

IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION IN ERKIN A'ZAM'S "THE DIN"**Saydaliyeva Aziza Ergashevna**

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Annotation: This article examines Erkin A'zam's novella *The Din* as a reflection of the social and ideological changes of the post-Soviet period in Uzbekistan. It focuses on themes of identity, memory, and individual consciousness during the turbulent 1990s. The study analyzes the protagonist's experience as a representation of broader historical transformation and highlights the author's use of psychological realism and multi-layered narrative structure. The article concludes that *The Din* combines national context with universal human issues, offering insight into personal and social change.

Keywords: Erkin A'zam, *The Din*, Uzbek literature, post-Soviet literature, identity, memory, social change, historical transformation, individual consciousness, psychological realism.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola Erkin A'zamning "Shovqin" romanini post-sovet davrida O'zbekistonda yuz bergan ijtimoiy va mafkuraviy o'zgarishlarning badiiy ifodasi sifatida tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqotda 1990-yillardagi murakkab tarixiy jarayonlar fonida shaxsiyat, xotira va individual ong mavzulari ko'rib chiqiladi. Asarda bosh qahramon kechinmalari orqali keng ijtimoiy o'zgarishlar aks ettiriladi hamda muallifning psixologik realizm va ko'p qatlamli narrativ uslubdan foydalanishi yoritiladi. Maqola "Shovqin" asarining milliy va umuminsoniy qadriyatlarini uyg'unlashtirgan holda shaxs va jamiyat o'rtasidagi munosabatlarni ochib berishini ta'kidlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: Erkin A'zam, "Shovqin", o'zbek adabiyoti, post-sovet adabiyoti, shaxsiyat, xotira, ijtimoiy o'zgarish, tarixiy transformatsiya, individual ong, psixologik realizm.

Аннотация: Данная статья рассматривает повесть Эркина А'зама «Шум» как художественное отражение социальных и идеологических изменений постсоветского периода в Узбекистане. Исследование анализирует темы идентичности, памяти и индивидуального сознания на фоне сложных исторических процессов 1990-х годов. Через опыт главного героя раскрываются широкие общественные трансформации, а также особенности психологического реализма и многослойной повествовательной структуры автора. Подчеркивается, что «Шум» сочетает национальные и универсальные ценности, раскрывая отношения между личностью и обществом.

Ключевые слова: Эркин А'зам, «Шум», узбекская литература, постсоветская литература, идентичность, память, социальные изменения, историческая трансформация, индивидуальное сознание, психологический реализм.

Erkin A'zam is one of the most prominent representatives of contemporary Uzbek literature, whose works are distinguished by their deep humanism, psychological insight, and attention to social change. His novella *The Din* reflects the complex realities of the post-Soviet transition period, particularly the turbulent 1990s, when Uzbekistan experienced profound ideological, cultural, and social transformations. The collapse of Soviet ideological structures created uncertainty and moral reorientation, which significantly influenced individual and collective consciousness. In this context, A'zam explores the relationship between the individual and society, focusing on themes of identity, memory, and personal freedom. The novella is notable



for its psychological realism, multi-layered narrative structure, and critical departure from the conventions of socialist realism. This article analyzes *The Din* as a literary representation of historical transformation and its impact on human experience in modern Uzbek society.

Erkin A'zam, an outstanding contemporary writer, playwright, and screenwriter, occupies a prominent place in modern Uzbek literature. Widely regarded as one of the most talented and influential literary figures of his generation, he has made a substantial contribution to the cultural and intellectual development of independent Uzbekistan through his diverse creative achievements.

Born in 1950 in the picturesque mountainous region of Baysun District, Erkin A'zam developed an early interest in literature and journalism. He pursued higher education at Tashkent State University, where he studied journalism, a discipline that would later shape both his literary style and professional career. His academic training provided him with a strong foundation for exploring social realities and human experiences with remarkable insight and artistic sensitivity.

Throughout his professional life, A'zam has been actively engaged in journalism, publishing, and cultural affairs. He worked for the national radio service and contributed to such respected literary magazines as *Guliston* and *Yoshlik*. His experience in the publishing sector was further enriched through his work at Ghafur Gulom Publishing House, one of the country's leading literary institutions. These positions allowed him to play an important role in promoting literature and fostering intellectual discourse within Uzbekistan.

