

# “UNDERGROUND PERSON” BY I. ABUZYAROV: DIALOGUE WITH F.M. DOSTOYEVSKY

Adela N. Nabiullina<sup>1</sup>  
Venera R. Amineva<sup>1</sup>  
Elena I. Zeifert<sup>2</sup>

1. Kazan Federal University. email: *amineva1000@list.ru*
2. The Russian State Humanitarian University

## Abstract

The aesthetic self-determination of ethnically non-Russian Russian writers occurs in dialogue with the traditions of Russian classics of the 19th century. For I. Abuzyarov, creating the works in the paradigms of different national and cultural traditions, the artistic discoveries by F.M. Dostoevsky are important. The concept of the work was influenced by the studies that substantiate the transcultural model of artistic development, the dialogical nature of verbal creativity, and the theory of intertextuality is developed. During the solution of the tasks set, system-structural and context-hermeneutic methods were used. It is established that the type of “underground” person in the work by I. Abuzyarov has kindred features with the paradoxicalist F.M. Dostoevsky. Undergroundness as an ontological situation, ideological and psychological space becomes the factor determining the process of identification and self-identification of characters in I. Abuzyarov's prose. Like his predecessor, he uses the hero's confessional introspection as the main means of revealing the “underground man” nature. The character is implemented not only in the plot, but also revealed as a subject, a carrier of a point of view. The problem of self-determination and self-awareness of the story subject is thematized and acts as the most important genre-forming principle that determines the way of the main character image development. The obtained results are significant for understanding the artistic and aesthetic nature of literature that implements the phenomenon of the Russian-Tatar borderlands, as well as for determination the volume and content of “national literature” concept at the present stage.

**Keywords:** Russian-language prose, tradition, character, type, identification, deixis.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The interaction of various traditions and elements of different artistic systems in the aesthetic field of one literature is one of the trends in the modern world literary process, reflecting the special role of frontier as the area of the most intensive implementation of intercultural dialogues. The border performs the structural functions of separating one from another, inner space from external one. But the border not only separates one from the other, but also unites them, since it belongs to both components.

The ambivalent nature of the border reveals itself in two opposite and interconnected acts - identification and differentiation. Therefore, for literature that implements the phenomenon of cultural frontier, the most important are the problems of identity, identification and self-identification. They become the subject of reflection of lyrical subjects [see: 1] and are actualized in the subject-character sphere of epic works.

A special image of the world is created in the works of writers who implement the phenomenon of cultural borderland, focused on the traditions of not only certain national literature, but also on the experience of world culture as a whole [for example: 2]. The same tendency manifests itself in the work by I. Abuzyarov. For example, in his novel "The Finnish Sun" (2015), the interaction of different types of spaces organize the model of the world that is characteristic of magical realism poetics, which is both "Nizhny Novgorod," "Finnish," and "Russian" and "universal".

The study of the types of dialogical relations with the traditions of Russian classics of the 19th century and above all with the works by F.M. Dostoevsky seems significant for understanding both the specifics of the artistic method by I. Abuzyarov, creating works in the paradigms of different national and cultural traditions, and the artistic and aesthetic nature of literature, implementing the phenomenon of the Russian-Tatar borderland as a whole.

The novelty of the study is determined by its material: the work of ethnically non-Russian Russian writers, in particular I. Abuzyarov, remains unstudied (the article by D. Uffelmann [3] deserves attention among serious literary studies) and requires a scientifically based and adequate aesthetic assessment. For the first time, an attempt is made to consider dialogue with the Other as the way of self-identification and self-determination of a hero in the artistic world by I. Abuzyarov, which corresponds to the genre-compositional structure of works and special poetics.

## 2 METHODS

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was the works of domestic and foreign scholars [4; 5], which substantiate the transcultural model of artistic development, suggesting "cultural diversity and universality as the property of one person" [6, p. 97].

The concept of the work was influenced by the studies that reveal the dialogical nature of artistic creation [7], the theory of intertextuality is being developed, the distinction of intertextuality in "wide" and "narrow" meaning is introduced. They determine the difference between intertextual analysis and the comparative historical and comparative study of national literatures [8].

During the solution of set tasks, it is proposed to use the system-structural and context-hermeneutic methods. Intercultural approaches are also in demand, the effectiveness of which has been identified in a number of modern works [9; 10; 11].

