THE JOURNAL OF WORLD WOMEN STUDIES| ISSN 2717-7211

Review Article

Submission: 26.09.2026| Accepted: 11.10.2026| volume: 11, ıssue: 3| pp: 469-478| Doi: http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23795582

Ronic Discourse in Erkin A'zam's Dramatic Novella "Jannat O'zi Qaydadir"

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Abstract

In this study, the two-part dramatic novella titled "Jannat o'zi qaydadir" by Erkin A'zam, one of the prominent writers of contemporary Uzbek literature, is examined from the perspective of irony. Set in post-independence Uzbekistan at the beginning of the new century, the work deals with the aspiration of the family of Domla, a scientist who rose during the Soviet era, to migrate to America and the disintegration experienced during this process. Methodologically, the study relies on D. C. Muecke's framework of irony typology, as outlined in Irony and the Ironic, alongside Wayne C. Booth's concept of "clues to irony" detailed in A Rhetoric of Irony. Guided by this theoretical paradigm, the study examines the ironic structures across seven key dimensions: verbal, situational, event-based, dramatic, name-identity, self-betraying, and intertextual-title ironies. The analytical findings reveal that the author guides the audience into an ironic perspective right from the outset via the epigraph from Chekhov and the notion of paradise in the title, additionally utilizing the character roster and stage directions as essential signposts of irony. The dramatic novella form, on the other hand, makes dramatic irony one of the fundamental elements of the work by establishing a structure where the reader knows more than the characters. Without resorting to explicit moralizing, the deployed ironies critique several prominent issues: the obsession with academic titles, the institutional devaluation of science, the subordination of national heritage to monetary gain, the hollow masking of Soviet-era identities, and the uncritical obsession with America. The "paradise" sought in America is lost both far away and close to home at the end of the work with the explosion in America and Domla's death in Jiydali. Consequently, this study reveals that Erkin A'zam uses irony not only as a figure of speech but as a fundamental narrative technique that constructs the entire structure of the work.

Keywords: Erkin A'zam, Jannat o'zi qaydadir, Uzbek literature, dramatic novella, irony, dramatic irony

Erkin A'Zam'in "Jannat O'Zi Qaydadir" Dramatik Kıssasında İronik Söylem

Özet

Bu çalışmada, çağdaş Özbek edebiyatının önde gelen yazarlarından Erkin A'zam'ın "Jannat o'zi qaydadir" adlı iki bölümlük dramatik kıssası ironi açısından incelenmiştir. Bağımsızlık sonrası Özbekistan'da, yeni yüzyılın başında geçen eser, Sovyet döneminde yükselmiş bir bilim insanı olan Domla'nın ailesinin Amerika'ya göç hevesi ve bu süreçte yaşanan dağılışı konu alır. Çalışmanın kuramsal çerçevesini D. C. Muecke'nin Irony and the Ironic adlı eserinde geliştirdiği ironi tipolojisi ile Wayne C. Booth'un A Rhetoric of Irony adlı çalışmasında ortaya koyduğu ironi ipuçları kavramı oluşturmaktadır. Bu kuramsal çerçevede eserdeki ironik yapılar sözel ironi, durum ironisi, olaylar ironisi, dramatik ironi, ad ve kimlik ironisi, kendini ele veren ironi ile başlık ve metinlerarası ironi olmak üzere yedi başlık altında incelenmiştir. İnceleme sonucunda yazarın, Çehov epigrafı ve eserin başlığındaki cennet sorusuyla okuru daha ilk sayfada ironik bir okumaya yönlendirdiği, karakter listesi ve sahne yönergelerini de ironinin ipuçları olarak kullandığı tespit edilmiştir. Dramatik kıssa biçimi ise okurun karakterlerden daha fazlasını bildiği bir yapı kurarak dramatik ironiyi eserin temel unsurlarından biri hâline getirmiştir. Eserdeki ironiler, unvan düşkünlüğünü, bilimin itibar kaybını, milli değerlerin para karşısındagölgede kaldığını, Sovyet ideolojisinden kalan adların ve kimliklerin maskeye dönüşmesini ve Amerika hevesini doğrudan yargılamadan eleştirmektedir. Amerika'da aranan "cennet", eserin sonunda Amerika'daki patlama ve Domla'nın Jiydali'deki ölümüyle hem uzakta hem de yakında yitirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Erkin A'zam'ın ironiyi sadece bir söz sanatı olarak değil, eserin bütün yapısını inşa eden temel bir anlatım tekniği olarak kullandığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Erkin A'zam, Jannat O'zi Qaydadir, Özbek Edebiyatı, Dramatik Roman, Ironi, Dramatik Ironi

Introduction

Erkin A'zam, born on August 10, 1950, in the Boysun district of the Surxondaryo region, graduated from the Faculty of Journalism at Tashkent State University in 1972. The writer entered the field of

literature in 1977 with his first story collection titled “Chiroqlar o‘chmagan kecha” (The Night the Lights Stayed on). A‘zam has published several novella and story collections, including “Otoyining tug‘ilgan yili” (The Year Otoyi’s was Born), “Olam yam-yashil” (The World is Lush Green), “Javob” (The Answer), “Bayramdan boshqa kunlar” (Days Other than Holidays), “Pakananing oshiq ko‘ngli” (The Loving Heart of the Dwarf), and “Kechikayotgan odam” (The Man Who Arrived Late). Alongside his prose work, he has been active in cinema, co-writing the screenplays for the films “Chantrimore”, “Piyoda” (The Pedestrian), “Pakana” (The Dwarf), “Dilxiroj”, and “Erkak” (The Man) (ziyo.uz).

