








## Artistic representation of people's world perception in folklore and literature

Gulfira Gareeva<sup>a 1</sup> , Ramziya Mustafina<sup>b</sup> , Sono Alieva<sup>c</sup> , Rif Akhmadiev<sup>d</sup> ,  
Azamat Gallyamov<sup>e</sup> 

<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup> *Bashkir State University, Ufa, Russian Federation*

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### Abstract

Studying the features of artistic reflection of the Bashkir people's spiritual world from ancient times to the present day is one of the most relevant issues of modern literature studies. The purpose of this study is to analyse the reflection of the main character traits of the Bashkir people in folklore works, to reproduce the spiritual process in the poetic material of the 18th-19th centuries; to reveal more complete and comprehensive disclosure of the spiritual world of characters in the works of Enlightenment and Critical Realism; to study the evolution of the artistic embodiment of the people's world perception in Bashkir literature of the 20th – early 21st centuries. The leading methods for studying this issue are: the analytical method – to analyse the scientific and methodological literature on the topic of the study; the comparative-historical method (comparativism) – to identify common elements in Bashkir and other national literatures over a long period of time; the method of structuralism (semiotic school) – to analyse a literary work from the perspective of structure, signification, communicativeness and integrity; the comparative method – to compare general literary phenomena. The data presented in this study can be a reliable support in studying the evolution of artistic reflection of the people's spiritual process in the art of words and in teaching courses on the history and theory of Bashkir literature at educational institutions of various levels, as well as in writing educational and methodological textbooks on the above courses.

**Keywords:** spiritual world; psychologism; national character; spiritual impulses; expressive details; artistic means

## 1. Introduction

The problem of studying the ways and means of artistic representation of the spiritual world of the people has long attracted the attention of literary scholars and folklorists. The identification of features reflecting national character traits, world perceptions, psychology and mentality has been a major area of research in recent decades. Since ancient times, in the folklore works of the Bashkir people one can find a vivid expression of the national character's main traits: kindness, sensitivity, humanity and striving for beauty. The poetic material of the 18th-19th centuries continues and, to a certain extent, develops the achievements of ancient poetry in the study of the spiritual process and reproduces the feelings of people who experienced the oppression of feudal society. The works of Enlightenment Realism depict the human being more lifelike and fully. The establishment of the principles of critical realism in Bashkir literature at the start of the 20th century and writers' creative mastery of the

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [ggareeva8284@uohk.com.cn](mailto:ggareeva8284@uohk.com.cn)

achievements of Russian and classical literature led to a fuller and more comprehensive disclosure of characters' spiritual worlds. During the formative years of Soviet literature in the 1920s and 1930s the problem of reflecting the spiritual world of the people was high on the agenda. Both objective and subjective factors played a role in the complex, contradictory understanding of this issue.

In contemporary Bashkir literature studies, a large number of works on the subject have appeared in recent decades. The fundamental works of Bashkir scholars explore various aspects of the issue concerning the spiritual world of the people. In the writings of F. Khatipov (1981), G. Khusainov (2003; 2008), A. Kharisov (1965), A. Vakhitov (2007), S. Galin (2004; 2009), F. Nadrshina (2006; 2010), M. Idelbayev (2004; 2015), G. Kunafin (2004; 2006) the spiritual world of the people is studied from ancient times to the 20th century. This study focuses on the artistic and aesthetic disclosure of the mentality, psychology, world perception and worldview of the people in Bashkir literature of the 20th and early 21st centuries. The object of the study is the works of fiction from this period. The subject of the analysis is the ways and techniques of conveying national and universal features, ways of reflecting various manifestations of the spiritual sphere of the people, the growth of writers' skill in creating a gallery of images with typical, general and individual, socio-psychological and mental traits of character. In recent decades, all fields of science have increasingly focused on a comprehensive study of the peoples' spiritual realm. Due to the reappraisal of the historical past, spiritual and moral values, and a growing interest in the identity of individuals and peoples, there is a need for a more in-depth study of problems relating to the spiritual world of the people. There is an increasing emphasis on research into such areas of modernity as "spirituality", "morality", "psychological traits of the mental", etc.

