

ARTICLE

SYNTHETISM IN THE PROSE OF MIRGAZIYAN YUNUS

Landysh R. Faezova*, Gulfiya R. Gainullina, Leilya Mukhametzyanova

Department of Tatar Literature, Kazan Federal University, Leo Tolstoy Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication, Kazan, RUSSIA

ABSTRACT

The article explores different forms of synthesis of the principles of realist and modernist poetics on the example of early works of M. Yunus 'Walking philosopher' (novella) and 'The Feast' (short novel). It analyzes the multidimensionality of literary structure, imagery and stylistic features of his works. The work of M. Yunus is characterized by a special role of the author in the text and its publicistic nature that are specific to the genre of travel writing. The author shows his individual style of writing, proves himself a master of syncretic art who stands out by providing a deep philosophical analysis of the real-life material on unique topics. These very topics will then gain national colours in the work of M. Yunus slowly turning towards Psychologism. The philosophy of his works is a world of his enormous soul that searches for the meaning of life and strives for perfection and harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Different stages of literary development, especially the transient periods from one qualitative level to another, bring new examples of synthesis between preexisting literary movements. In the Tatar literature studies, the integration of elements from different artistic systems is studied in the works of the literary scholars D.F. Zagidullina [1: 187] and V.R. Amineva [2].

In Tatar literature of the 60-80s of the 20th century Synthetism is characterized by artistic principles of Realism and some relevant tendencies of the Literary Modernism [3: 187], [4]. The upgraded concept of Synthetism and its meaning is defined by sociocultural and historical conditions, particularly the end of the World War II and the following euphoria from formation of the consumerist society [5: 63-77]. Our hypothesis takes into account the existential constituent of the writer's artistic world and identifies Synthetism as a search for an effective creative method of depicting the extremely complicated reality. As a term, 'Synthetism' was brought to the literary studies in the early 20th century. It was introduced by E. Zamyatin, who presumably borrowed it from Post-impressionist artists, in whose work he took his bearings [6: 162]. Framing the concept of Synthetism in the Hegelian triad, E. Zamyatin points at the achievements of the preceding literary phenomena, in this instance Realism and Symbolism: 'dialectically: Realism is a thesis, Symbolism is an antithesis, and at the moment the new third one is a synthesis which is essentially a microscope of Realism with telescopic lenses of Symbolism reaching to the infinity' [7: 185]. At the same time Zamyatin equates Synthetism with Neo-Realism. However, L.V. Polyakova, known in the Russian literary studies as Zamyatin-theorist, believes that Synthetism is part of Neo-Realism, as mode of thought is part of a literary school [8].

In Tatar literature, the synthetic mode of thought was first used in the early 20th century in the works by F. Amirkhan and Sh. Kamal. In her article 'Synthetism as a phenomenon of the national literary-historical process', V. Amineva wrote that 'the synthesis of principles and devices from the Realist and Modernist poetics is accomplished on the level of subjective architectonics of the literary pieces and conditional nature of the narrative; depiction of the psychological fundamentals of a human being that are exposed in limit situations; the plot, which has two angles - evident and concealed, metaphorical. Synthesis of elements from different artistic systems made it possible to link global universals with concrete socio-historical, mundane and psychological realia' [9: 197].

Having adopted the best traditions of the early 20th century Synthetism, the literature of the 60-80s takes the path of a dialogue between artistic and philosophical thought. In the 60-80s of the 20th century the syncretism of philosophical and artistic thought in Tatar literature was mentioned in the works by D. Zagidullina [10: 187]. The work of the Tatar author Mirgaziyan Yunus (1927-2014) belongs to this period of the literary development, and the synthetic discourse is in many ways defined by the method of his artistic thought. In this paper we chose to analyze his two stories labelled by the author himself as a novella and a short novel from his early works - 'Walking philosopher' and 'The Feast'.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The novella 'Walking philosopher' (1961) combines principles of Realism, as a foundation, and nominally allegoric and symbolic images, as a construction material, which help to present a direct illustration of existential comprehension of the world.