As one of the prominent authors of modern Uzbek literature, Erkin A‘zam addresses the human inner world, moral dilemmas, and alienation from society in his works. Rather than taking a direct critical approach, the author employs subtle irony, gentle humor, and tragicomic storytelling to convey his prespective. Thanks to his exceptional skills in staging and dialogue, and through characters who have preserved their innocence he reveals both the impasses of contemporary individuals and bureaucratic corruption in depth, thereby conveying his ideas. (Olim, Oyina.uz).

The authors who followed the period in which socialist realism constrained literature with ideology and pushed the individual into the background focused on the protagonist's everyday life. Erkin A’zam argued that the essential subject, deemed insignificant in the shadow of grand issues, is the human being (Qobulova, 2021, pp. 476-477). While his earlier novellas, such as *Javob* and *Bayramdan boshqa kunlar*, portray protagonists within a domestic and daily setting, the author's later works adapted for stage and screen including *Suv yoqalab*, *Qarzdor*, and *Jannat o‘zi qaydadir* center directly on everyday slices of life. Qobulova noted that *Jannat o‘zi qaydadir* contrasts Uzbek, American, and Russian perspectives through an intra-family discussion. As Sanobar To‘laganova noted, A’zam, who naturally transformed vernacular speech into art, aimed not to burden his protagonists with grand ideological duties, but to reflect them as living individuals with their inner worlds, professions, and temperaments through the objects and everyday details that surround them (Qobulova, 2021, pp. 477-480). A’zam’s texts are structured with a cinematographic language, interwoven with devices such as irony, parody, paradox, and the grotesque (Shofiyev, 2020, p. 471).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, intellectuals became aware of the gap between communist ideology and social reality, inspiring a self-reflective, ironic viewpoint among emerging authors (Sheraliyeva, 2017, p. 10). Instead of openly opposing official doctrines, writers of this era compared the illusions created by those doctrines with harsh reality, thereby defining the nature of irony in 1970s-1980s Uzbek prose (Sheraliyeva, 2017, p. 11). Furthermore, Sheraliyeva points out that dialogism and intertextuality served as the main techniques for expressing this ironic position (Sheraliyeva, 2017, pp. 7, 19). She also identifies that the irony in this period's prose was nourished by global literature while remaining deeply anchored in traditional national culture specifically the *latifa* (joke/anecdote) genre, which depends on subverting audience expectations and playing naive (Sheraliyeva, 2017, p. 17).

Irony plays a central role in the writings of Erkin A’zam, a key author of this generation. As Shofiyev notes, satirical elements appeared in his texts from the very beginning, especially in stories written during the early 1990s, he addressed the blind alleys into which the Soviet system pushed ordinary people using a sorrowful yet mocking tone. One of the main techniques the author relies on to build irony is naming characters intentionally. For example, Salim Safarov, the main character of the story *Ta’ziya*, is nicknamed *Qaror* (Resolution/Decision) because of his talent for drafting party documents (Shofiyev, 2020, pp. 467-468).

Erkin A’zam’s two-part dramatic novella *Jannat o‘zi qaydadir*, the subject of this study, is set at the beginning of the new century in a dacha outside Tashkent and recounts the disintegration of the family of Domla (Jo‘raqul), who originated from Jiydali and rose as a Marxist scholar during the Soviet era. The work opens with an epigraph from Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard, citing a servant who disparages his homeland and yearns to go to Paris. Standing in contrast to Domla who lost his academic prestige with independence yet remains steadfast in his convictions is his wife, Xonim, who enters commerce in pursuit of a “better life”. Influenced by Rahmatulloh Jiydaliy, an American-Uzbek millionaire presenting himself as a patriot, Xonim resolves to emigrate the entire family to the United States. The first part, titled “Telaş” (Turmoil/Haste), addresses intra-family disputes and the unease within the country; the second part, titled “Vesvese” (Apprehension/Delusion), depicts the sale of the house, the dismissal of Aunt Asal who had served the family for years and the commencement of English lessons. During this period, while Domla’s daughter Klara reconciles with her Russian husband and considers remaining in the country, his granddaughter Luiza learns Uzbek and renounces going to

America. Domla, meanwhile, departs for his native Jiydali, admitting his shortcomings in a farewell letter left to his wife and declaring that he will not go to America. The work concludes with the simultaneous arrival of the news of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States and Domla's death in Jiydali, marking the loss of "paradise" for the family both far and near.

Among the key scholarly contributions in Uzbek philology are the works of Ibragimova (2001), who was the first to explore irony in a dedicated monograph, Sheraliyeva (2017), who analyzed ironic tendencies in post-1970 Uzbek prose; and Shofiyev (2019), who assessed irony and imagery in Erkin A'zam's narrative works (Tursunova, 2025, pp. 114-117).

Studies on the literary work have mostly focused on character development and the representation of daily life (Qobulova, 2021). Meanwhile, Shofiyev (2020) investigated irony across Erkin A'zam's prose more broadly. Yet, *Jannat o'zi qaydadir* has not been specifically analyzed on its own in terms of irony. The primary objective of this research is to examine the ironic discourse within the narrative through the lens of D. C. Muecke's theory of irony and Wayne C. Booth's framework of ironic clues, thereby highlighting the author's critique of transitional Uzbek society.

