

“PARADOXICAL YOUTH AND MORAL RECKONING: TIME, GUILT, AND SELF-REFLECTION IN ALEKSANDR FAYNBERG’S POETRY”

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Abstract.

This article presents a comprehensive literary and philosophical analysis of Aleksandr Faynberg’s poem that reflects on time, aging, and moral self-assessment. The poem explores the paradox of physical aging accompanied by emotional and spiritual rejuvenation, raising profound questions about fate, guilt, and the ultimate meaning of human life. Through compact yet powerful imagery, Faynberg challenges conventional perceptions of time as a linear and irreversible force. The study examines the poem’s temporal paradoxes, ethical undertones, existential questioning, and poetic form, situating it within the broader context of Faynberg’s humanistic worldview. The analysis demonstrates how personal introspection is transformed into a universal meditation on responsibility, inner growth, and the uncertainty of one’s final destiny.

Keywords: Aleksandr Faynberg, time, aging, existential poetry, guilt, fate, self-reflection, moral philosophy

Introduction.

Aleksandr Faynberg’s poetry is distinguished by its ability to condense complex philosophical ideas into concise lyrical forms. Rather than relying on extensive narratives or elaborate imagery, Faynberg often turns inward, focusing on moments of personal reflection that resonate with universal human experience. Time, moral responsibility, and the inner transformation of the individual are recurring motifs in his work.

The poem beginning with “Nelar ro‘y bermoqda men bilan, bilman” (“I do not know what is happening to me”) is a striking example of Faynberg’s introspective lyricism. In

just a few lines, the poet raises fundamental questions about aging, sin, destiny, and the enigmatic relationship between physical time and inner life. The speaker experiences a paradox: as chronological age increases, the soul seems to grow younger. This article aims to analyze the poem as a philosophical reflection on time and moral self-awareness. By examining its imagery, structure, and rhetorical questions, the study reveals how Faynberg transforms a personal sense of confusion into a broader existential inquiry relevant to readers of all ages.

Time as a Paradoxical Force.

Time in Faynberg's poem is not portrayed as a simple, linear progression. The speaker openly admits confusion: he does not understand what is happening to him, nor whether time has been accelerated or distorted. The metaphor of time "urging the horse forward" suggests movement that is forceful and uncontrollable, emphasizing humanity's limited power over temporal flow.

Yet, this force does not produce the expected outcome. Instead of exhaustion or decline, the speaker feels increasingly youthful. At forty, he feels like thirty; at fifty, only half of fifty. This inversion of expectations creates a paradox that lies at the heart of the poem. Aging, traditionally associated with loss and decay, becomes associated with vitality and inner renewal. Through this paradox, Faynberg questions socially constructed notions of age. He implies that time affects the body and the soul differently, and that spiritual energy may follow laws entirely separate from chronological measurement.

Youthfulness as an Inner State.

The poem's repeated emphasis on feeling younger with each passing year highlights the idea that youth is not merely biological but psychological and spiritual. The speaker's joy and vitality are internal conditions rather than physical attributes.

This conception aligns with a humanistic philosophy in which self-awareness and emotional maturity allow an individual to transcend external limitations. Youthfulness becomes a metaphor for openness to life, curiosity, and emotional intensity. In this sense, growing older does not necessarily mean becoming distant from life; instead, it may lead

to deeper engagement with it. However, Faynberg does not romanticize this condition uncritically. The speaker's joy is accompanied by confusion and anxiety. The paradox of rejuvenation is unsettling rather than comforting, prompting deeper self-examination.

Guilt and Moral Accountability.

One of the most significant shifts in the poem occurs when the speaker turns from time to morality. He wonders what "unimaginable mistake" he may have committed and acknowledges that his sins are shaping his destiny. This transition introduces an ethical dimension that complicates the earlier sense of joy.

The poem suggests that inner vitality does not absolve one of moral responsibility. On the contrary, increased self-awareness may intensify feelings of guilt and accountability. As the speaker grows spiritually younger, he becomes more conscious of his past actions and their consequences. Faynberg thus presents guilt not as a destructive force but as an integral part of ethical self-reflection. It is through acknowledging one's moral imperfections that deeper understanding and growth become possible.

Fate and the Question of the End.

The poem culminates in a direct and unsettling question: "My friend, what awaits me at the end?" This question transforms the poem from a reflection on aging into a meditation on destiny and mortality.

Importantly, the speaker does not ask about death in physical terms. Instead, he questions the moral and existential outcome of his life journey. The uncertainty of the ending underscores the human condition itself: no matter how youthful or reflective one becomes, the final meaning of one's life remains unknown. By addressing a "friend," the speaker extends his private doubts to the reader, inviting shared contemplation. This rhetorical strategy universalizes the poem's concerns, making them applicable to anyone who has ever questioned the direction of their life.

Poetic Form and Stylistic Restraint.

Stylistically, the poem is notable for its simplicity and precision. Faynberg avoids elaborate metaphors or extended descriptions, relying instead on clear statements and numerical contrasts. This restraint enhances the poem's philosophical weight, allowing ideas to emerge without distraction. The balanced structure of the lines mirrors the poem's thematic balance between joy and doubt, youth and guilt, confidence and uncertainty. The conversational tone, particularly in the final address to a "friend," reinforces the poem's sincerity and emotional accessibility.

The Universal Dimension of Personal Reflection.

Although deeply personal, the poem transcends autobiography. Its themes—time, aging, guilt, and destiny—are universally relevant. Faynberg demonstrates how individual introspection can illuminate shared human concerns. The speaker's confusion becomes a mirror for the reader's own uncertainties. In this way, the poem functions as both confession and philosophical inquiry, blending emotional honesty with intellectual depth.

Conclusion.

Aleksandr Faynberg's poem offers a profound meditation on the paradoxes of time and human consciousness. By portraying aging as a process of inner rejuvenation accompanied by moral reckoning, the poet challenges conventional assumptions about life's trajectory.

The poem suggests that true growth lies not in escaping time but in engaging with it thoughtfully and ethically. Youthfulness, guilt, and uncertainty coexist, shaping a complex yet deeply human portrait of self-awareness. Ultimately, the poem leaves its central question unanswered, emphasizing that the meaning of one's "end" is not predetermined but continually shaped by reflection, responsibility, and inner transformation. This open-endedness is precisely what gives the poem its enduring philosophical power.

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