INTRODUCTION

Animal characters occupy a distinctive position in literature because they allow a writer to speak about nature and human behaviour at the same time. In some works, an animal remains part of the setting; in others, it becomes a participant whose actions influence the plot and whose experience shapes the reader's understanding of the fictional world. Jack London and Normurod Norqobilov belong to different literary traditions, yet both writers repeatedly turn to animals when exploring survival, dependence, freedom, cruelty, loyalty, and the limits of human control over nature.

London's dog novels have long attracted attention because *Buck* and *White Fang* are not static symbols. They learn, remember, fear, trust, adapt, and alter their behaviour according to changing circumstances. Modern criticism has therefore moved beyond reading *Buck* only as an allegorical projection of the human world. Loren Glass, for example, argues that London was seriously interested in representing canine cognition and in imagining relations between dogs and humans as relations between separate but evolutionarily connected species [8]. Kenneth K. Brandt likewise reads *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* through adaptation, captivity, freedom, social hierarchy, cooperation, and the capacity of an organism to modify inherited patterns of behaviour [9]. These approaches are useful



Date: 9th October-2026

because they keep the animal character visible as an animal rather than reducing it entirely to a human metaphor.

Normurod Norqobilov's prose develops a comparable interest within an Uzbek cultural and ecological setting. His works are closely associated with mountains, villages, forests, steppe landscapes, hunters, shepherds, dogs, wolves, and other living creatures. Research on his prose notes that nature is not merely a decorative background: it participates in character formation and helps reveal human psychology and ethical attitudes [7]. Bekzod Ashurov's analysis of *Changalzor iti* is especially important in this respect because it treats Qoravoy as a dynamically developing image and examines the dog alongside the human character Tolmas [6]. Thus, Norqobilov's animals also demand attention as literary subjects whose actions and suffering contribute to the meaning of the narrative.

The purpose of this article is to compare the artistic functions of animal characters in the works of London and Norqobilov and to identify both shared principles and significant differences in their representation. The study does not attempt to prove that the two writers use identical aesthetic models. Instead, it asks a narrower question: how do animal characters become centres of narrative meaning, and what aspects of human–nature relations are revealed through their experience?

Materials and methods

The analysis is based on a comparative close reading of London's *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* and Norqobilov's *Paxmoq*, *Changalzor iti*, and *Ovul oralagan bo'ri* [1–5]. These texts were selected because animals occupy a central rather than episodic place in their narrative structure. Secondary studies on London's canine narration and naturalistic treatment of adaptation, as well as Uzbek scholarship on Norqobilov's animal and nature imagery, are used to clarify the critical context [6–9].

Five analytical criteria guide the comparison: the narrative status of the animal character; the role of environment in shaping behaviour; the influence of human treatment; the relation between instinct and learned experience; and the ethical or philosophical function of the animal image. This framework makes it possible to compare the writers without forcing their works into a single cultural model.

Jack London: adaptation, instinct, and changing environments

In *The Call of the Wild*, Buck's development begins with a violent displacement. He is removed from a secure domestic life in California and taken into the harsh conditions of the Klondike. The change of environment immediately changes the terms of existence. Food, strength, observation, memory, and the ability to learn become matters of survival. Buck's transformation is therefore not a sudden return to an abstract 'wild nature'; it is a gradual process produced by repeated encounters with new conditions, new hierarchies, and different forms of human treatment [1].

One of the most important features of Buck's characterization is that cruelty and care produce different behavioural responses. Violence teaches caution and resistance, while his bond with John Thornton opens another dimension of the character: attachment does not disappear when instinct becomes stronger. London thus avoids a simple equation in which civilisation means affection and wilderness means brutality. Buck carries learned emotional

Date: 9th October-2026

bonds into a life increasingly shaped by the wild. Brandt's discussion of the novel is valuable here because it places adaptation alongside freedom, captivity, hierarchy, cooperation, and altruism rather than treating survival as mere physical dominance [9].

White Fang develops in the opposite spatial direction. He begins in the wilderness and is gradually drawn into human society. Hunger, competition, punishment, and abuse make him suspicious and aggressive; later, a different kind of human relationship allows trust to develop [2]. The structural contrast between Buck and White Fang is therefore central to London's artistic method. One moves from domesticity toward the wild, while the other moves from the wild toward domestic life. Yet both novels insist that behaviour is formed through a continuous interaction between inherited dispositions and experience. An ecocritical reading of London has similarly noted the importance of nature as more than a passive setting in his naturalistic fiction [10].