Theoretical Framework

The Equivalents and Boundaries of Irony in Uzbek Literary Studies. Although the term *kinoya* serves in Uzbek literary criticism as the equivalent of *ironiya* in Russian and other languages, its semantic field is more restricted. When compared to the Western concept of irony, this can result in conceptual confusion (Sheraliyeva, 2017, pp. 8-9). As Sheraliyeva notes, while irony functions narrowly as a stylistic device in language, in a broader sense it shapes the author's overall stance toward reality. It weaves through the subject matter, plot, and composition, turning into a core element that forms the poetic structure of the literary work (Sheraliyeva, 2017, p. 9). In irony, the subject adopts an attitude of feigned ignorance appearing positive outwardly while remaining negative at its core. Irony stands apart from humor and satire through the distinct prominence of a personal perspective (Sheraliyeva, 2017, p. 18).

In Uzbek linguistics, irony is broadly defined as employing a word or phrase in a manner that contradicts its literal sense. Stylistic resources in the Uzbek language describe irony as a stylistic device where words and idioms are used via sarcasm, barbs, or insinuations to convey an opposite meaning (Tursunova, 2024, p. 82). Prominent linguists such as R. Qo'ng'urov, E. Begmatov, Y. Tojiyev, H. Homidiy, and A. Hojiyev share nearly identical views on this definition (Tursunova, 2024, p. 83). Within Uzbek philology, the concept of irony is expressed through the terms *ironiya* and *kinoya*. Constructing ironic meaning draws upon a rich lexical-semantic field that includes terms like *kinoya, kesatiq, piching, qochirim, kulgi, zaharxandalik, istehzo, masxara, and shama*. Furthermore, Arabic loanwords such as *ta'riz* and *tajohili orifona* (feigned ignorance) are frequently utilized in this context. Ibragimova characterizes irony as a complex of contradictory ideas carrying a negative subtext, which implicitly conveys the author's intent and subjective outlook (Tursunova, 2025, p. 114). Meanwhile, A. Hojiyev views *kinoya* as a distinct literary trope rooted in employing a linguistic unit in a sense entirely contrary to its direct definition. While Pospelov notes that irony adopts a mocking tone by framing the worthless as valuable, the ignorant as wise, and the unappealing as attractive, Pigulevskiy highlights its dual-layered structure, which manifests either as criticism disguised as praise or praise masked as criticism (Tursunova, 2025, pp. 114-115).

In classifications of irony, the distinction among verbal, situational, and dramatic irony is predominantly adopted. In this study, however, in accordance with Muecke's conception, irony is treated as a broader structure that can be embodied not only by speech, but also by situations, events, and characters. Accordingly, the ironic structures in the work are examined within the framework of six concepts selected from Muecke's typology, along with titling and intertextual irony based on Booth's concept of clues to irony. Muecke's typology is employed to identify the types of irony in the work, whereas Booth's approach is used to demonstrate how the author signals irony to the reader. These concepts are defined below.

Verbal Irony: Muecke regards verbal irony as the most fundamental form of instrumental irony, in which language is employed as a tool. In this type, although the speaker or writer conveys a message through the surface meaning of the utterance, the actual intention is for its exact opposite or an entirely different sense (transliteral meaning) to be understood. What is expected is that the surface meaning be discarded and the author's genuine intent be grasped through contextual indicators and clues within the text (Muecke, 1982, pp. 39, 56–66).

Situational Irony: Categorized by Muecke under “observable irony”, situational irony stems not from a speaker's deliberate words, but rather from the inherent contradictions found in real life or within a fictional plot. In this case, there is a clear contrast or incongruity between an individual's perception of the circumstances and the stark reality at hand. Such irony occurs when a character's mental expectation clashes directly with actual events. Moreover, situational irony can appear purely through the collision of two contrasting circumstances, even when no fault or mistake is committed by the character (Muecke, 1982, pp. 21, 36-37, 41-43).

Irony of Events: Muecke treats the irony of events as a form of situational irony extended across time. In this type, an individual takes steps driven by specific expectations, hopes, or fears to secure their future or avert a danger, however, quite contrary to expectations, these actions turn against them, leading to their downfall or ruin. The cause-and-effect relationship between the action taken and the resulting outcome is inverted, producing a dramatic or tragic incongruity (Muecke, 1982, pp. 20, 42, 69).

Dramatic Irony: Highly prominent in drama and narrative arts, dramatic irony is anchored by Muecke in the concept of (discrepant awareness). While the audience or reader is fully aware of the true backdrop of events, the approaching danger, or hidden secrets, the character acts in complete ignorance of this reality. As a result, the protagonist's utterances take on a dual layer of significance for the audience simultaneously conveying the superficial meaning intended by the character and the actual truth unfolding in the scene (Muecke, 1982, pp. 29, 54-55, 81-83).

Name, Disguise, and Identity Irony: Muecke regards role-playing, masking, and identity confusion fundamental components of theatrical art and character development as key ironic devices. Central to this concept is the striking gulf between a character's outward name, asserted social standing, or assumed mask and their genuine inner identity. The dissonance between the artificial identity assumed by the character and their authentic self, which surfaces throughout the narrative, becomes clear as masks slip and names undergo scrutiny (Muecke, 1982, pp. 77-80).