In addition to his literary and editorial activities, Erkin A'zam held significant responsibilities within the media sphere. He served as First Deputy Director of the Uzbekistan National Information Agency, where he contributed to the development of the national information and communication landscape. His leadership and professional expertise earned him recognition as a respected public intellectual and cultural figure.

Since 1994, A'zam has served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Tafakkur*, a distinguished magazine devoted to social, cultural, and literary issues. Under his editorial guidance, the publication has gained a reputation as one of the most widely read and intellectually influential periodicals in Uzbekistan. Highly valued by the country's intelligentsia, *Tafakkur* has become an important platform for thoughtful discussion, literary criticism, and the exchange of ideas on contemporary social and cultural developments.

As a creative writer, Erkin A'zam has authored more than ten books that have earned both critical acclaim and popular appreciation. His works are distinguished by their psychological depth, vivid characterization, and thoughtful engagement with the moral and social questions of modern life. Among his notable achievements is the receipt of the Award of Uzbekistan's Youth Union for *Otoy's Date of Birth*, a work that further established his reputation as a significant voice in Uzbek literature. Literary scholars have noted that Erkin A'zam's prose departs from many conventions of socialist realism by presenting psychologically complex characters and multifaceted social realities rather than ideologically predetermined models of behavior (Allworth, 1990; Karimov, 2018).

A'zam's artistic accomplishments extend beyond prose into the field of cinema. As a screenwriter, he has participated in the creation of several feature films, including *Dilkiroij*, *Zabarjad*, and *Parizod*. These films have attracted considerable attention from audiences and critics alike, demonstrating the author's ability to translate his literary vision into compelling cinematic narratives. Productions based on his scripts have received recognition and awards at both national and international film festivals, reflecting the universal appeal of his storytelling and artistic perspective.

His contribution to dramatic literature has been equally noteworthy. Plays written by Erkin A'zam have been successfully staged in theatres throughout Uzbekistan, earning appreciation for their artistic quality, intellectual depth, and relevance to contemporary social concerns. Through



his work as a playwright, he has enriched the national theatrical tradition and expanded the possibilities of modern Uzbek drama.

Novelist and screenwriter Erkin A'zam is one of the most prominent representatives of contemporary Uzbek literature today, with ideas of humanism, liberty and freedom of thought playing a key role in his works.

A'zam not only captures the peculiar characteristics of the Uzbek people, but also tempers his plays and prose with an acute understanding of human nature, a broad-minded, inquisitive worldview and an unmistakable appreciation of spiritual values.

In his novellas and short stories, the author has created a cast of unique national characters whose life stories faithfully and fearlessly reflect the complex relations between society and the individual, particularly over the recent tumultuous decades. As such, A'zam's work brings a welcome breath of fresh air to modern-day Uzbek literature.

In May 2013, the Permanent Delegation of Uzbekistan to UNESCO hosted a presentation of the film "Heaven is my Abode" in the Diplomatic Academy of Paris. The feature film, which is based on a script written by Erkin A'zam, has won broad critical acclaim at many international film festivals.

This event marked the beginning of our cooperation with the author. Today it is a great honor for us to present this English translation of Erkin A'zam's selected prose, soon to be published in French, too. This edition comprises two novellas and two short stories which lead the reader to a deeper understanding of how the external, political and economic transformations of recent history were reflected in the consciousness, thoughts and lives of Uzbek people. It is our hope that this book will enable the international audience to learn more about the scope and style of contemporary spark interest in the rich tradition, Uzbek literature, as well as culture and spiritual values of our people.

Erkin A'zam's works, which skillfully convey the ideas of humanism and the pursuit of spiritual freedom, have undoubtedly enriched Uzbek literature, earning the author our people's sincere love and respect. We hope he will soon find a similar place in the hearts of Western readers, too.

Erkin A'zam is widely recognized as one of the most distinguished representatives of contemporary Uzbek literature. As a novelist, playwright, and screenwriter, he has made a significant contribution to the development of modern Uzbek literary and cultural life. The central themes of his works: humanism, personal liberty, freedom of thought, and spiritual integrity have earned him a respected place among readers and literary critics alike.

