



Article

# The Literary and Aesthetic Views of Erkin Vohidov

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**Citation:** Abbosjon, R. The Literary and Aesthetic Views of Erkin Vohidov. Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture 2026, 7(4), 19-25.

Received: 05<sup>th</sup> Mar 2026

Revised: 20<sup>th</sup> Apr 2026

Accepted: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Published: 20<sup>th</sup> Aug 2026



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**Abstract:** This article is dedicated to the study of Erkin Vohidov's literary and aesthetic views, illustrating the unique individual facets of the poet's work through specific examples. Additionally, it analyzes the perspectives of literary scholars on the poet's creative world and the scope of his artistic thought, while cohesively exploring the thematic range of his poetry and the essence of his literary-aesthetic thinking. The article employs comparative-typological, hermeneutic, psychological, and social analysis methods where appropriate. The research findings are summarized, and general conclusions are presented.

**Keywords:** *Literary-aesthetic thought, creative process, talent, literary-aesthetic attitude, critical attitude.*

## 1. Introduction

The creative process has always constituted the focal point of attention for every talented individual. We attempt to grasp this profoundly through close acquaintance with the works of numerous poets and writers. It is a subtle moment indeed: a work of art born from inspiration by the divine power of creation can afford the reader aesthetic delight regardless of the literary genre or form to which it belongs. The words that flow from a creator's pen connect with the reader's very bloodstream, drawing him closer to the psychology of both the author and the protagonist. Such a state within the creative process manifests uniquely in each author, so that an artistic discovery attaining the level of a genuine work of art ceases to belong solely to its creator and instead becomes the spiritual property of all humanity [1]. Many literary scholars, poets, and writers have voiced numerous opinions concerning the creative process and the distinctive world of the creator's workshop, and their reflections on this matter have, in most cases, taken shape as complete works in their own right. This aspect also constitutes a distinct field within the work of the People's Poet of Uzbekistan, Erkin Vohidov [2].

The People's Poet of Uzbekistan, Erkin Vohidov, is a devoted creative figure deserving of recognition as a poet of unique talent, a skilled translator, an author of epic poems (dostons), an accomplished authority on the Uzbek literary language, and a statesman and public figure. This is the first aspect of the matter [3].

Second, upon reading the poet's literary-critical views on artistic creation, we also come to recognize him as an accomplished literary scholar. Leafing through his book of literary reflections, "The Poet, the Poem, and Consciousness" (Shoir-u, she'r-u, shuur),

which brings together his literary-critical and artistic-publicistic articles published in the press over various years, one finds that many of the ideas he expressed in his time have lost none of their significance — a quality we recognize as one of the distinctive facets of the poet's creative legacy [4].

Third, it is noteworthy that Erkin Vohidov's creative legacy has today become an object of scholarly research among scholars worldwide as well; in particular, the research conducted on the poet's work by the Turkish scholar Veli Savaş Yelok deserves special attention [5].

On the whole, the earliest critical responses to the poet's work began as far back as the 1960s. Given that more than half a century has passed since the first articles on the poet's poetry appeared in print, scholars of the succeeding generation — U. Normatov, B. Nazarov, N. Jumakhodja, N. Jabborov, B. Karimov, and Q. Yolchiyev, among others — have studied his poetry from scholarly-theoretical perspectives. Scholarly articles on this subject have likewise been written by literary scholars such as O. Karimov, F. Karimova, M. Sulaymonov, Z. Baltayeva, and M. Hoshimova [6].