Self-Betraying Irony: Drawing on Fielding’s works and broader literary traditions, Muecke defines this ironic form as a phenomenon where a character while striving to mask human frailties or project an image of virtue inadvertently lays bare their own insincerity, vanity, or ignorance through the very justifications they provide. As the figure speaks under the illusion of maintaining a righteous and moral stance, the internal logic of their arguments or the specific phrasing they choose strips away their facade, laying their true motives and shortcomings bare before the reader (Muecke, 1982, pp. 10–11, 18, 87).

Title and Intertextual Irony: In analyzing how readers decode covert irony within a text, Wayne C. Booth ranks “straightforward warnings in the author’s own voice” as primary among the “clues to irony” supplied by the author (Booth, 2016, p. 93). According to Booth, authors deploy titles and epigraphs as direct signals to prepare readers for an ironic reversal before diving into the narrative proper (Booth, 2016, pp. 93,96). Title irony suggests that the words in the work do not stem directly from the author, but rather from the narrator or a fictional persona, thereby fostering an analytical and detached perspective that warns readers against accepting surface meanings at face value (Booth, 2016, pp. 94-95). As for the epigraph, the author deliberately borrows from another text to announce their ironic stance from the outset, subsequently stepping back to leave the characters on their own, the epigraph thus functions as a declared intention foreshadowing the illusion sustained throughout the text (Booth, 2016, pp. 95-96). At the same time, Booth notes that such direct cues are rarely sufficient on their own, emphasizing that readers can only be certain of irony when supported by other textual indicators (Booth, 2016, pp. 96, 99).

Meanwhile, D. C. Muecke labels structures formed through a text’s allusion to another text or phenomenon as “irony by analogy” (Muecke, 1982, p. 63). In Muecke’s view, what ostensibly looks like a critique of element A in this mode actually serves to expose element B, whose parallel the reader is expected to recognize; consequently, grasping the irony relies on perceiving the hidden correspondence between the two texts or situations (Muecke, 1982, p. 63). Indeed, the scholar highlights satirical allegories such as John Gay's The Beggar’s Opera and George Orwell’s Animal Farm as prime examples of this category (Muecke, 1982, p. 63). Within this framework, the title and epigraph featured at the threshold of a work establish a structural and intertextual foundation of contrast, bringing the clash between the characters’ internal illusions and the harsh reality to light right from the start.

Title and Intertextual Irony

Booth's concepts regarding explicit warnings in the authorial voice, alongside Muecke's framework of "irony by analogy" are prominently manifested in the title and epigraph of the work.

The text opens with an epigraph drawn from Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard. The servant Yasha's remarks "This country is completely backward, its people are ignorant... Be sure to take me with you" (A'zam, n.d.: 1) foreshadow the family's obsession with America right on the opening page. According to Booth, the epigraph serves as one of the most explicit devices through which an author pre-announces their ironic intentions (Booth, 2016, pp. 95-96). Viewed through Muecke's lens of irony by analogy, Yasha's longing for Paris functions as a direct reflection of the family's later yearning for America (Muecke, 1982, p. 63). This parallel is further reinforced within the narrative itself. While listening to a song, Domla remarks, "One feels precisely as though wandering through a blooming white cherry orchard... paradise itself!" (A'zam, n.d.: 6) an utterance that alludes both to the cherry orchard in the epigraph and the motif of paradise embedded in the title.

Throughout the narrative, the geographical and metaphorical locations of paradise and hell constantly shift. Jiydaliy, a "patriot" figure returning from America, praises Uzbekistan as "a ready-made paradise!" while dismissing America with the words, "Rich though it may be, it is the very embodiment of hell!" (A'zam, n.d.: 15). Ironically, however, it is precisely he who orchestrates the family's eventual migration to America.

The title of the work is first introduced internally by Domla: "Where indeed is paradise... Do not yearn for every place, every place has its own balance and measure!" (A'zam, n.d.21). In contrast, Xonim remains resolute: "Believe me, master, paradise is right there! After all, I saw it with my own eyes!" (A'zam, n.d.: 21). Consequently, the interrogative title brings the two opposing poles of the narrative into direct conflict: Domla, who seeks paradise in his homeland, versus Xonim, who envisions it in America.

This ideological clash becomes increasingly pronounced toward the conclusion of the second part. When Mels reminds his mother of Jiydaliy's earlier description of America as "Hell, hell!", Xonim passionately retorts, losing all self-control: "I will go! Even if it is hell I will still go!" (A'zam, n.d.: 29). Thus, the initial quest for paradise ultimately deteriorates into a deliberate plunge into hell.

The text resolves the central question posed by its title through a traditional lament. Following the news of Domla's death, the household disintegrates, leaving Asal xola behind to mourn alone: "You were the master of these houses! May [God] grant you paradise, dear Domla!" (A'zam, n.d., 33). Significantly, this invocation of paradise is voiced not by the family members who idealize America, but by Asal xola an outcast dismissed from the house on the grounds that she "does not suit America." In this manner, the fundamental question "Where is paradise?" transforms into an ironic axis that sustains the underlying tension between the homeland and America throughout the entire work.