The title disposes the reader towards philosophical perception of the text. M. Yunus' philosopher is a faceless, bodyless image against the machines that symbolize, on the one hand, technological progress, stereotypical mentality of the crowd, on the other, an outcast that the author does not identify with the rest of the world, the opposite world. In the narrative he does not philosophize, but on the contrary, is busy with mundane activities: he goes to get a simple job that does not require any technology. He is surrounded by

KEY WORDS

Tatar literature, Realism, Modernism, Existentialism, subjective architectonics, Synthetism.

Received: 12 May 2018
Accepted: 18 June 2018
Published: 30 June 2018

*Corresponding Author

Email:
LNJuzmuhametova@kpfu.ru

creations of human: high buildings in the big city, a stream of cars that a pedestrian cannot stop. He is weak, lonely, according to Heidegger, 'thrown' in the ocean of products of human consciousness [7: 319-344]. This artificial 'fifth element', although depicted very realistically by the author, appears to the hero as evil, a hostile world. The symbolized essence of the image hides in its simplicity, so the reader, as Synthetism implies, 'finishes the picture' himself in his own mind. It can be a philosopher from any era, as the archetypical image of a thinker always remains unchanged. He can be imagined as Socrates, who lived in an unpretending way, Michel Foucault, who with his appearance created an image of an intellectual from Paris, Berdyaev, who wrote the article 'Man and machine'. In this article Berdayev wrote: 'What tragic is that the creation rebels against its creator, it no longer obeys him. The mystery of the Fall from grace is in the rebellion of a creature against the Creator. It happens again and again throughout the history of humanity. The Promethean spirit of human is not able to master the machines he created, handle the liberated fantastic energies. We can see this throughout all the processes of rationalization in the technological era where human is being replaced by machines. (...) Human labour is being replaced by machines, which is a positive achievement that should have ended human slavery and poverty. But the machine does not obey what human requires from it, it dictates its own rules. Human said to the machine: I need you to make my life simpler, to increase my power, and the machine answered him: well, I do not need you, I can do anything without you, you might as well be gone" [8: 13]. Continuing his thought about the philosophy of technology and the fate of humanity, N. Berdyaev calls this subject 'philosophy of the human existence' [11: 13].

Another human character is a representative of the opposite world who is also faceless. Author denotes him with a synecdoche Brass face ('Jiz mangay'), hinting at his profession as a policeman, and puts it in a metaphorical sense. Further on, the author leaves the reader an algorithm to finish the portrait, give the image a full body. He is an equivalent of a preprogrammed robot who does not step outside the box of stereotypical mentality.

RESULTS

The author builds the architectonics of the piece on binary oppositions: walking/driving a car, alive/dead, he/they, that go hand in hand throughout the entire piece, but in the end the first part, as a logical conclusion for one's earthly life, falls into oblivion, which proves the essence and irreversibility of the technological progress.

The existential problematics in literary pieces is often translated into a search for a meaning of life, so authors use limit situations. The term 'limit situation' was introduced by a German philosopher and psychiatrist, one of the creators of Existentialism, Karl Jaspers in his work 'Reason and Existenz': 'According to Jaspers, limit situations arise in the teeth of death, guilt, tough challenges in life, severe stress. In order to preserve itself, the human body mobilizes all of its inner reserves, and the senses sharpen to the limit. A limit situation may lead to a revelation, catharsis, elevate the person to a higher level of spiritual growth' [12: 125]. There are quite a few textbook examples for such definition of theoretic thought in literary fiction. In the novella 'Walking philosopher', death is exactly that limit situation where in death man finds freedom. And this choice of a plot line for some reason is not considered a tragedy, as it usually is by Western Existentialists. And here is why.

The question of death in the novella is interpreted according to the Japanese version of Existential philosophy. World War II, as a premise for formation of Existentialism, influenced the Japanese literature right away. 'In the west, existentialistic feelings had two levels of fright: "cosmic" caused by the painful awareness by an individual of his or her own mortality, and "social" fueled by alienation of an individual in the period of capitalism which intensified the feeling of despair and tragic nature of the human existence among the intelligentsia. Existentialistic sentiment in Japan took on a different direction than in the West. Here, the central problem that burdened an individual was not death, but social alienation" [13: 10]. For them death was not a problem, but a 'cleansed existence'. [14:10]. In M. Yunus' novella, the death of the philosopher is described as an escape from the pressing reality and transition into an idyllic reality, which is also described as an infinite space but this time a contrastive one: 'around is a spacious emptiness' ('Tirä-yündä irken bushliq').