Scholar D. Valeyev (1989) used Bashkir epic works ("Ural-Batyr", "Ak buzat", etc.) as sources for studying philosophical and socio-political thought of Bashkortostan and worldviews of ancient Bashkirs. For the same purpose, he also uses application letters of Bashkir figures to tsarist authorities (a letter from all Bashkirs to Peter I, Batyrsha Aliev's letter to Empress Elizaveta Petrovna and other documents), works of Bashkir thinkers and public figures (Valeyev, 1996; 2001). The works of G. Khusainov (2003, 2008) investigate in detail the evolution of Bashkir literature, conduct a coherent and systematic study of the history of Bashkir literature from ancient times to the 20th century, ways and methods of reproducing the spiritual and moral quests of the people. A. Kharisov (1965), F. Nadrshina (2006) and S. Galin (2004) believe that the historical memory of mankind, spiritual world, world outlook of every nation is imprinted in folklore genres such as epic, kubair, legends, songs, beits, etc. The study was based on the following materials: 1) works of fiction by Bashkir writers; 2) various textbooks and teaching aids; 3) scientific works on literature studies and monographs. The leading methods for studying this issue are: the analytical method – to analyse the scientific and methodological literature on the topic of the study; the comparative-historical method (comparativism) – to identify common elements in Bashkir and other national literatures over a long period of time; the method of structuralism (semiotic school) – to analyse a literary work from the perspective of structure, signification, communicativeness and integrity; the comparative method – to compare general literary phenomena.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Since ancient times the Bashkir people have expressed their emotions, feelings and spiritual world in a unique and vivid way: through pictures of nature and objects of the surrounding world. In the ancient epics "Ural Batyr", "Ak buzat", "Zayatulak and Hyuhylu", etc. the native land, nature, homeland and the Ural Mountain are glorified by various tropes and expressive-emotional and artistic means in the form of kubair. They express sincere feelings of devotion to the promised land and a readiness to defend their homeland. For instance, in the oldest epic, "Ural Batyr", the winged horse

Akbuzat is portrayed as a loyal friend of the epic hero Ural. With the help of a bulat sabre, the batyr destroys his enemies. The melody of the kurai reflects the feelings and experiences of the batyr, his longing for his homeland, his mother, his beloved, etc. Various elements of psychologism in folklore works serve to transmit spiritual impulses (Shadmanov, 2010; Mazhitayeva et al., 2016; Samirkhanova et al., 2015). The epos "Kuzy-Kurpes and Mayan-Khylyu" is a striking example of this. It depicts some of the manifestations of the soul's dialectic, the severe mental hesitation before the hero makes an important decision: he experiences contradictory feelings. The behavioural and internal aspects of the character are particularly evident before he leaves to look for his bride. Kuzy-Kurpes' soul reaches out uncontrollably towards Mayan-Khylyu, but at the same time he feels sorry for leaving his mother alone for long. The poetic monologue, a reference to the nomadic world, conveys Alpysha's state of mind as she yearns for her son.

Most of the time it is the poetry form that conveys the emotions of the soul in works of prose genre. This is precisely the peculiarity of poetry in reflecting emotional processes. The achievements of ancient poetry in the study of the spiritual process of the 18th-19th centuries are continued and to some extent developed, the experiences of people oppressed by the conditions of feudal society are reproduced (Mardanov et al., 2017; Gareeva et al., 2017). The love lyrics figuratively and poetically convey the emotional conflicts of young people who love each other. However, often due to the fixation on the epic genre of depicting external events, the artistic elaboration of the reproduction of the peoples' spiritual sphere was insignificant in this period. In its underlying ideological and moral principles, the creative method of Enlightenment realism "seemed to make a bid to portray specifically at least one of the essential aspects of the psyche – the thinking process, without which no intellectual development is possible" (Ashirova et al., 2016; Khazretali et al., 2018). This made it possible to depict a person in a more lifelike, fuller way. But the works of this method show only static mental qualities, the flow of thoughts is not reflected in detail. The characters' mental capacities in the works of Bashkir enlightenment writers of the late 19th century – R. Fakhrutdinov, M. Gafuri, A. Tagirov, A. Isyanberdin, Z. Ummati – are "objectified" and serve primarily as didactic instructions and moral precepts. Such means as description of the environment, the inner monologue addressed to the self, the compositional and narrative form of letters, enrich the artistic arsenal of Enlightenment realism.