Verbal Irony

Throughout the narrative, verbal irony chiefly manifests in family conflicts and conversations regarding social status. Although characters outwardly express agreement or admiration toward one another, the actual intent relies heavily on the situational backdrop and theatrical stage directions. For instance, Domla responds to his wife's jibe regarding her lack of a "prosecutor nephew" with the remark: "We have no need for such a bothersome nephew anyway, my lady, you are here, that is more than enough!" (A'zam, 2007, p 74). Although phrased as a surface-level compliment, the surrounding context clearly indicates that Domla views his wife as an absolute nuisance a nuance reinforced by the stage direction noting that Xonim thanks God "failing to grasp the implication of the remark." Consequently, the irony is fully decoded by the reader while remaining lost on the intended target (Muecke, 1982, p. 40).

A similar technique manifests as criticism disguised as praise. After Xonim angrily storms off, condemning all men as "feudal," Jiydaliy flatters her by declaring, "Our sister-in-law is an immensely learned and wise woman." Domla appears to concur, adding, "Oh, don't ask, Rahmatvoy! She just demonstrated her scholarly deeds, as you clearly witnessed!" (A'zam, 2007, p 76). By recalling his wife's recent outburst, Domla's comment deftly transforms apparent praise into an overt reprimand (Muecke, 1982, p. 56).

On other occasions, Domla consciously feigns ignorance. When his student Tursuniy candidly admits that he pursues a doctoral degree not for the sake of scholarship, but because it looks prestigious

on application forms and aids in career advancement, Domla responds acting in accordance with the stage directions by "playing the simpleton" with the words: "Oh, Tursuniy, Tursuniy! Look at that, so this science business comes in handy there as well, huh?" (A'zam, 2007, p 78). Here, Domla embodies what Muecke defines as the eiron: an ironist who feigns ignorance specifically to expose the vulnerabilities of his interlocutor (Muecke, 1982, p. 61).

Irony is also occasionally masked behind foreign expressions. When Xonim silences her daughter by snapping, "Have you even laid eyes on America?!" (A'zam, 2007, p 88), Klara retorts in Persian: "Yak chizro donem - az xudro xudo ronem" (We know but a single thing, yet we fancy ourselves gods" (A'zam, 2007, p 88). Xonim's baffled reaction "What is she saying?" (A'zam, 2007, p 89) demonstrates that the target of the irony remains completely oblivious to it, whereas the reader perceives it instantly.

Domla's most scathing mockery of the American fever emerges in the second part. Feigning sleep while dressed in the shorts and t-shirt forced upon him by Xonim, Domla addresses his son "slyly" as prescribed by the stage directions: "You drink Coca-Cola, walking around shouting hi-hi, bye-bye, what a life! Jiydali America!" (A'zam, 2007, p 90). On the surface, Domla appears to support the relocation plans, but he subtly mocks the obsession by blending his local village with America into one absurd phrase. The blank, confused glances passed among the people in the room clearly indicate that the irony goes completely over their heads.

Situational Irony

In the work, situational irony is mostly built around the inversion of values during the transitional period. In the majority of such instances, there is no conscious ironist orchestrating the effect; rather, the irony stems from the organic juxtaposition of two incompatible realities. A striking illustration of this occurs in the opening scene: while Mels shouts from inside, "Everything is gone! Everything! Independence too! Freedom too!" (A'zam, 2007, p 71), Xonim is busy tallying the prices of goods imported from Turkey. Unknowingly, she mixes her son's words into her calculation: "Independence... one dollar! Freedom... one dollar! How much does that come to?" (A'zam, 2007, p 71). Xonim has no ironic intent here; instead, the irony arises naturally from the collision between sacred national values and vulgar market vocabulary within a single utterance. As Muecke observes, placing two discordant situations side by side without deliberate commentary by a character inherently generates an ironic contrast (Muecke, 1982, pp. 21, 36-37).

The devaluation of science in the post-independence period is likewise conveyed through situational irony. When Domla mentions that the watchman guarding the neighboring garden holds a doctorate in physics and mathematics alongside a professorship, Xonim reacts with disbelief "If he were a doctor or a professor, would he be working as a watchman in someone else's yard?!" (A'zam, 2007, p 73). Ironically, the mansion he protects belongs to none other than his own nephew, the prosecutor. "Even the prosecutor himself cannot simply come and stay in this mansion, right?" (A'zam, 2007, p 74).

In a subsequent exchange with Domla, this watchman neighbor dismisses the prospect of running for the academy once more, noting, "There is no point" and adding, "It's already a blessing that you and I manage to squeeze a profit out of that swimming pool" (A'zam, 2007, p 72). Visitors to the pools routinely "leave three or four sums behind," among them even the grandson of academician Mustafoqulov who had been Domla's rival in the previous election. Domla, visibly embarrassed, claims he drives away anyone who visits his pool accompanied "by girls of that sort". Aligning academy elections with renting out swimming pools in the same dialogue brilliantly captures the compromised position of contemporary intellectuals.

This topsy-turvy value system equally extends to state institutions. When a police officer pulls Mels over for drunk driving, he salutes him instead of issuing a fine. "What else could he do, he gave a salute! He isn't blind; he sees it's a "foreign car!" (A'zam, 2007, p 70). The officer even passes along regards to Mels's "millionaire mother" and urges her to purchase an upgraded vehicle. The fact that an officer tasked with upholding the law bows before a luxury foreign automobile rather than penalizing the lawbreaker demonstrates how societal standards have bowed entirely to monetary wealth.

