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## FACT AND INTERPRETATION IN THE REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICAL FIGURES

**Abstract.** This article analyzes the literary interpretation of historical figures in Uzbek literature. The author explores the influence of political and ideological factors on the depiction of historical personalities in 20th-century Uzbek historical novels, highlighting how state intervention shaped these interpretations. Special attention is given to Javlon Jovliyev's novel "Qo'rqma" ("Do Not Fear"), which presents a bold and renewed perspective on the Jadid era. The study employs historical, comparative-historical, and sociological methods to reveal the subtle balance between fact and interpretation in the portrayal of historical characters.

*Keywords:* Historical figure, literary interpretation, historical novel, problem of fact and interpretation, 20th-century uzbek literature, historical literary method.

The issue of historical accuracy and artistic interpretation in the depiction of historical figures is one of the most relevant directions in contemporary literary studies. This is due to the fact that artistic creation allows for the free selection of historical information and its enrichment through artistic imagination. As a result, historical novels often reflect the author's personal perspective, and the portrayal of historical figures or events is inherently interpretive in nature. While purely historical works aim to reconstruct factual history, literary works present history as interpreted and reimagined by the author.

The English scholar Georg Lukács writes the following regarding the form of the historical novel: "The primary task of the historical novel is not to retell great historical events, but to create a poetic image of the individuals who participated in these events. As a result, we must come to better understand how historical figures thought, felt, and acted in reality... Therefore, the historical novel, through artistic means, demonstrates that the historical conditions and characters

genuinely existed as such” [1]. According to Lukács, the historical novel demands that the author pay close attention to both general and specific processes characteristic of the historical period being portrayed.

Russian scholar M. M. Bakhtin, in his research on the characteristics of historical novels, emphasizes several key features of such works: the merging of historical and personal life; the overcoming of temporal abstraction and achieving a sense of temporal universality (i.e., not merely remembering the past in the present, but experiencing the past as present); the integration of different historical periods (as seen, for example, in Walter Scott’s novels, which combine national, dynastic, and social histories); and the synthesis and transformation of various literary traditions such as the gothic novel, biographical fiction, and historical drama [2].

Historian E. V. Kolodinskaya notes that in recent years, scientific works about the past increasingly employ artistic techniques, thereby bringing the discipline of history closer to literature [3]. In the process of organizing historical facts in a coherent narrative, the historian inevitably resorts to imaginative reconstruction. Consequently, to fill the gaps between documented facts, authors create interpretive accounts, using figurative language and narrative strategies to portray historical figures based on selected evidence. This allows historical characters to be revived in a vivid manner, often leading to a wider readership than traditional historical texts.

The growing popularity of historical fiction in recent years and the increasing demand for such literature have led to a rising tendency within historical scholarship to draw upon artistic narratives. As a result, the boundary between historiography and historical prose is becoming increasingly blurred. This challenge in historiography, in turn, contributes to the development of literary treatments of history and fosters the progress of historical fiction as a genre.

It is well known that the years of independence in Uzbekistan have prompted a return to the true essence of historical inquiry, necessitating a reassessment of

historical figures and events. The tendency observed in 20th-century historical prose to reinterpret history in line with political ideologies of the time led to many misconceptions regarding the lives, activities, and creative legacies of historical personalities. These misinterpretations have gradually been corrected thanks to the opportunities afforded by independence. It must be emphasized that the issue of historical accuracy and artistic interpretation is inherent to both academic and literary texts. In scholarly writing, the interpretation of facts demands extreme caution and precision from the author. In contrast, in literary composition, interpretation serves as a powerful tool that allows the writer to express their artistic vision freely and to showcase their creative talent. While a historian's freedom to reinterpret facts in a way that contradicts established evidence constitutes a distortion of historical truth, a writer's artistic interpretation often enhances the appeal of a literary work and shapes public opinion on the subject. Through interpretation, the creative writer can reveal subtle aspects of lived reality that might otherwise remain unnoticed by the general public.

Therefore, writers are granted certain "creative liberties" when engaging with historical material:

- the supplementation of historical events with imaginative details that harmonize artistic fiction with historical reality;
- the selective emphasis on particular events from the chain of historical occurrences that align with the author's intention;
- the reflection of the author's personal evaluation and attitude toward historical facts within the narrative.

Azerbaijani literary scholar S. Sh. Sharifova describes interpretation in historical fiction as a dynamic phenomenon. According to her, interpretation evolves as public opinion toward a given historical fact or figure changes [4]. We support this view. Perceptions of historical events and personalities, and society's relationship with their legacy, can shift over time. For instance, in the early 20th century, the activities of the Jadids—a group of reform-minded intellectuals—

were later condemned in the second half of the century due to ideological pressures. The works of Jadid writers were banned, their schools, theaters, newspapers, and journals were shut down, and their textbooks were prohibited. However, during the independence period, public perception of the Jadids changed for the better. Historians and literary scholars began to study their socio-political activities and literary output in depth. The works of Fitrat, Cholpon, A.Avloni, Behbudi, A.Qodiriy, Sidqiy Khondaliqi, Ibrat, Ajziy, Sofizoda, F.Khojayev, and Munavvarqori were republished and included in educational curricula. By the late 1990s, a new wave of scholarly interest in the Jadid movement emerged, and specialists in the field of Jadid studies began to appear.

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed, during which time the lives, works, and tragic fates of the Jadid movement's members have been deeply researched using archival evidence. As a result, the public has gained a clearer and more accurate understanding of these reformers as figures who genuinely cared about the fate of the nation. Their legacy is now more fully appreciated, and modern perceptions of the socio-political climate of their era have become more nuanced. This reassessment has led to the emergence of new public narratives about the Jadids. Since the 2020s, there has been a noticeable surge in interest—especially among youth—in studying and emulating the ideas of the Jadids, empathizing with their fate, seeking justice for their repression, and drawing broader lessons from their experience.

It was within this context that Javlon Jovliyev's novel "Qo'rqma" ("Do Not Be Afraid"), completed in the autumn of 2020, was born as a product of this new interpretive approach. The novel resonated deeply with readers and remained one of the most widely sold books in Uzbekistan for several years. In addition to capturing the new public discourse around the era's events, "Qo'rqma" offers an emotionally powerful reinterpretation of history and does not shy away from implicating those responsible for past tragedies. The novel portrays the fate of 72 students who, inspired by the Jadid movement, were sent abroad to receive

modern education with the hope that they would one day serve the advancement of their nation. Rather than adhering to a traditional linear narrative, the author deviates from convention and instead focuses on identifying those responsible for the impending tragedy. In this sense, the protagonist of the novel is not an individual, but society itself.

All historical novels written in 21st-century Uzbek literature reflect, in essence, a new worldview and an evolving understanding of history. Contemporary historical fiction presents readers with reinterpreted narratives of the most glorious periods of our nation's past.

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