A more complete and comprehensive disclosure of the spiritual world of the characters was achieved through the establishment of the critical realism principles in Bashkir literature at the beginning of the 20th century. During this period, writers were in the process of mastering the achievements of Russian and classical literature. The romantic element, which had a definite place in literature in the early twentieth century, also played a significant role. Gradually, literature as a whole was undergoing a qualitative renovation. The writers' approach to the conception of the hero changed, psychological analysis was combined with social analysis, and the contradictory inner world of the socially determined individual was being recreated. For the first time, the works of M. Gafuri, D. Yultyi and A. Tagirov (Gareeva et al., 2020) depicted images of poor, oppressed people whose actions and inner feelings were explained by social motives. Such expressive realistic details as tears, sighs, a baby's piece of bread with a psychological burden, portrait characteristics, and monologues in non-personal direct speech were used by the writers to reveal the mental qualities of their characters (Kunafin, 2006). The role of psychological detail has increased in their works. For instance, the pre-revolutionary prose of M. Gafuri reveals the psychological inner world of its characters: the psychological portrait of the national intelligentsia, its spiritual needs, thirst for the renewal of life, and expectation for new changes are more fully reflected in "The Confession of Khamit, or Leila and My Life".

The problem of reflecting the spiritual world of the people was high on the agenda during the formative years of Soviet literature. Objective and subjective factors influenced the contradictory

understanding of the issue. The presence of psychologism in the works was entirely removed in view of the fact that literature had an enlightenment mission, driven by the social and aesthetic demands of the time. Psychologism was considerably damaged by the dominant phenomenon of asceticism, a misguided approach to the concept of the hero. Ye. Usievich (1936) rightly notes the following about the mistaken conception of the hero: "For a very long time it was common in literature to portray the New Man as self-sacrificing in struggle and labour, heroically devoted to the idea and extremely energetic, but totally devoid of all human feelings, cold-hearted, rough and (it was also highly popular) even physically unattractive. As for his ideas – not in their general form, but specifically, practically deployed – and his intellectual qualities, they were not visible at all."

Bashkir prose has also been affected by the absolutisation of "class distinction", the widespread tendency to portray heroes only in black and white, with a lack of individualisation and the representation of the individual as the embodiment of a single social trait. The novels "The Red Army Soldiers" and "The Red Guards" by A. Tagirov depict the schematic image of the Red Army commander Bilalov, an active fighter for Soviet power, but indifferent to his family and wife. The novel "In the Wagon" by I. Nasyri recreates the image of the Chief of Staff Tagirov, devoid of the usual human feelings of grief and worry. The purely sociological nature of the psychology of the period did not serve the artistic aim of revealing the spiritual world of the characters. The Bashkir writer and critic, D. Yulyti, editor-in-chief of the magazine "October" (Figure 1) (Gareeva, & Mustafina, 2020) underlines: "...The revolutionary heroism shown in the armed struggle gave birth to its own artistic colours in art. Here there is a denial of any manifestation, of the benefits of a personal life, it is consumed by the struggle. The revolutionary enthusiasm, the asceticism that was characteristic of the period of wartime communism, these are the lines, the qualities inherent in the heroes of that time". In the 1920s, the lyrical-epic genre of *neser* was developing intensively. The lyrical works of S. Kudash, Sh. Fidai, B. Ishemgulov, D. Yulyti, T. Yanabi, I. Nasyri and A. Karnay are characterised by the lyrical hero's lengthy outpourings of an agitated soul, stormy feelings, sometimes too excessive and abstract. Thus, the stories, essays, and *nesers* – genres of small prose reflected "feelings without images" instead of concretised emotions. (Khusainov, 2003; Vakhitov, 2007).