These articles were included in the collected proceedings of the international conference held on the eve of the poet's 80th anniversary. Most of the studies devoted to Erkin Vohidov's work are gathered in essay-style memoirs and life stories connected with his personality. For instance, Rahmatilla Inog'omov's works "It Is Not Easy to Be a Poet" and "The Fate of a Poet" were written in the final decade of the twentieth century, while on the eve of the poet's 70th anniversary the literary scholar U. Normatov's "Poetry That Has Migrated into Hearts" and Hamidulla Boltaboyev's collection "The Magic of the Word," outlining Erkin Vohidov's life and work, were published. Likewise, Abdig'affor Gadayev's "The Lessons of Erkin Vohidov" and Shukur Qurbonov and Javlon Jovliyev's "The Lessons of Erkin Vohidov: Sketches for a Literary Portrait" emerged as remarkable works recounting the poet's creative experience. The 2018 publication of the collection "To quyosh sochgayki nur" ("That the Sun May Shed Its Light"), which brought together contemporaries' memories of the poet's work, was a wonderful gift to lovers of literature. In more recent years, Ahmadjon Meliboyev, who conversed with and remained close to the poet, published a memoir entitled "The Signature of Erkin Vohidov." [7].

## 2. Methodology

It should be noted that the poet's personality alone reveals to us the phenomenological image of a figure such as Erkin Vohidov, who labored tirelessly for many years on the most contested fronts of the literary community. We regard the poet as one of the most passionately committed representatives of our literature, a claim confirmed by his own words: *"Literature is not an arena for meek, compliant people. Servile submissiveness and concern for one's own peace are factors that destroy talent. The world needs peace; literature needs battle."* Indeed, a creative individual's life invariably unfolds on a field of literary conflict, debate, and dispute. On this field, failing to value the views of the talented, or failing to defend one's own convictions, is tantamount to hindering the growth of a young sapling just beginning to bud. As the poet himself observed: *This is a field of struggle, a merciless field. Talent alone is far from sufficient here. One needs strength of nerve, firmness of spirit, endurance to bear the burden of fame, and the fortitude to withstand the stones of reproach.* Indeed, just as any endeavor demands that a person withstand trials with patience, endurance, and fortitude, so too does the creative individual temper and refine his mode of thought, his inner world, and his innermost self through such conscious conflicts, thereby opening a broad path toward the horizons of his literary-aesthetic universe.

## 3. Results.

As the poet himself acknowledged, Erkin Vohidov's work was not confined by talent alone; rather, it attained its lofty summit through the courageous overcoming of various obstacles along the path of poetry. The literary scholar Ibrohim G'afurov, addressing the poet's work in his book of literary-critical views "Poetry Means Search," expressed the following warm assessment: *"In Erkin Vohidov's early poems, conceptions of life are not yet particularly rich. Yet these conceptions possess brilliance and vividness."* It is significant that

today's Uzbek poetry and its devotees continue to draw benefit from the manifold uniqueness of this vivid "vividness," while at the same time the profound conceptions and understanding of life's philosophy continue to grow richer [8].

*Literature and art are a craft of the soul, a labor of the heart. The poet, the writer, is one who takes up the pen at the word of his heart and the command of his soul,* the poet states in his article "A Sense of Justice." This statement alone testifies to the respect for and devotion to literature ingrained in the poet's personality. It is notable that the poet's literary-aesthetic views manifest themselves in three distinct forms [9].

First, Erkin Vohidov expressed his views on particular subjects in the form of reviews and forewords to the books of young writers. This is evident, for example, in the forewords he wrote for the selected works and collections of poets such as Anvar Obidjon and Shukur Qurbon. In the foreword to Shukur Qurbon's first selected volume, published in 2011, the poet wrote: *"We, the generation that entered literature in the 1960s, were still called 'young writers' and 'young poets' even when we reached the age of forty. This was because the generation of creators who came after us had not yet truly emerged or taken their place in the literary arena. By the 1970s, a new wave, a new generation of talented writers, joined our ranks. A new spirit entered Uzbek poetry and prose. Shukur Qurbon was among the foremost figures of that generation. His heart, brimming with passion, was evident in every word he uttered, every poem he wrote, and every action he took."* Our literature bears witness to the fruitful creative activity of the generation of poets and writers active in the 1960s and 1970s, including Erkin Vohidov, Abdulla Oripov, O'tkir Hoshimov, and Jamol Kamol. Notably, they served, in the truest sense, as mentors in shaping the succeeding generation of writers. Having deeply understood this, the poet expressed impartial and heartfelt appreciation for the work of young writers, wishing them creative fulfillment [10].

