



BEYOND POETRY: THE CULTURAL AND LITERARY LEGACY OF ALEKSANDR FAYNBERG

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18981000>

ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 1-mart 2026 yil
Ma'qullandi: 4-mart 2026 yil
Nashr qilindi: 12-mart 2026 yil

KEY WORDS

Aleksandr Faynberg, literary translation, poems, skilled screenwriter, involvement of ecological issues, Tashkent

ABSTRACT

Less known dimensions of Aleksandr Faynberg are discussed in this paper by providing detailed information about each field. Moreover, the poet's role as a cultural bridge between Uzbek and Russian literature is clearly evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

Aleksandr Faynberg (often rendered in English as Alexander Feinberg) is widely recognized as a skilled poet. However, his impact on other fields has been rarely examined. It is true that Aleksandr Faynberg holds a special and irreplaceable place in Uzbekistan's cultural history. He was a poet who became the soul of Tashkent, not merely a poet who lived there. Although many readers are familiar with his name, the breadth and depth of his influence on translation, literature, film, and environmental awareness remain underexplored. Through five lesser-known but distinctive aspects, this piece revisits Faynberg's legacy and reveals him as a public intellectual, cultural bridge, and true son of the city.

As the sole ethnic Russian to receive the honorary title of People's Poet of Uzbekistan, Aleksandr Faynberg achieved an academic distinction that remains unique in Uzbek literary history. In the history of Uzbek literature, no writer has been associated with this title as distinctly as Aleksandr Faynberg. This recognition was both organic and well-deserved, as the poet was a true son of the nation.

Faynberg was born in Tashkent; therefore, his creative perspective was deeply rooted in Uzbekistan. His poetry was full of the city's everyday life, including its mahallas, streets washed clean by rain, and teahouses filled with heartfelt conversations among welcoming, authentic people (Feinberg, 2005; Karimov, 2016). Faynberg did not write about Uzbekistan as a mere observer; he wrote from within it. The cultural codes, emotional rhythms, and moral principles embedded in his verse resonated so strongly with Uzbek readers that many believed he was a native Uzbek poet. Furthermore, his outstanding work demonstrated that art can serve as a bridge between cultures and ethnicities, bringing nations closer together.

1. The Invisible Hand Behind Uzbek Cinema and Animation

Faynberg's contribution to Uzbek culture extended far beyond poetry. He was one of the key, though often uncredited, architects of Uzbek cinema during its most creative period. As a screenwriter, he participated in the creation of more than twenty films, including "The House

Under the Hot Sun," "My Elder Brother," "Tempered in Kandahar," and "The Criminal and the Defenders," which shaped narratives that combined poetic depth with social sensitivity (Yusupov, 2015).

His most enduring influence, however, lies in animation. Faynberg understood that a nation's cultural memory is formed early, through stories told to children. The rhythmic dialogue, lyrical structure, and moral clarity of many classic Uzbek animated films bear the unmistakable imprint of his poetic thinking. Through animation, Faynberg spoke to generations, embedding cultural values not through didactic instruction, but through beauty, humour, and musical language.

In his initiatives as a screenwriter in animated films, the poet's background strongly influenced his scripts, which often included lyrical storytelling, symbolic imagery, philosophical undertones, and humanistic themes. These characteristics made many animated films not only entertaining but also thought-provoking and culturally meaningful. Although the target audience of these animated films was children and youngsters, Aleksandr Faynberg managed to convey deeper messages about kindness and moral values, friendship and courage, cultural traditions, and the beauty of imagination. Many of the animated films based on his scripts can not only be used as entertaining pastimes but also serve as a stimulus for youth to learn literature, ethics, and cultural values. Undoubtedly, this demonstrates the professional excellence and interdisciplinary creativity of the poet.

2. His Outstanding Work in Translation

One of Faynberg's most intellectually demanding achievements was his translation of several Uzbek poets' works into Russian. He translated the poems of Alisher Navoiy, Erkin Vohidov, Abdulla Oripov, and Omon Matjon, making these masterpieces accessible to a wider public. In all his translated work, Navoiy's works, in particular, were essential. Alisher Navoiy's literary works, written in Old Uzbek (Chagatay), are deeply rooted in medieval Eastern philosophy, Sufi symbolism, and complex poetic forms. Translating Navoiy is not a technical task; it is an act of cultural interpretation (Navoi, 1998; Navoi, 2003; Kadyrova, 2018).

However, Faynberg approached this challenge with rare sensitivity. Rather than offering literal translations, he sought to preserve the spirit of Navoiy—the musicality, the metaphysical depth, and the oriental imagery. His translations of Navoiy's ghazals (g'azal) and parts of the Khamsa opened the door of Eastern classical literature to a broader Russian-speaking audience, while maintaining the original's philosophical and aesthetic integrity. In doing so, Faynberg positioned himself as a bridge between civilizations and centuries. In addition, he analyzed the works of leading figures in poetry and translated them into Russian, reflecting his mastery of this field and his respect for cultural values.

4. A Poetic Witness to the Aral Sea Tragedy

Long before environmental discourse entered public and academic agendas, Faynberg addressed ecological catastrophe through poetry. He was among the earliest literary voices to respond to the tragedy of the Aral Sea. In his poems, the Aral was not a statistic or a policy failure; it was a living, suffering being (Faynberg, 1987; Micklin, 2007).

Faynberg's ecological poetry condemns human indifference and challenges anthropocentric arrogance. Nature, in his work, is sacred and morally equal to humanity. This perspective gives his poems timeless relevance, especially in the context of contemporary climate challenges faced by Central Asia. Faynberg did not separate art from responsibility; for him, poetry was a form of ethical engagement with the world. He consistently advocated the idea of holding

nature in equal importance with other concerns. From this early time, he encouraged people to care for the environment and to live cooperatively with it.

5. The Street Poet of Tashkent

Perhaps the most defining feature of Alexander Faynberg's personality was his rejection of isolation. He famously resisted the role of the "cabinet poet"—the intellectual detached from everyday life. Faynberg was a constant presence in the streets of Tashkent: walking through parks, sitting in modest teahouses, and speaking with ordinary people (Feinberg, 2005; Saidov, 2020).

He called himself a "Son of Tashkent" and lived according to that identity. He once stated that he was born in Tashkent, would die in Tashkent, and would eventually become part of its soil. This profound sense of belonging allowed him to capture the city's living voice—the humour, pain, resilience, and warmth of its people—with rare authenticity. His poetry does not observe life from above; it stands at street level, where real voices are heard. The piece known as "Monologue about Tashkent" ("Монолог о Ташкенте") by Faynberg—frequently shared in readings and short films—reflects the poet's heartfelt reflections on his city.

CONCLUSION

Alexander Faynberg's legacy cannot be confined to a single genre or discipline. He was a poet, translator, screenwriter, environmental thinker, and cultural mediator. More importantly, he was a living symbol of coexistence and shared cultural identity. His life and work demonstrate that literature has the power to unite languages, people, and histories. To read Faynberg today is not merely to encounter poetry; it is to walk the streets of Tashkent, hear its voices, and feel its pulse. His work remains a testament to the idea that true cultural belonging is earned through love, service, and unwavering commitment to place.

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