Normurod Norqobilov: vulnerability, loyalty, and ethical relation

Norqobilov's animal characters emerge from a different landscape and narrative tradition, but they are also more than background figures. In Paxmoq, the life of a young bear separated from its mother brings vulnerability and the struggle for survival to the centre of the story [3]. The animal's experience encourages the reader to see danger, loneliness, and the need for care from a perspective that is not exclusively human. The importance of the episode lies not in turning the bear into a disguised person, but in allowing the animal's condition to reorganise the reader's moral attention.

Changalzor iti provides an even clearer example of dynamic characterization. Qoravoy is not introduced merely to accompany human characters. His behaviour develops within relationships and changing circumstances, and the dog's position in the story helps expose qualities in the people around him. Ashurov's study of the qissa specifically emphasises the dynamic interpretation of Qoravoy and examines the character in relation to Tolmas [6]. This is important for comparative purposes because it brings Norqobilov close to London at the level of narrative technique: in both writers, the animal's response to experience becomes part of characterization.

Ovul oralagan bo'ri adds another dimension. The wolf is connected with loss, attachment, and fidelity, and its experience is placed beside human emotional experience without erasing the animal's belonging to the natural world [5]. Norqobilov therefore uses proximity between human and animal feeling carefully. The animal may evoke emotions that readers recognise as grief or loyalty, but it does not simply become a person in animal form. This balance is one of the writer's notable artistic strengths.

The ethical dimension of Norqobilov's prose is also visible in the way human behaviour toward animals becomes a measure of character. Compassion, indifference, exploitation, and cruelty are not presented as abstract moral categories; they become visible through concrete relations with living creatures. Research on the writer's landscape imagery similarly argues that nature and the animal world participate in revealing psychological and ethical meaning rather than functioning only as scenery [7].

Comparative discussion



Date: 9th October-2026

The clearest similarity between London and Norqobilov is their refusal to keep animals at the edge of the fictional world. Buck, White Fang, Paxmoq, Qoravoy, and the wolf of Ovul oralagan bo'ri all react to circumstances and enter meaningful relationships. Their actions carry consequences, and their behaviour is not presented as completely fixed. In this sense, the animals possess narrative agency: they do not simply illustrate what human characters already know.

A second similarity concerns environment. London's northern landscape imposes extreme physical demands, and adaptation often determines survival. Norqobilov's mountains, rural spaces, forests, and steppe environments are less consistently organised around the same naturalistic pressure, yet the connection between creature and place remains essential. In both writers, removing the animal from its environment changes the meaning of the character.

The most significant difference lies in emphasis. London repeatedly foregrounds the tension between instinct and learned behaviour, wildness and domestication, hierarchy and cooperation. His canine protagonists are shaped by movement between social and ecological systems. Norqobilov, while also depicting struggle and survival, more often draws the reader toward attachment, loyalty, vulnerability, loss, and the ethical consequences of human conduct. This distinction should not be turned into a rigid formula. London also writes about affection and altruism, just as Norqobilov depicts danger and instinct. The difference is one of artistic emphasis rather than absolute separation.

This comparison also helps clarify the role of anthropomorphism. Both writers use emotional and cognitive language that makes animal experience intelligible to human readers. Yet their strongest passages resist complete humanisation. Glass's discussion of canine narration in London is useful precisely because it argues against reading Buck only as an allegory [8]. A similar caution is necessary with Norqobilov. Qoravoy or the wolf may reflect human ethical problems, but their literary value depends on remaining recognisable as non-human beings with their own behavioural logic.

The comparative perspective therefore reveals a broader point: animal characterization can test the limits of human-centred reading. When an animal is given memory, reaction, attachment, and a changing relation to its surroundings, the reader is asked to consider not only what the animal symbolises for people, but also what human actions look like when viewed through their effects on another living creature.

CONCLUSION

The works of Jack London and Normurod Norqobilov show that animal characters can carry a complex narrative and philosophical load. In London, Buck and White Fang are shaped through adaptation, instinct, experience, violence, care, captivity, and freedom. Their opposite movements between domestic and wild environments allow the writer to examine how behaviour changes under pressure. In Norqobilov, animal characters such as Paxmoq, Qoravoy, and the wolf in Ovul oralagan bo'ri bring questions of vulnerability, loyalty, loss, and human responsibility into the centre of the narrative.

The central result of the comparison is that both writers create animals as developing literary subjects rather than decorative figures, but they employ this technique for somewhat



Date: 9th October-2026

different artistic purposes. London's model is more strongly connected with naturalistic questions of environment, adaptation, and the instinct–experience relationship; Norqobilov's prose places greater emphasis on ethical and emotional relations within a recognisably Uzbek natural and cultural landscape. Reading the two writers together therefore broadens the study of animal characters beyond symbolism alone and shows how literature can use non-human experience to reconsider human behaviour.

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