Second, the poet articulated his literary-aesthetic views in the form of complete articles, as seen in his aforementioned work "The Poet, the Poem, and Consciousness."

Third, the poet succeeded in expressing his literary-aesthetic views through his poetry itself. A number of his poems are characteristic in this regard [11].

It is well known that literature is also nourished by works of translation. While the act of translating demands considerable labor from the translator, preserving the spirit of the work being translated likewise demands great responsibility. As the poet stated [12],

*The moon grieves, tears in its eyes, its breast scarred, its heart torn to shreds. It says: "O heavens, I was once the sun — why have you turned me into a translation?"* [13]

These very lines demonstrate that the question of form and content, so central to literary scholarship, is likewise of the utmost importance for translated works.

The following observations, made by the poet in his article "When the Stars Align," are of considerable importance in showing just how great a burden of responsibility rests upon the translator in preserving the artistry of translated works and the authentic spiritual and psychological world contained within them: *"We live in an era in which the mutual influence of literatures has grown immeasurably stronger. In our time, the work of translation is not merely a matter of craftsmanship but also a great act of patriotism. Literary translation has yet another dimension. A writer who takes up the task of translation sacrifices, to a certain extent, his own creative work. He devotes his time, his energy, and his talent to a work created by another writer. In this sense, translation is a work of selfless devotion in the service of internationalism."* Indeed, literary translation brings peoples and nations closer together: while one literature enriches its spiritual world through translation, another fulfills the function of gaining experience and cultivating a school of mastery.

A person's demand upon himself and his frequent self-examination elevate to a higher level both the realization of his ultimate goals and his capacity to withstand life's hardships. The fact that Erkin Vohidov's work has become beloved by all is likewise a consequence of his own exacting attitude toward his creative output. In numerous interviews, meetings, and articles, the poet expressed deep and impartial views and attitudes concerning poetic talent and its cultivation. Moreover, his poetry contains passages that return repeatedly to this very issue.

*To be a poet is to forsake one's sweet life, to drink devotion, brimming, to its full. To be a poet is to shatter one's own liver a thousand times, to write one's lines with the blood of one's heart. To sacrifice oneself, drop by drop, grain by grain, to the people, until the very last, and say, with regret: 'O my native land, forgive me — I have passed without fulfilling my duty to you.' Thus lives the true master of creation — thus lived the master Mirtemir. [14]*

In his article "Responsibility," included in "The Poet, the Poem, and Consciousness," Erkin Vohidov, reflecting on the responsibilities and hardships involved in attaining the status of a poet, openly confesses: *"There is yet another difficulty — flaws that arise from the contradiction between the natural intensity of our emotion and our lack of artistic mastery. Our limited reading is a consequence of the fact that we have not rid ourselves of an 'amateurish' attitude toward our own work, and have failed to become true masters and jewelers of our craft."* Through these words, the poet seems to offer both a reproach and a lesson to the succeeding generation, suggesting that one must enter the threshold of poetry with a heart cleansed of vain desires — only then does one become a truly talented poet.

"Poetry," writes Professor B. Karimov, *"is the image of feeling. It must contain emotion, symbol, image, and artistic craft; a poem must reflect the poet's subjectivity, individual style, his 'self,' and his own voice... Dozens of such theoretical requirements, which have taken on the character of law, are placed upon genuine poetry."* Indeed, Erkin Vohidov's poetry has taken shape as a solid edifice standing in accordance with the criteria outlined above. Ibrohim G'afurov, who was, in the best sense, both a discerning admirer and a critic of the poet's verse, recognized the elevated marks of humanity in Erkin Vohidov as early as his first poems, valuing and impartially assessing his qualities of modesty, nobility, generosity of spirit, and combativeness. He observes: *At the very core of poetry lies moral decorum. The summons to decorum, the preaching of decorum, has a very ancient tradition, especially in Eastern poetry.... And here the young poet Erkin Vohidov, in one of his very first poems, counsels: be modest, do not even cross the threshold of pride. This, of course, stems from the power of classical poetry. Such counsel has existed from time immemorial within the very nature and thematic scope of Uzbek poetry.* In our view too, the brilliant facets characteristic of the poet's verse flowed from his very soul. For the poet himself, in one of his conversations, advanced the just observation that "behind every poem, we see its author."