A'zam's creative achievement lies not only in his vivid depiction of the unique characteristics of the Uzbek people but also in his profound understanding of universal human experiences. His prose and dramatic works demonstrate a keen awareness of human nature, revealing the complexities of individual emotions, aspirations, and moral dilemmas. At the same time, his writing reflects a broad intellectual outlook, a spirit of inquiry, and a deep appreciation for ethical and spiritual values that transcend national boundaries.

Throughout his novellas and short stories, Erkin A'zam has created a rich gallery of memorable characters whose lives illustrate the challenges and contradictions of their time. These characters are portrayed with authenticity and psychological depth, allowing readers to engage closely with their personal struggles and aspirations. Through their experiences, the author explores the intricate relationship between society and the individual, particularly during the period of profound political, economic, and social changes that have shaped recent decades. By addressing these transformations through the lens of individual lives, A'zam succeeds in presenting a nuanced and compelling picture of contemporary Uzbek society.

One of the most remarkable aspects of A'zam's literary style is his ability to combine national specificity with universal relevance. While his works are firmly rooted in Uzbek culture, traditions, and social realities, they also address themes that resonate with readers across



different cultures and backgrounds. Questions of identity, human dignity, moral responsibility, and the search for personal freedom are explored with sensitivity and insight, making his writings accessible to an international audience. In this regard, his contribution has brought a distinctive and refreshing voice to modern Uzbek literature.

Erkin A'zam's creative activities extend beyond literature into the field of cinema. In May 2013, the Permanent Delegation of Uzbekistan to UNESCO organized a presentation of the film *Heaven is my Abode* at the Diplomatic Academy of Paris. Based on a script written by Erkin A'zam, the feature film received considerable recognition and critical acclaim at numerous international film festivals. The event not only introduced foreign audiences to an important work of Uzbek cinema but also marked the beginning of a fruitful cultural collaboration with the author.

It is therefore a great privilege to present this English translation of Erkin A'zam's selected prose, which is also scheduled for publication in French. The collection includes two novellas and two short stories that offer valuable insights into the experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of Uzbek people during a period of significant historical transformation. Through these carefully selected works, readers are invited to examine how external political and economic changes influenced everyday life, social relationships, and individual consciousness.

This volume seeks to contribute to a broader international understanding of contemporary Uzbek literature and culture. Beyond their literary merit, the works included in this collection provide an opportunity to explore the spiritual values, cultural traditions, and intellectual perspectives that continue to shape Uzbek society. They serve as a bridge between cultures, encouraging dialogue and fostering greater appreciation of Uzbekistan's rich literary heritage.

Through his masterful treatment of humanistic ideals and his thoughtful exploration of spiritual freedom, Erkin A'zam has enriched Uzbek literature and earned the admiration and respect of generations of readers. His works continue to inspire reflection on the fundamental values that define human existence. It is our sincere hope that this translation will introduce his literary achievements to a wider audience and that readers throughout the world will discover in his writings the same depth of thought, artistic excellence, and humanity that have long been appreciated in Uzbekistan.

Taken together, Erkin A'zam's achievements as a writer, editor, journalist, screenwriter, and playwright testify to his exceptional talent and enduring influence on Uzbek culture. His creative legacy continues to inspire readers, audiences, and scholars, securing his place among the most respected literary figures of contemporary Uzbekistan.

The *Din* is one of Erkin A'zam's most thought-provoking novellas, portraying the life and experiences of an Uzbek playwright during one of the most turbulent periods in recent history: the dramatic and uncertain years of the 1990s. Set against the backdrop of profound political, social, and ideological transformation, the work explores the impact of historical change on individual consciousness and human relationships. *Din* portrays the experiences of an Uzbek playwright during the turbulent transition from the Soviet era to independence. The novella reflects the ideological uncertainty and social transformation that characterized the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods, particularly during the years of perestroika and the 1990s (Khalid, 2015; A'zam, 2013).