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The subject of analysis was the stories by I. Abuzyarov "Genghis novel" (2004) and "Glamor in the slum" (2007), which contain the references to the works by F.M. Dostoevsky, noted by mentioning the type of "underground" person that was developed in his work. The allusion appears in them as a sign of a different semantic position, in relation to which "their" statement is built. The comparative analysis of "Notes from the

Underground” by F.M.Dostoevsky and short prose by I. Abuzyarov made it possible to establish two types of dialogical relations between them: “one's own” as similar to “another's” and “another's”, which became “their own”.

The first type of dialogical relationship determines the ways of self-determination of the hero in the story "Genghis novel" (2004). Azat Keshe ("free man") calls himself Shihi Hutuhu (Genghis Khan official). His commitment to ethnic rites and traditions, the observance of a certain set of rules of the nomadic people - Yasa, on the one hand, and secular life in modern society, on the other hand, force the hero to exist in a dual world. In the evenings, led by a knock-star, Azat is a warrior: physically strong, wild, aggressive, primitive. He is a lone wolf, walking through life with a single purpose - to glorify the great Genghis Khan. The touchy and suspicious hero responds to an oblique look with a fight, to a seemingly small insult - with bloodshed. The world around him seems hostile, opposed to him and his khan. Hiding behind an external desire to strictly observe Yasa, Azat makes many people suffer: a waiter in a cafe, a casual money changer, harmless teenagers, his friend and beloved woman.

Unlike Paradoxalist F.M. Dostoevsky, Azat Keshe sometimes leaves his underground, but does so with great reluctance and under the pressure of external circumstances. In addition, Azat's aggression is open, he directs it to offenders, resorting to physical violence. On the one hand, the hero's excessive aggressiveness can be perceived as the phenomenon of the notorious “gopnichestvo”. But the complex duality of his consciousness, constant analysis and introspection, the sense of shame experienced by him, indicate the true scale of the hero's personality, testify to his extraordinary.

The hero's inherent pride and at the same time the self-humiliation that he experiences every time thinking about his khan, destroy the character's epic integrity and completeness, making him romantically contradictory and open-minded. Azat feels shame for disgracing and betraying his khan when he fell in love. He suffers in the situation of ethical and psychological duality. Contempt and disgust for others are expressed in the questions that the hero asks himself, discussing his betrayal: “Was I really absorbed by her culture, airy, like a castle, patchwork and cold, like a satin coverlet? Have I really succumbed to her? Admired? Started to imitate this culture?” [12, p. 95]. In this situation, like the Paradoxalist who abandoned Lisa, the hero refuses to love a woman. He voluntarily becomes a martyr, taking revenge from fifteen teenagers. Here a direct parallel arises with the hero F.M. Dostoevsky: “Of course, I was the main martyr myself, because I was fully aware of the whole disgusting baseness of my evil stupidity, at the same time I could not restrain myself ...” [13, p. 496].

Unlike the hero of Dostoevsky, Azat Keshe is not familiar with the philosophical works of Kant, Stirner, Schopenhauer, he did not read Chernyshevsky, Nekrasov, Gogol, Goncharov, Pushkin, Byron and Heine, but he also thinks about the evil that civilization carries, absorbing everything around, and most importantly - the person. The paradoxist reflects on the questions that people have become worse and farther from civilization. Azat Keshe argues in a similar way: “Eaten by the guilt of betrayal from the mere thought that he almost became a “civilized man”. What is it to become “cultural”? To sleep with a woman who does not have the slightest respect for men? Write a novel about battles instead of participating in them by yourself?” [12, p. 96]. At this moment, he makes a decision - "to chop this civilization down." Like the Paradoxalist, Azat Keshe claims to a complete break with the world and goes "underground" as a kind of ideological space - opposing himself to the whole society, justified by criticism of the

social ideals of progress. As in the story by F.M. Dostoevsky, the story by I. Abuzyarov performs the conscious rooting of a person in a metaphysical evil: "And I realized: this knock calls him up - to the glory. This star draws him into the sky - to freedom. And succumbing to this call, he will shout: "Hurray! Cut it!" - and he will go, feeling the spaciousness and recklessness in the chest, to destroy everything in its path." [12, p. 98].