**Figure 1.** Magazine "October"

### 3. Results and Discussion

Later Soviet literature marked a qualitative change in the reflection of the spiritual world of the people. A strong tendency towards in-depth psychologism, which succeeded in revealing the hidden springs of heroes' external behaviour and in combining social analysis with psychological analysis, emerged with the publication in 1923 of the novel "Chapayev" by D. Furmanov, in 1924 of "Towns and Years" by K. Fedin and in 1926 of "the Defeat" by A. Fadeev (Nadrshina, 2010; Samirkhanova et

al., 2015). Thanks to the mastering of achievements of Russian and the entire multinational Soviet literature, the Bashkir prose also includes works which try to provide psychological motivation for the actions of the heroes and comprehend their inner world, such as "The Philosophy of Timerkai" (1924) by D. Yuliy and "The Black-Faced" (1926) by M. Gafuri, which in the psychological sense illuminated the tragic destiny of the heroes before the Revolution. The novel "Blood" (1931) by D. Yuliy and the short story "The Steps of Life" (1931) by M. Gafuri reveal to a greater extent the image of a Bolshevik, a conscious fighter of the revolution. The origin of qualitative changes in the inner world of a person under the influence of the fundamental factors of socialist reality and new social relations through the drama of individuals is psychologically convincing in the novels "Sibai", "The Defeated Pitfall" by I. Nasyri. The writer managed to show the movements of the characters' souls through a dynamic inner struggle, the contradictory nature of their views, and the triumph of positive elements in them. The synthesis of the psychological and the epic results from the combination of psychoanalysis and the epic unfolding of events. Along with works of Soviet writers such as "Traansval" by K. Fedin and "Virgin Soil Upturned" by M. Sholokhov, the short story "Honour for Honour" by S. Agish, written during these years, deepened the understanding of the aesthetic significance of psychologism in relation to the negative hero.

In the years of the Great Patriotic War, lyrical and journalistic genres were mainly developed without any claim to extensive psychologism or a deep psychological argumentation of actions. Unlike the works of the 1930s, where psychological analysis became an aesthetically effective means of revealing the spiritual world of the hero, consistent realistic perception and depiction of a person, artistic means were subordinate to the individualisation of the character. The following decade witnessed a retreat from the prevailing positions of literature in its exploration of the depths of human life. The weakness of the psychological motivation, the artificial impoverishment of the character's mental life, were generated by the "theory of non-conflict". H. Davletshina's novel "Irgiz" (Figure 2), although written in the 1940s-50s, had a powerful impact on the literary process only in the 1960s, but due to certain objective reasons (the author became a victim of Stalinist repressions), it was published much later. The writer combines the universal and the national traits with the typical, the general and the individual, the social and the psychological in the personality of the protagonist, Aibulat, a shepherd from a poor peasant family, who managed to understand the class essence of the capitalist system and became one of the political leaders of his people in the revolutionary struggle.