The profound reflections that passed through Erkin Vohidov's mind in his youth regarding artistic creation had, by his later years, matured into aphorisms whose ideational and substantive content never grew outdated, remaining significant for any era, much like words of wisdom. In this sense, and as a continuation of his thoughts on the hardships of creation, it is worth recalling the poet's following words: *"Be contemporary, but do not conform to fashion; be proud, but do not be arrogant; let the waves of your own heart move you, not the petty ripples of ideology.... If you cherish your comfort, if you desire rank and wealth, then it is better that you not approach the threshold of poetry. Poetry is not a worldly affair."* It must be acknowledged that the poet's words arose from a justified apprehension of the time — namely, that creating under the influence of literary policy and ideology would damage the aesthetic and beauty-generating facet that constitutes literature's most essential feature, thereby negating the true essence of poetry. In point of fact, at a time when our present social life has entered a phase of rapid advancement, the literary taste of readers has likewise grown correspondingly, so that it has become an increasingly difficult task for any work written in a spirit of conformity to fully occupy a place in the reader's heart, or for the reader to truly "digest" it. This lends further support to our view that Uzbek readers now wish creators to present them with genuine, select works kindled by the true fire of the heart.

Creation is such a delicate process that many creative individuals have shared in their memoirs the feelings that passed through their hearts concerning it. For the admirers of any creator, his psychological state during the creative process and the creative anguish experienced at the moment a work is born constitute a fascinating subject. *"The creative hour,"* writes Jan Parandowski, *"bears no relation whatsoever to the astronomical hour; it is singular and unrepeatable. One cannot remove a quarter of it or replace it with another. It is a fortunate coincidence, a gift of fate, a boon of exceedingly favorable circumstances. If it is disturbed or disrupted, it will never return again."*

Indeed, human feelings are entirely free with respect to space and time. No one can foretell when they will stir into motion, sowing agitation in the creative heart, or when they will grant it moments of calm. In this regard, the confession of our fiery-hearted poet Usman Nosir inevitably comes to mind:

*My inspiration keeps no time — it comes like a flood, merciless as an executioner, it tears the heart apart. It is clear: one day it will lay me to ruin... [15]*

...and the poet searches for his own path to suddenly reveal his feelings, his world of thought, his musings and reveries, and the experiences of his heart. In the end, a work of art is born, one entirely suffused with feeling and expressive of beauty.

The literary scholar Go'zal Muhammadjonova, addressing the question of the creative individual's persona in particular, states: *"In the works of writers and poets, recourse to the image of the creative persona arises primarily from the need to grasp one's own 'self.' Whether this image is that of a historical figure or a fictional one, in both cases the shared aspect lies in the discovery of the creator's own 'self' as the basis for self-expression; in fictional imagery, this task is accomplished directly, allowing the author's inner world to be seen more vividly. In the image of historical figures, by contrast, the 'selves' of two creators — namely, the author and the historical figure — become fused together."* This observation becomes still more vivid when considered from the standpoint of the poet's own work.

First, the image of the "poet" is invariably depicted in vivid colors throughout Erkin Vohidov's work.

Second, it is precisely through recourse to the image of the "poet" that the substantive content of a poem becomes fused with its formal expression. In the poet's lines:

*The falcon has two abodes — one the cliff, the other the sky. The poet has two wings — one his homeland, the other the world.*

the image of the "poet" is likened to a falcon, and correspondingly it is explained that one of the poet's wings is his homeland and the other the world. In other words, the poet, through his own creative work, glorifies his homeland so that the peoples of the world may become aware that such a great nation and such a unique country exist upon this earth. At the same time, it is not difficult to discern the profound meaning that the sparks of the poet's talent are polished and developed within the framework of the creative experience reflected in the rich literary heritage of both national and world literature.