Irony of Events

As demonstrated in the work, the irony of events manifests primarily through actions undertaken by characters to secure their futures, which ultimately yield outcomes diametrically opposed to their

original expectations over time (Muecke, 1982, p. 69). The first instance stems from a decision Domla made years earlier. As Xonim recalls, insisting that "an intellectual's wife must be an intellectual" (Ziyolining xotini ziyoli bo'lishi kerak), Domla had her pursue external studies, driving her from one library to another (A'zam, 2007, p 81). Xonim, however, turned to commerce instead of science and Domla eventually came to accept "Perhaps this is the greatest mistake of my life..." (Hayotimdagi eng katta xato shudir balki…) (A'zam, 2007, p 81). Thus, the very initiative Domla took to elevate his wife steered her in a direction completely contrary to his intent.

The central irony of events in the work, however, is anchored in the family's relentless pursuit of emigration to America. At the conclusion of the first part, upon hearing broadcast reports of terrorist attacks in the mountains, Xonim cries out in panic (Another explosion!) and pleads with Jiydaliy: "Take us to that America of yours! Please, brother, please!" (Olib keting bizni o'sha Amerikangizga! Jon uka, iltimos!) (A'zam, 2007: 87). All subsequent preparations within the household pivot entirely around this escape. Yet, in a bitter twist at the very end of the text, the "White pigeon" (Oq kaptar) arrives with terrifying news: "America has exploded! It blew up, mommy!" (Amerika portlabdi! Portillab ketibdi, mamul!) (A'zam, 2007: 93). The very "explosion" Xonim sought desperately to flee ultimately confronts her in the sanctuary she hoped would protect her. This vast discrepancy between expectation and reality elevates the irony to its peak, aligning neatly with Muecke's principle of sharp contrast (Muecke, 1982, p. 53).

Parallel to this catastrophic turn, a second ironid thread unfolds. Earlier, Domla remarks to Tursuniy, "If it were up to me, I'd head off to distant Jiydali and rest beside my parents," immediately brushing it off as a joke: "but there's no fool who's going to die anytime soon!" (A'zam, 2007, p 79). Yet, in his final farewell letter, he echoes this exact sentiment with solemn sincerity: "When my time eventually comes, let me not wander from grave to grave in foreign lands" (A'zam, 2007, p 33). Uttered initially in jest, the prophecy fulfills itself, and Domla passes away precisely in Jiydali. Mels's poignant declaration "He exploded in Jiydali" (Jiydalida portladi) (A'zam, n.d., p. 33) juxtaposes the distant explosion in America with Domla's untimely death at home.

Ultimately, these instances of the irony of events demonstrate how the characters' calculated measures for a prosperous future systematically backfire. The metaphorical "paradise" sought across the ocean in America ends up being forfeited both abroad and right at home.

Dramatic Irony

In the work, dramatic irony is built upon the characters remaining unaware of a truth known to the reader. Muecke notes that this ironic impact grows considerably when the disparity in awareness extends beyond the reader and the characters to involve the figures on stage among themselves. (Muecke, 1982, pp. 54-55, 81). The first part of the work is based on such a misunderstanding from beginning to end: Xonim thought the things Mels said were gone, shouting "Independence too! Freedom too!" (Mustaqillik ham! Erkinlik ham!), were a political disaster. "Did he just say independence? Gone? Oh! Where is it going?" (Mustaqillik dedimi boya? Ketdi? Voy! Qayoqqa ketadi?) (A'zam, 2007, p 71). She tells her fear to Domla as well. "Do you not know anything, domla? Independence is gone, they say!" (Hech gapdan xabaringiz yo'qmi, domla? Mustaqillik ketganmish-ku!) (A'zam, 2007, p 75). However, the reader knows from the very beginning from the character list that the "White pigeon" (Oq kaptar) is absolutely determined to marry Mels and is a girl "even ready to suffocate and die in the trunk of the car" (mashinaning yukxonasida dimiqib o'lmoqqa ham tayyor) for this cause (A'zam, 2007, p 69). When Domla hears the song coming from the car, he is surprised, saying, "Or has it stuck in my head?" (Yo miyaga o'rnashib qolganmikan?) ((A'zam, n.d., p. 14). The reader, on the other hand, senses the source of the song. When the trunk opens and the girl comes out, the misunderstanding is resolved. Relieved, Domla says, "Independence, freedom... So that's what this is about" (Mustaqillik, ozodlik… Gap bu yoqda ekan-da) and names the girl "Ozodoy" (A'zam, n.d., p. 18). What was thought to be a political disaster is actually Mels losing his own freedom.

A second event is related to the envelope brought by Tursuniy. The reader has seen that Tursuniy secretly placed the white envelope containing dollars among Domla's papers (A'zam, n.d., p. 12), Domla, however, is unaware of this. A few scenes later, Tursuniy swears to Jiydaliy that he has never seen dollars in his life: "By God, I have never seen it! Everyone says "dollar, dollar"..." (Xudo haqqi, ko'rmaganman sira! Hamma "dollar, dollar" deydi…) (A'zam, n.d., p. 15). For the reader, these words carry a different meaning than what Tursuniy thinks. When the envelope falls to the ground and the

dollars scatter out, Tursuniy tries to hide his surprise by saying, “It's just the ordinary paper we know!” (O’zimiz bilgan oddiy bir qog’oz ekan-ku!). Jiydaliy's meaningful response completes the irony: “Ye-es, dear brother, that paper you know!” (Ha-a, ukajon, o’sha o’zingiz bilgan qog’oz!) (A’zam, n.d., p. 19).