For several decades, the Soviet system had sought to construct a unified society founded on communist ideology. In pursuing this goal, traditional cultural values and religious beliefs were often marginalized or openly rejected in favor of a standardized Soviet identity characterized by a common language, worldview, and social order. Yet the collapse of this ideological framework during the era of perestroika exposed deep contradictions within society, generating uncertainty, conflict, and, in many cases, personal tragedy. Against this historical background, *The Din* examines the challenges faced by individuals attempting to redefine themselves in a rapidly changing world.



At the center of the narrative stands a creative intellectual whose personal experiences reflect the broader transformations taking place around him. Through the protagonist's reflections, relationships, and struggles, the novella demonstrates that despite political upheavals and competing ideologies, the individual remains unique and irreducible. Human beings continue to experience love, disappointment, loyalty, resentment, hope, and loss in deeply personal ways, regardless of the dominant political doctrines of their age. In this respect, the work presents a powerful affirmation of individual identity and human dignity.

One of the novella's greatest strengths lies in its vivid depiction of the social and cultural atmosphere of the transitional period. Erkin A'zam skillfully captures the uncertainty, aspirations, and anxieties that accompanied the collapse of established systems and the emergence of new realities. At the same time, the work offers valuable insight into the intellectual life of Uzbekistan, presenting a nuanced portrait of writers, artists, and educated professionals confronted with unprecedented social change. The work explores the tension between collective ideological systems and individual identity, emphasizing the resilience of personal emotions, memories, and moral values in times of historical upheaval (A'zam, 2013).

The narrative gains additional depth through the character of Farhad (Fidel) Ramazan, a celebrated screenwriter, honored worker of art, and influential figure within the film industry. His life takes an unexpected turn when he receives two unusual messages from people who once played significant roles in his past: the renowned film director Ravshan Akobirov and Victoria Lagutina, the woman who remains one of the most cherished memories of his youth. Presented with an opportunity to attend the screening of a film based on his screenplay at the Moscow International Film Festival, Farhad embarks on a journey that is both physical and emotional.

His return to the city where he once studied and experienced the passions and uncertainties of youth becomes a journey of self-discovery and remembrance. As he revisits familiar places and encounters fragments of his past, he is forced to confront long-forgotten emotions, unresolved conflicts, and the consequences of choices made many years earlier. The journey transforms into a profound exploration of memory, identity, and the passage of time, revealing the complex relationship between personal history and present reality.

Structurally, the novella is notable for its richness and complexity. The narrative incorporates multiple characters, interconnected stories, and diverse perspectives, creating a multidimensional literary world. This compositional complexity allows the author to explore a broad spectrum of social, philosophical, and psychological issues while maintaining a compelling and engaging narrative. The work resists simple interpretations, offering instead an open-ended and often ambiguous philosophical vision that encourages readers to reflect on the nature of truth, memory, and human experience.

Particularly significant is the novella's departure from the conventions of socialist realism that dominated much of Soviet-era literature. In *The Din*, Erkin A'zam challenges and dismantles many of the ideological and artistic stereotypes that had previously shaped literary representation. The realities of the period are depicted with honesty and critical insight, while characters are presented as complex individuals rather than embodiments of predetermined social or political ideals. This innovative approach marked an important development in contemporary Uzbek prose and contributed to the emergence of new forms of literary expression in the post-Soviet era.

Through its sophisticated narrative structure, psychological depth, and sensitive portrayal of historical transformation, *The Din* stands as an important contribution to modern Uzbek literature. It not only documents a crucial period in the nation's history but also explores universal questions concerning identity, memory, freedom, and the enduring resilience of the human spirit.

In conclusion, Erkin A'zam's *The Din* serves as a significant literary work that captures the essence of social and ideological transformation in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Through the experiences of its characters, the novella reveals the psychological and emotional consequences



of historical change, emphasizing the resilience and individuality of human consciousness. The author's use of psychological realism and complex narrative structure allows for a nuanced exploration of memory, identity, and moral uncertainty in a rapidly changing society. By moving beyond the boundaries of socialist realism, A'zam creates a more authentic and human-centered portrayal of life during a transitional era. Ultimately, *The Din* stands as an important contribution to modern Uzbek literature, offering both national insight and universal reflections on the human condition.

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