#### 4. Discussion.

In "To be a poet," says Erkin Vohidov, *"means to imagine what others have not imagined, to think what others have not thought."* Indeed, these words seem to impress upon young poets that a creative individual must be able to perceive realities invisible to the ordinary eye, to adopt a sound attitude toward them, and, moreover, to continually expand the boundaries of his imaginative world.

In a subsequent couplet of Erkin Vohidov's poem "My Dutar Has Two Strings," we encounter a remarkable example of his world of imagination and fantasy.

*In the writing of this ghazal there sprang forth tears from my eyes, fire from my heart. That is why, of my every two lines, one is a teardrop, the other a spark.*

The motif of the lyrical hero shedding tears has long existed in the ghazals of classical Uzbek literature, and this mode of depiction continues to be employed traditionally to this day. In the couplet above, however, the poet's creative innovation lies in explaining to the reader that, because the lyrical hero — unable to withstand the heat of a heart set ablaze by the fire of love — sheds tears from his eyes in response to this condition, each line of the couplet is at once a teardrop and a spark. The simultaneous depiction of two contrasting states constitutes a distinctive stylistic facet of the poet's work, one that is clearly perceptible in the ghazal lines cited above.

The renowned poet Tursunoy Sodiqova, in the concluding section of her treatise

devoted to Erkin Vohidov's work, entitled "My People's Mentor," wrote: *"Through the magic of poetry, your eyes grow clear. You begin to see things that stand right beside you yet had gone unnoticed. Clear and luminous images are born in your mind. The candle of talent shows you this turbulent world — with all its battles and struggles, its beauty and ugliness, its victories and defeats, its sorrows and joys — as precious and priceless in your sight."* It is noteworthy that, in these words, the author acknowledges that poetry is a rare phenomenon not granted to everyone and not to be found in every person.

In discussing talent, it should be recalled that Erkin Vohidov held his own views on this matter as well: *"Because talent is such a rare quality of the human soul and mind, and because it is so multifaceted, it is difficult to confine within a single definition."* One may thus conclude that the concept of talent constitutes a general philosophical category that manifests itself by uniting various traits within the sphere of universal human qualities.

In the article "The Essence of Literary Thought," included in Professor Bahodir Karimov's book "The Alphabet of the Spirit," the author's broad and profound reflections on Erkin Vohidov's literary views are employed. The scholarly-literary observations expressed there from a literary-critical standpoint further reinforce what we have said above concerning the poet's work: *"In the natural environment of literature's golden palace, belonging to eternity, it is difficult for a person without talent to breathe. Nor can a 'dervish' dwell within literature's sacred abode — one who outwardly wears a beggar's cloak upon his shoulders but whose inner self has become a den of devils. How necessary it is to understand and feel this truth, and how difficult it is to acknowledge it. At the same time, the cultivation of one endowed with innate talent is likewise a matter of the utmost importance."* It is not difficult to grasp from the scholar's words that lofty talent alone is insufficient for the creation of a genuine work of art; what is also required is a creative environment enriched by literary tradition and the guidance of a mentor. In our view as well, this is the true essence and source of the fact that Erkin Vohidov, a truly gifted poet, came to occupy a place in the hearts of the people as a great poet who, throughout his creative path, partook of the sacred abode of talent.

## 5. Conclusion.

In conclusion, it should be stated that Erkin Vohidov regarded talent as the primary hallmark of artistic creation and creativity: a person without talent may circle around the periphery of literature, but can never, in the true sense, become a person of literature. Through his own creative work and his literary-critical views, the poet established the qualities discussed above as a creative standard for future generations. If the present-day literary process is examined through the criteria of Erkin Vohidov's literary-aesthetic thought, we are firmly convinced that Uzbek literature will see an increasing number of captivating talents and their fresh works written on enduring, immortal themes..

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