Just as the narrative opens under the sign of dramatic irony, it closes with it. In the final vignette, a young couple moves into the now-vacant, sold house. The woman asks about the former owners of the house, “Who lived here before? What kind of people were they? Did you say they moved to America?..” (Kim yashagan bu yerda oldin? Qanaqa odamlar ekan? Amerikaga ko’chib ketishdi, deganmidingiz?..). The man tells her to pray for them, “Come on, let's say a prayer for them...” (Ke, shularning haqqiga bir duo qilib qo’yaylik…) (A’zam, n.d., p. 33). However, the reader knows that the family could not go to America. America has exploded, Domla has died in Jiydali, and the family has been left on the street. The well-intentioned prayer of the young couple turns into a bitter irony in the face of this truth known to the reader.

Ultimately, these deployments of dramatic irony underscore the characters’ chronic inability to decipher the true nature of their circumstances. By establishing a narrative structure where the reader consistently holds superior knowledge, the text effectively strips away the family’s illusory romanticization of America, framing it through a distinctly ironic lens.

Name, Disguise and Identity Irony

In the course of the narrative, the irony of name and identity is built upon the contrast between the names remaining from the Soviet era and the identities lost beneath these names. As Muecke points out, a character giving themselves a new name, disguising themselves, or their true identity being revealed later on are among the important examples of irony in drama (Muecke, 1982, pp. 77–78). The name of Domla's son, Mels, is the first example of this. His son, who took the name Mels during the Soviet era, later became “Meliboy”. When his mother still calls him by his old name, Mels immediately corrects her: “Meliboy! It's going to be Meliboy now, mommy!” (Meliboy! Endi Meliboy bo’ladi, oyivoy!) (A’zam, n.d., p. 2). But immediately after, he says: “Actually, whether it's Meliboy or Melisqul now, it's all the same!” (Va-abshe, endi Meliboy bo’ladimi, Melisqul bo’ladimi, bari bir go’r!) (A’zam, n.d., p. 2). In the second part, Mels himself articulates the lost identity: “If I had been born over there, maybe I wouldn't be Melis-pelis, but Mengliqul or Mamatqul... And your Klara, Karomat or Karima...” (O’sha yoqda tug’ilganimda, men ham Melis-pelis emas, Mengliqul yo Mamatqul bo’larmidim balki… Klarangiz, Karomatmi, Karimami…) (A’zam, n.d., p. 27). The name has changed, but the identity gap beneath it has not closed.

Another character who carries a similar abyss between his name and identity is Jiydaliy. Rahmatulloh Jiydaliy, introduced as a "patriot" (vatanparvar) in the character list, states that he took his nickname from his ancestors' homeland. “For example, because our ancestors were originally from the land of Jiydali, they call me Jiydaliy... I haven't seen that place myself yet” (Mani, masalan, ota-bobomiz asli Jiydali makonidan bo’lganlari uchun, Jiydaliy deb ataydilar… O’zim ko’rmaganman hali u yerni) (A’zam, n.d., p. 14). Born in Afghanistan and living in Saudi Arabia and America, Jiydaliy has never seen the place whose name he bears. Domla, too, warns his wife about him in his farewell letter. “He also has little connection to Jiydali. His homeland is elsewhere...” (Jiydaliga ham aloqasi kamroq. Uning vatani - boshqa…) (A’zam, n.d., p. 31). The name he bears turns into a mask, just like the adjective "patriot".

This mask falls off when Mels takes off his own mask. Mels, who appears blind drunk in the first part, confesses in the second part that he was actually feigning drunkenness: “I was just pretending to be drunk” (Men o’zimni mastlikka urib yotganman) (A’zam, n.d., p. 29). During this time, he heard Jiydaliy tell his Saudi friend regarding Klara’s seventeen-year-old daughter Luiza, “she is a heavenly fairy herself” (o’zlari jannati bir pari) and add, “She should be turning eighteen any day now...” (Erta-indin o’n sakkizga chiqsalar kerak…). Xonim still defends Jiydaliy as a “noble, chaste” (olijanob, pokdomon) man. Mels, on the other hand, tries to expose his true face: “Call him a filthy, faithless man!” (Iflos, iymonsiz odam deng!). Thus, Mels's drunken act and Jiydaliy's “noble man” identity are exposed (Muecke, 1982, pp. 77-79).

Domla's farewell letter is one of the important examples of the irony of name and identity. In the letter, the addresses made to his wife are crossed out one by one: “Xonim... Crossed out... My dear Roza Hasan... Crossed out... Bibirobiya!” (Xonim… O’chirilgan… Azizim Roza Hasan…

O’chirilgan… Bibirobiya!) (A’zam, n.d., p. 30). Domla drops the masks one by one until he finds the right name. He then confesses the source of all the names: “Aspiring to Rosa Luxemburg, I named you Roza; likening her to Clara Zetkin, I named my daughter Klara; and as for my only son, you know, remembering the leaders of the ideology I devoted my life to, I named him Melis” (Roza Lyuksemburgga havasan men seni - Roza, Klara Tsetkinga o’xshatib qizimni - Klara, yolg’iz o’g’limni esa, bilasan, o’zim umrimni bag’ishlagan g’oya yo’lboshchilarini eslab - Melis deb atadim). Saying, “Perhaps many absurdities started from this too” (Balki ko’pgina bema’niliklar shundan ham boshlangandir), Domla reveals his own identity: “When I myself am just Jo'raqul from Jiydali!” (O’zim bir Jiydalidan chiqqan Jo’raqul bo’lsam!) (A’zam, n.d., p. 30). It is only understood here that the expression “Jo'raqul from Jiydali” in the work's subtitle is Domla himself. The letter also ends with the signature “Your sinner, Jo'raqul” (Gunohkoring Jo’raqul) (A’zam, n.d., p. 31).