**Figure 2.** H. Davletshina's novel "Irgiz"

As shown in the aforementioned study, such a striking feature of people's psychology as readiness for self-sacrifice for the sake of others' happiness and life on earth, reflected in the epic "Ural Batyr", (when the folk hero Ural Batyr denied himself life-giving water and, dying, sprinkled his native land with it, and thus, by giving up personal immortality, the hero immortalised his land and people) continues successfully during the whole evolution of Bashkir literature (Shamigulova et al., 2015; Abdullina, 2016; Abdullina et al., 2018; Alibayev et al., 2016; Kiraeyev, 1963). The high aesthetic ideals of the people are the source of the acute raising of ideological, moral and spiritual problems, uncompromising resolution of which are continued in the works of M. Karim, A. Khakimov, R. Sultangareev, D. Bulyakov, N. Musin, A. Mirzagitov and other Bashkir writers. Reflecting the ideas of humanism and the aesthetic ideal of the Bashkir people in the works of M. Karim, I. Yumagulov, A. Atnabaev, A. Khakimov, R. Sultangareev and D. Bulyakov: a harsh sentence of Bashkir women - simple toilers - to the friend Zulkhabira in the drama "The Country of Aigul", Akieget and Zubarzhata's leaving for their death in the tragedy "Night of the Moon Eclipse" by M. Karim, the expulsion of Nerkes by her relatives in the tragedy "Nerkes" by I. Yumagulov, the repudiation of Mother from her traitor son in the drama "Mother's Verdict" by A. Atnabaev, moral maximism of Mansur Kutushev in the novel "The Milky Way" by A. Khakimov, the uncompromising and principled nature of Azamat Bikbaev and Arslan Argynbaev in the novels "The Land We Live On" by R. Sultangareev and "Life Is One" by D. Bulyakov – the reader does not doubt about these actions, they are taken for granted as manifestations of citizenship, morality and spirituality (Kireyev, 1963). In Bashkir prose one can also discover the tendencies in Soviet literature which existed in the 1930s, e.g. in works such as "Virgin Soil Uplifted" by M. Sholokhov, "Sot" by L. Leonov, "Hydrocentral" by M. Shaginyan and "People from the Backwoods" by A. Malyshkin. These tendencies represent aesthetics of socialist labour, particularities of depicting the process of awakening of people's self-consciousness, artistic unveiling of different aspects in the character of worker and collective farmer.

#### 4. Conclusions

Thus, the functional significance of the external world's attributes – the animate and inanimate objects surrounding the hero – is immense. The ancient human being could not yet comprehend his or her inner world and the psychological processes occurring there. That is why it is impossible to find modern forms and ways of reflecting the heroes' mental world in folklore works. At the same time, the main features of the national character: kindness, sensitivity, humanity, aspiration for beauty can be found in the works of folk art. The Bashkir epos differs from those of other nations in that it is dominated by the ideas of humanism, goodness, justice and love of mankind, and affirms one's unity with nature and the origins of life. For instance, the epic hero Ural Batyr shows a vivid, unprecedented example of readiness to sacrifice himself for the well-being of others, for life on earth. By refusing life-giving water, while dying, Ural sprinkled his land with it, immortalised the people.

The high aesthetic ideals of the people are the source of the acute raising of ideological, moral and spiritual problems. The quality, degree and forms of artistic reflection of the spiritual sphere in the artistic consciousness of the people at different stages of the literature's development have undoubtedly been greatly influenced by the social and aesthetic needs of the time and the specifics of the writers' artistic vision. Due to the changes in socio-political conditions and reality during the 20th century, Bashkir literature, as well as multinational literature in general, undergoes fundamental changes not only in the principles of creating images but also in the methods of approaching the phenomenon depicted. Writers have delved ever deeper into the processes of the inner life of the individual and have been successful in applying direct forms of psychoanalysis. When revealing the spiritual world of the people, the authors focus particularly profoundly on the constant, detailed reproduction of the spiritual strivings, aspirations, dreams, quests and experiences of the characters. Gradually freeing

itself from autobiography, factuality and descriptiveness, Bashkir literature has been gradually moving towards artistry, aesthetic expressiveness, richness and deepening the knowledge of the individual.

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#### AUTHOR BIODATA

**Gulfira Gareeva** is a Full Doctor in Philology, Professor, Department of Bashkir Literature, Folklore and Culture, Bashkir State University, Ufa, Russian Federation.

**Ramziya Mustafina** is a PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism, Bashkir State University, Ufa, Russian Federation.

**Sono Alieva** is a PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism, Bashkir State University, Ufa, Russian Federation.

**Rif Akhmadiev** is a Full Doctor in Philology, Professor, Department of Journalism, Bashkir State University, Ufa, Russian Federation.

**Azamat Gallyamov** is a PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism, Bashkir State University, Ufa, Russian Federation.