Another form of character self-identification, carried out by identifying oneself with the Other, is manifested in the story "Glamor in the Slums", whose hero calls himself "an underground man". Like his predecessor, I. Abuzyarov interprets the underground in social, philosophical and psychological aspects. An analytical explanation and assessment of the hero's character are the main elements in the structure of the image. The hidden depths of the soul illuminated by self-awareness are subject to artistic rationalization: "An underground man is an author and a fashion designer. Let homegrown, funny, awkward, in leotards with drooping knees, but a fashion designer. He reflects a lot and cannot stand the interference of others in his strange life-reflection" [14].

The character is realized not only in the plot, but also revealed as a subject, the bearer of a point of view, and also acts as a narrator. The hero searches for himself between these poles. The narrator wonders several times, who is he - an "underground man"? An "underground man" is a person who voluntarily strives for loneliness, as is evidenced by his actions and thoughts. Every day he secretly dreams of a "cover girl," but having met her and even liked her, he voluntarily withdraws into himself, because the underground grows together with his soul and becomes her inner space. "Underground person" is "a person - fold in the lining", "a person-gap" [14]. He is always gloomy, lonely, but at the same time constantly reflects. Reflection is his special relation to the world. The hero by I. Abuzyarov has some entertainment: walks in the woods, breakfast in a cafe, talking with a dog and the dreams of a "cover girl". Despite the necessary underground trash, the hero has a rather ordinary biography: incomplete secondary education, work at the factory, life with a single mother, whom he promised to marry. Instead of a friend - a dog, a two-volume book by Kandinsky at leisure, which the hero read twice, but did not understand.

The story is built on the principle of antithesis, which allows us to draw explicit parallels between an "underground" person and a "glamorous" person. At the same time, we do not find a particular contrast in the biographies of the heroes, since the "cover girl", unattainable and incredible in the thoughts of the "underground man", turns out to be a simple girl from the province, looking for love, support and protection. Dependent on her benefactor and "boss," the girl is forced to live in a one-room apartment with a bunch of domestic problems that only a man can solve. And this man is a neighbor. But he is the same "underground man" who decided for himself that she would remain only a "cover girl" for him.

Despite the apparent antithesis, the heroes are close in spirit, in the type of consciousness. The writer notes that both the "underground" and the "glamorous" people are outside of society. A "glamorous" girl is not adapted to life in the same way as an "underground" person. In pursuit of a beautiful life, she misses the opportunity to get an education, completely falls under the influence of her "boss", cannot find a job and provide for herself. The "underground" person is outside of society, because he wants to be only alone with himself. He misses the funeral and weddings, misses life itself: "The underground man is all in himself. He is always the whole scruff of the neck, inside out. It is as if he begs to be beaten again" [14].

The life outside of society, the lack of proper education and good work, self-doubt are expressed in the low self-esteem of the "underground man." He is afraid of women, love and its manifestations, because he is unsure of himself, but absolutely sure that a woman cannot like him. "Cover girl" and "a young man from the last page" are found in a narrow and cramped space in which they cannot get away from each other: in the elevator, and then in the apartment of the "glamorous" person. But it is impossible to "get close" to the "underground" person, he has become very rigid and hardened in his wild underground. And this is the reason for his emotional tragedy. The hero prefers to pass his days alone, preferring to talk with a dog, considering himself unworthy of love and human participation.

The underground for I. Abuzyarov's hero is more expensive and dearest than anything else, and it doesn't matter that the dreams of love will be unfulfilled, and the beloved woman will be killed. Being the inner space of the soul, the underground tells the hero that real life is full of fears and cruelty: "He understood long ago that the outside world is only suffering and fear. And that suffering and fear does not exist if you fence them off with a wall" [14]. "Underground" as the only possible situation of a radical "extra-worldliness" inside the world is expressed in the fact that the hero does not even try to defend himself against accusations of his beloved woman murder. His days will be numbered in the tops of the "outer" underground - in the thick soundproof walls of a mental hospital with iron doors on a deadbolt.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the type of "underground" person in the work by I. Abuzyarov has kindred features with the Paradoxist F.M. Dostoevsky. The hero of "Notes from the Underground" claims that "consciousness is a disease." Modern heroes of the underground literally suffer from diseases of consciousness - they have mental deviations. Azat Keshe, the hero of "Genghis novel", easily loses his temper, he often has bouts of aggression, he is mentally unstable, and the hero of the story "Glamor in the slums" is recognized insane and ends his life in a psychiatric hospital.