The ironies of name and identity in the work thus demonstrate that the names and identities imposed on individuals by the Soviet ideology turned into masks after independence. Domla's return to the name “Jo'raqul” ironically reveals that a lost identity can only be found again on the threshold of death.

Self-Betraying Irony

Through the unfolding of the plot, self-betraying irony is presented through the contradiction between the values the characters defend and the true attitudes they unknowingly reveal. According to Muecke, in this irony, the character unintentionally betrays their true nature while speaking according to the false image they have created about themselves (Muecke, 1982, pp. 18, 87). This irony is seen mostly in the character of Domla. While arguing with his wife, Domla delivers a long speech and defines himself as a defender of social justice: “If you want to know, I am merely a supporter of social justice and human equality” (Bilgingiz kelsa, men ijtimoiy adolat, insoniy tenglik tarafdoriman, xolos) (A’zam, n.d., p. 7). He supports his words with Ancient Roman democracy and Farabi's dream of a virtuous society. However, a few lines later, he shouts at his wife, “What's wrong with my condition, you she-ass, shut your mouth!” (Ahvolimga nima qipti, mochaxar, og’zingni yum-e!). And when Xonim says, “Now is the time of democracy!” (Hozir - demokratiya zamoni!), he silences her like this: “Hey, along with that democracy-shmemocracy of yours...” (He, o’sha demokratiya-pemokratiyangga qo’shib seni) (A’zam, n.d., p. 8). Domla, who claims to be a defender of equality and justice, unknowingly betrays that he does not treat his wife equally in his own home.

A similar contradiction is seen in Jiydaliy's patriotism. Jiydaliy, who is introduced in the character list as a “patriot” (vatanparvar) in quotation marks, unknowingly reduces the homeland to a piece of property while describing his love for it. “Now we have the intention to buy a homeland from these parts and make it prosperous, dear brother” (Endi mana shu joylardan bir vatan sotib olib, obod qilmoq niyatimiz bor, ukajon) (A’zam, n.d., p.15). To Tursuniy's question, “Don't you have a house in America?”, he also answers proudly: “I do! Not one, but several! Our wife and kids are over there” “Bor! Bir emas, bir nechta! Bola-chaqamiz o’sha yoqda” (A’zam, n.d., p. 15). Thus, Jiydaliy's patriotism turns into an investment that can be bought and sold. While the character describes himself as a patriot, he reveals through his own words that this identity is empty on the inside.

The self-betraying ironies in the work thus demonstrate that values such as justice, patriotism, and freedom, which the characters constantly talk about, are rendered meaningless by their own words and actions. The author does not judge these characters directly; on the contrary, he allows them to betray themselves.

Conclusion

This study has examined Erkin A’zam’s dramatic novella *Jannat o‘zi qaydadir* through the methodological lens of D. C. Muecke’s irony typology and Wayne C. Booth’s concept of clues to irony. As a result of the analysis, it has been determined that verbal irony, irony of situation, irony of events, dramatic irony, irony of name and identity, self-betraying irony, and title and intertextual irony form a complementary structure in the work. The author has tried to show the shift in values experienced in post-independence Uzbek society to the reader by using this structure, rather than judging it directly. Guided by Booth’s notion of overt authorial signposts, the Chekhovian epigraph and the thematic question in the title immediately prompt the reader toward an ironic interpretation from the opening page. The character list and stage directions have also played a decisive role in noticing the irony as

places where the author's voice is heard in the dramatic text. Through verbal ironies, the narrative sheds light on the fixation on social titles and the shift of science into a professional steppingstone, whereas situational ironies demonstrate that financial power consistently overshadows cultural values, scholarly pursuits, and state authority. The irony of events has shown that the steps the characters took for a better future led them to the opposite of what they expected. The paradise sought in America has been lost both far away and close to home with the explosion in America and Domla's death in Jiydali. Dramatic irony, directly related to the dramatic novella form of the work, has established a structure where the reader knows more than the characters and has made it possible to view the family's illusion ironically. Through the irony of name and identity, the identity has revealed that names assigned by Soviet ideology became superficial masks post-independence; meanwhile, self-betraying irony reveals that core values such as justice, patriotism, and freedom are undermined by what the characters say themselves. Most of the ironies in the work lead the reader to a single truth when the mask falls. The common target of these ironies is the individual of the post-independence era, wavering between the aspiration for America and the homeland. In this respect, *Jannat o'zi qaydadir* shows that Erkin A'zam uses irony not merely as a figure of speech, but as a fundamental narrative strategy that constructs the entire structure of the work. This study is intended to contribute to the examination of Erkin A'zam's dramatic works from the perspective of irony.

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