When looking at the literary piece from the historical point of view, the time and place of creating the novella – 1961, Plymouth, England – show the creative laboratory that the author was surrounded by. M. Yunus' works are characterized 'by a special role of the author in the text, the publicistic nature, that are specific to the genre of travel writing. Travel writing is a genre that implies Synthetism, which not only combines different kinds of elements, but suggests their deflection to each other, interpenetration, "saturation" with each other, intertwinement into one fabric' [15: 280]. M. Yunus is a Soviet child brought up in the Soviet realia. In virtue of his profession, M. Yunus, being a Soviet man, had a rare opportunity to get to know the world of the leading foreign countries. On the one hand, the novella 'Walking philosopher' draws a picture of the capitalistic West from the eyes of a Soviet person recovering from the memory all that was seen, just like a Post-impressionist artist, while on the other hand, the author presents to his reader an existential essay about the highly developed consumerist society.

In the short novel 'The Feast' ('Bäyräm', 1966) the author's main focus is on another problem of Existential philosophy. The problem of guilt interconnected with the problem of loneliness, freedom and responsibility for moral choices.

DISCUSSION

In many of his works the author puts his heroes in elemental spaces, or in uneasy spaces, like Blaise Pascal, who wrote: 'The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me' [16: 142]. In the socio-philosophical concept of the author the nominal infinite spaces of the four elements of earthly existence determine the existential sentiment of his heroes. There is ocean and seas ('The concealed blue world', 'The Feast', 'Fate of an albatross', etc.), a winter blizzard creating an illusion of the skies and the ground fusing into one ('The Feast'), the expanses opening up in front of a plane pilot ('Candles burn only in the candle holders'). On the one hand, this technique creates conditions leading to a 'limit situation', on the other, it graphically captures the very essence of Existentialism. For instance, in the short novel 'The Feast', sailors have to face the infinite ocean for months. The main character of the short novel Gabdrakhman Rakhmankulov is an image very close to the author himself that travels from one literary piece to another, which determines the cyclical nature of the narrative. The external architectonics of the text is the narrative elements related to the anticipation of celebration formed from nostalgic motives. The internal subjective architectonics bears the main ideological and aesthetic load of the narrative. It is expressed with an inserted retrospective story where the hero shares his 'New Year's holiday' memories from his childhood, that end up being far from 'festive', in the form of an inner dialogue.

The hero, young Gabdrakhman Rakhmankulov, on December 31, 1943 was sent on a mission to another village. He had to deliver hay alone on a horse. On his way he gets caught in the middle of a blizzard that soon turns everything into an infinite space ('Dönyanġ astı öskä kilä' – 'The world is turning upside down'). His feelings, his attempts to find a way is described by the author with the use of heavy colours of Expressionism ('Gabdrakhman was left alone in the very thick of the roaring, howling blizzard' – 'Ükerep-ulan torghan qishqi buran echendä Gabdrakhman ber yalghizi ide'). As he returns back to his horse, he sees there a woman who was also lost. So here is where the hero faces the problem of choice interconnected with the moral law of Existentialism. In the aforementioned article 'Existentialism and Humanism' one of the theorists of Existentialism Jean-Paul Sartre explains its essence in detail: 'We cannot decide a priori what it is that should be done. [...] Man makes himself; he is not found ready-made; he makes himself by the choice of his morality, and he cannot but choose a morality, such is the pressure of circumstances upon him. We define man only in relation to his commitments; it is therefore absurd to reproach us for irresponsibility in our choice' [17: 315]. In the given situation each of them makes their own choice: the woman driven by her maternal instinct gives her warm coat to the boy to save him from dying and in the end dies herself. The boy does not leave his horse motivated by his fright of power and survives, but is left feeling guilty for what happened for the rest of his life. However, before the boy and the woman meet, the author gives a comment that could have justified his choice: 'Yalghizliqqa qarshi torirliq tajriba dä, mikhnättägelärneng tughri yärdämchese – sabirliq ta yuq ide äle üsmer egettä ul chaqta. Yäshäu instinktġ ghäna, tuqtargha irek birmichä, anı haman algha quid' ('At the time the boy did not have any experience that could help him fight the loneliness, he did not have that true friend helping those in trouble, the patience. It was only the survival instinct that did not let him stop and pushed him further'). Returning from his memories to the present, Rakhmankulov projects this feeling onto mothers, the closest women in anyone's life. In his stream of consciousness, he comes to a conclusion: a man cannot be happy or unhappy without women, without them life has no sense at all. As we can see, the author's solution to the problem is determined by an optimistic perspective to the existential picture. When human lives, when human moves, it is a celebration of its own.