These heroes cannot live in society, therefore, not only they are fenced off from the outside world, but the world rejects them. Reflecting and lightly wounded characters of Abuzyarov feel their uselessness and they are more deeply rooted in their underground because of this. Moreover, each of the heroes, prone to introspection, reveals psychological paradoxes in himself and in others: the simultaneous ability to good and evil, the inseparability of human dignity from insignificance, the inconsistency of elemental impulses.

Representing a person in two dimensions: in his socio-psychological specificity and in a universal-tribal essence, the writer fixes the gap between his internal potentialities and their implementation, raises the question of the spiritual self-determination of a person, freedom and predetermination of his fate, responsibility for his actions and life path choice. These problems are solved entirely from within the character's consciousness, in his horizons and in his language. The main means of revealing the nature of the "underground man" is the confessional introspection of the hero, which justifies a direct penetration into the content of his experiences, revealing of their hidden essence.

## 5 SUMMARY

The aesthetic self-determination of ethnically non-Russian Russian writers occurs in the dialogue with the traditions of Russian classics of the 19th century. For I. Abuzyarov the artistic discoveries by F.M. Dostoevsky, the type of underground man formed in his works are important. Undergroundness as an ontological situation, ideological and psychological space becomes the factor determining the process of identification and self-identification of characters in I. Abuzyarov's prose.

As the main way of character identification, deixis is used. This method of character self-determination corresponds to the genre-compositional structure of works, which include the elements of lyrical meditation, a philosophical novel, a parable and a joke.

The conducted research is significant for “national literature” concept volume and content determination at the present stage: it turns out to be flexible and plastic, infinitive, with a solid semantic core and periphery - the field of uncertainty.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University and by RFBR and Government of the Republic of Tatarstan according to the research project № 18-412-160006.

## REFERENCES

- [1] A. Gaynutdinova, S. Zinin, A. Galimullina, M. Ibragimov, “Special features of studying modern russian poetry at school in the context of Russian and Tatar cultures' dialogue”, *Astra Salvensis*, vol. 5, no. 10, pp. 375-380, 2017.
- [2] G. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed., Aunt Lute Books, 2012. 312 p.
- [3] D. Uffelmann, “The game of nomadism, or Postcoloniality as a technique (The case of Ildar Abuzyarov)”, *New Literature Review*, 2017, No. 2.  
<http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/8411> (Reference date 01.05. 2018).
- [4] M. Tlostanova, “Post-Soviet literature and the aesthetics of transculture. Never to live, write from nowhere”, M.: URRS. 2004. 416 p.
- [5] H. Bhabha, “The Location of Culture”, New York, 1994. 408 p.
- [6] E. Berry, M. Epstein, “Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication”, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. 340 p.
- [7] M. Bakhtin. “The Aesthetics of Verbal Creativity”, Moscow: Art, 1986. 445 p.
- [8] J. Kristeva, “Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art”, New York: Columbia University Press. 1980. 305 p.
- [9] A.Khabibullina, E. Nagumanova, O. Amurskaya, “Russian Classical Literature in Multi-ethnic Environment: The Issues of Reception and Methodology of Teaching”, *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences EpSBS*, vol. XII, pp. 75-82, July 2016.
- [10] M. Afanasyeva, V. Krylov, Y. Govoruhina, “Genre synthesis in Andrei Bely's reviews”, *AD ALTA-journal of interdisciplinary research*, vol.8, is.1, pp. 159-161, 2018.
- [11] V. Shamina, “Chekhov's Imprints in “A Streetcar Named Desire”, *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, vol. 26, pp. 135-144, 2018.

- [12] I. Abuzyarov, "On Dislike," Kazan: Idel, 2016. 256 p.
- [13] F. Dostoevsky, "Collected Works: In 12 vol. V. 2. Tales and short stories", Moscow: Publishing House Pravda, 1982. 560 p.
- [14] I. Abuzyarov. "Glamor in the slums", <http://glfr.ru/biblioteka/ildar-abuzjarov/glamur-v-trushhobah.html> (Reference date: 01.05.2019).