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**ALEKSANDR FAYNBERG: A POETIC CONSCIOUSNESS BRIDGING
CULTURES**

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Abstract. Aleksandr Arkadevich Faynberg (1939–2009) was a prominent Soviet and Uzbek poet, translator, and screenwriter whose creative legacy occupies a unique position between Russian and Uzbek literary traditions. This article examines Faynberg’s poetic worldview through selected English translations of his works, focusing on themes of existential autonomy, alienation, memory, and cultural mediation. Through close textual analysis, the study demonstrates how Faynberg’s poetry constructs symbolic landscapes that reflect both personal and collective experience. His legacy is evaluated as a cultural bridge that transcends linguistic and national boundaries.

Keywords. Aleksandr Faynberg; Uzbek literature; Soviet poetry; cultural identity; existential autonomy; poetic symbolism; translation studies; literary mediation

Introduction. Aleksandr Arkadevich Faynberg stands among the most intellectually refined figures of late Soviet and modern Uzbek literature. Born in Tashkent in 1939 to Russian parents, he grew up within a multicultural environment that shaped his dual literary consciousness. Although Russian by ethnicity, Faynberg considered Uzbekistan his spiritual homeland, and this dual belonging profoundly influenced his poetic voice.

His work synthesizes Russian philosophical lyricism with Central Asian imagery and emotional tonality. Rather than aligning with rigid ideological frameworks, Faynberg’s poetry explores moral and existential dilemmas through metaphor, atmosphere, and symbolic spatial structures. The following poems illustrate the depth and complexity of his artistic vision.

Existential Autonomy and Moral Equilibrium: “Dependence”

One of Faynberg’s most philosophically charged poems is “*Dependence*,” which reflects on autonomy within hierarchical systems.

Dependence

To depend on yourself — a lucky chance,
God forbid you bow to another’s stance.

From gates you’ll get a turning blow,
Or punches in the face with no clear foe.



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Depend on the slaves? No better, friend.
They'll bring you bread with poison spread,
They'll trample gardens out of spite,
Or torch your house while you're in bed.
Now tell me, where have you arrived?
Left's a slave, right's the lord contrived,
And in the middle, rowan by the fence,
A quiet place without pretense.

This poem constructs a moral landscape divided between domination and submission. The imagery of “gates” suggests institutional authority, while the faceless violence reflects systemic oppression rather than individual conflict. Faynberg challenges simplistic moral binaries by portraying both master and slave as ethically compromised.

The poisoned bread becomes a powerful metaphor for corrupted reciprocity — help contaminated by resentment. In rejecting both extremes, the poem introduces the “rowan by the fence” as a symbol of moral independence. Positioned in the middle, the rowan embodies inner sovereignty and ethical balance. Thus, the poem advances a central philosophical claim: authentic freedom exists not in power structures but in internal integrity.

Alienation and the Machinery of Modern Life: “The Rain Has Gone Mad”

Faynberg’s exploration of existential isolation becomes even more vivid in “*The Rain Has Gone Mad.*”

The Rain Has Gone Mad

The rain has gone mad—no dawn will break,
Headlights rush on down the lonely lane.
Oh, just one car—please, a chance to take,
From the night, carry me away again.
Someone—anyone—I beg, I’m kind,
Can’t vanish lost among the woods so deep.
Wheels on concrete splash cold rain behind,
Answering my cries with sprays that sweep.
I shout aloud, though voice is weak and torn,
Cursing darkly—God, forgive my plea.
Though today I’m lost, unseen, forlorn,
Tomorrow I’ll be needed on the journey.
The lights lash harsh across my weary eyes,
Cars roar by, a mass that never ends.
Within my heart, beneath the stormy skies,
A wall of rain, cold gusts that wind sends.
It falls in torrents, steep and slow it flows,
While I stand wiping sweat across my brow.



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The cars speed past—as every traveler knows—
The road is fate, repeating here and now.

In this poem, rain operates as a metaphysical force rather than a natural phenomenon. It symbolizes emotional suffocation and existential confusion. The rushing cars represent modern society — mechanized, indifferent, and relentless.

The repetition of pleas underscores vulnerability within impersonal systems. The striking line “The road is fate” transforms physical movement into philosophical determinism. Yet the poem resists despair. The assertion that “Tomorrow I’ll be needed” introduces resilience. Faynberg balances alienation with quiet endurance, affirming human persistence despite systemic indifference.

Memory, Cyclical Time, and Becoming: “Velodromes”

If “Dependence” examines moral autonomy and “The Rain Has Gone Mad” portrays existential alienation, “*Velodromes*” meditates on time, memory, and transformation.

Velodromes

Behind our stadium, the velodromes lie,
And in November, especially at night,
They drift like rivers in a misty sky,
With neither start nor end in sight.
They flow through cold and vast expanse,
Through autumn’s blurred and distant plains.
Above, like medals yellow, dance
Lonely traffic lights in steady chains.
Do you remember dusk and mud’s embrace?
Not knowing yet what racing meant,
A girl alone learned how to face
Her tears, dreaming of triumph’s scent.
On moonlit squares, the slabs would guide,
In darkened alleys near the fence,
She once, adjusting her sweater wide,
Said to me with quiet defense: — “No need.”
And now again, wild and strange,
She walks like dawn’s first tender light.
Emerging from the fog’s long range,
Pushing forward her bike in sight.
And after her, like rivers wide,
On cold, rainy nights they flow away—
Velodromes that neither hide
Their endless path nor break of day.



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The velodrome's circular structure symbolizes cyclical temporality. Unlike linear progress, the circle implies repetition and return. November mist enhances the atmosphere of transition, where memory and present moment intertwine.

The girl in the poem embodies aspiration shaped by vulnerability. Her evolution from dreamer to determined figure pushing her bicycle suggests maturation. The recurring motif of flow connects personal growth to temporal continuity. Faynberg's meditation here is gentle yet profound: identity develops within patterns that seem repetitive but produce transformation.

Cultural Mediation and Legacy

Faynberg's contributions extend beyond poetry. As a translator, he introduced Uzbek classics to Russian-speaking audiences, preserving their emotional nuance while adapting them linguistically. His work in cinema further demonstrated his commitment to psychological depth and moral complexity.

Awarded the title of People's Poet of Uzbekistan and honored with the Pushkin Medal, Faynberg's achievements reflect his role as a cultural mediator. He did not merely coexist between two traditions — he actively connected them.

Conclusion

Aleksandr Faynberg's poetry articulates a consciousness positioned between cultures, ideologies, and historical transitions. Through symbolic landscapes of gates, storms, roads, and velodromes, he examines autonomy, alienation, and the passage of time. His work affirms inner sovereignty and human resilience amid systemic pressures.

As a poet, translator, and screenwriter, Faynberg built bridges not only between Russian and Uzbek literatures, but between individuals navigating shared existential realities. His voice remains a testament to literature's enduring power to transcend boundaries and illuminate the human condition.

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