Along with other inserted stories, in the greater story called 'Rakhmankulov' we see some features of the national character defined by modesty ('Tiynaqliq digän närsäne anglamiylar ikän bolar' – 'Apparently, these ones do not understand what modesty is') and unexplainable sadness ('Bu turında söyläsäm, anglamaslar, dip qurıqtım' – 'I was afraid they would not understand if I told them about it'). However, it is too early to say something about the specifics of national viewpoint as an individual style of Mirgaziyan Yunus. It forms later on, at the same time transitioning to a psychological level allowing to get even deeper into the inner world of the characters.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the novella 'Walking philosopher' and the short novel 'The Feast' by M. Yunus written using the synthetic way of thinking are great examples of the Tatar Realist literature of the 60-80s of the 20th century that manage to reflect the existential explorations of the writer. The work of M. Yunus is characterized by a special role of the author in the text and its publicistic nature that are specific to the genre of travel writing. From the very first pieces the author shows his individual style of writing, proves himself a master of syncretic art who stands out by providing a deep philosophical analysis of the real-life material on unique topics. These very topics will then gain national colours in the work of M. Yunus slowly

turning towards Psychologism. The philosophy of his works is a world of his enormous soul that searches for the meaning of life and strives for perfection and harmony.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

None

REFERENCES

- [1] Amineva V, Ibragimova L. [2014] Synthetism as a phenomenon of the national literary-historical process. *Philology and culture*, 2(36):86.
- [2] Berdyaev N. [1933] Man and machine. (Problem of sociology and metaphysics of technology). *Journal 'Put' ('The Path')*. 38(5):13. Available at: https://krotov.info/library/02_b/berdyaev/1933_384/ [accesses on 23.07.2017].
- [3] Jameson Fredric. [2000] Postmodernism and consumer society. *Logos*. 4(5):63-77.
- [4] Jaspers K. [2013] Reason and Existenz, M Kanon+ROOI 'Reabilitatsia'.
- [5] Jean Paul Sartre. [1989] Existentialism and Humanity, Sumerki bogov (Götterdämmerung – Twilight of the gods). – M.: 'Politizdat'. Available at: http://scepcc.net/library/id_545 (accessed on 24.08.2017).
- [6] Koltsova N. [2016] Synthetism of E. Zamyatin and syncretic movement in Russian literature of the first third of the 20th century. *Herald of the Buryat State University*. 6(2):162.
- [7] Lutsky A. Existentialism and Japanese literature. Extended abstract of the dissertation. Available at: <http://www.dissercat.com/content/ekzistentsializm-i-yaponskaya-literatura> (accessed on 30.11.2017).
- [8] Rudenko AM [2016] Philosophy in diagrams and tables: a study guide. Rostov-on-Don: Feniks.
- [9] Polyakova L. [2000] Evgeny Zamyatin in the context of assessment of the 20th century Russian literature as a literary era. Tambov: Publishing House of Tambov State University named after G.R. Derzhavin.
- [10] Shachkova V. [2008] Travel writing' as a genre of fiction: theory. *Herald of the Lobachevsky University of Nizhny Novgorod*. 5(3):277–281.
- [11] Yusupova, N.M., Sayfulina F.S., Gainullina, G.R., Ibragimov, B.K. [2016] Specifics of artistic trends adaptation in the Tatar literature of the second half of the XX century. *European Journal of Science and Theology (ISSN 1841 – 0464-Romania-Scopus)*. 12(1): 213-222.
- [12] Zagidulla D. F. [2013] Modernism in Tatar literature of the first third of the 20th century. Kazan: Tatar Publishing House.