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# GIVING ORPHANS A VOICE: POSTCOLONIAL LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION IN CONTEMPORARY KAZAKH LITERARY TEXTS

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## ABSTRACT

*This article investigates literary representations of the vulnerable condition of orphans across diverse geopolitical and cultural contexts, including the United States, Turkey, Yakutia, Bashkortostan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. The examined narratives, as literary texts, encompass portrayals of both school-aged children and university students pursuing education in Europe and Central Asia. D. Beisenbekuly's novel "Kyltusau," a poignant literary text, articulates the sociocultural tensions experienced by students concurrently navigating life in America and Kazakhstan, shedding light on the complexities of bicultural identity. In a parallel vein, a detective novel "Kargys atkan tagdyr" (Cursed Fate) by Kazakhstani Uyghur author Sh. Nazarov, another compelling literary text, foregrounds systemic issues such as corruption, human trafficking, drug addiction, and homicide. Set during the fraught transition from socialism to capitalism in the 1990s, this narrative unfolds through the tragic fate of a single family, rendering a microcosmic view of societal disintegration within the framework of a literary text. A. Baimukhametov's short story "Tastamashy, Ana!" (Don't Leave Me, Mum!) explores the lived realities of orphans in Bashkortostan, transforming their suffering into a literary reflection of broader social dynamics. Likewise, "Confessions of the Disappeared" by Russian-language Yakut writer N. Dyachkovskaya captures the existential struggles of South Asian orphans amid the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Across these literary texts, orphanhood is not merely a thematic concern but a narrative device through which broader societal crises are conveyed. The protagonists, bereft of guardianship or solidarity, embody the marginalized subjectivity through which the authors critique social instability and moral fragmentation.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Literature, Novella, Character System, Story System, Historical Reality, Artistic Solution.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the condition of orphans has remained a poignant and persistent social concern, reflected across literary traditions in every era. In the early XX century, the plight of parentless children became a foundational theme in Kazakh literature, inspiring numerous poetic and prose works. This period saw a realistic and compassionate depiction of orphanhood in stories such as "Zhetim (The orphan)" and "Korgansyzydyn Kuni (A day in the life of the defenceless)" by M. Auezov, "Korkemtay" by S. Donentayev, "Momyntay (The quiet soul)" and "Zhetim Kyz (She, the Orphan)" by K. Kemengeruly. Kazakh literature further documented the trauma endured by children orphaned during the catastrophic famine of 1930-1933 and by those who lost fathers in the Second World War (1941-1945) and were lack of their father's love, portraying lives of orphan infants shaped prematurely by grief and deprivation. Orphanhood, already an enduring motif in world literature took on renewed urgency in the post-Soviet context, as the upheavals of the 1990s introduced new dimensions to this theme. A striking example is Zh. Korgasbek's short story "Zhetimnin elmen koshtasuy (An orphan's last goodbye to home)", which narrates the transoceanic journey of a young orphan during this period of dislocation. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 plunged all fifteen former republics into a profound economic and social crisis. In Russia, the absence of meat, dairy, wool, cotton, vegetables, and grain supplies from Central Asia led to a marked decline in living standards. Conversely, Central Asian republics faced the sudden cessation of construction materials such as timber, cement, nails, and glass previously sourced from Russia, resulting in industrial stagnation and widespread unemployment. The collapse of the socialist system and the disbanding of collective farms left rural populations without the means to sustain agricultural livelihoods. Lacking access to machinery or livestock, many peasants were compelled to migrate in large numbers from isolated villages to urban centers in search of subsistence. During this time, a deepening crisis of gender and family roles emerged. With men facing unemployment, women, often mothers turned to informal market trade to survive. Unmarried young women, some of whom were unprepared for the responsibilities of motherhood, sought desperate solutions to unwanted pregnancies. These cascading social disruptions, affecting millions, constituted a human tragedy that gradually found expression in contemporary literature. Today, the literary imagination continues to reconstruct and reinterpret

the stark realities of this turbulent period. In global literature, the lived experiences of orphans during the late XX century are increasingly rendered into nuanced artistic representations, offering insight into broader historical, ethical, and emotional dimensions of collective memory.

In literary studies, the orphan character is often portrayed at the intersection of reality and fantasy, emerging as an "othered" figure whose loss of parents is compensated for through supernatural abilities. Drawing on postcolonial extensions of the concept of othering, scholars analyze how the extraordinary and uncanny qualities of orphan characters in fiction intersect with readers' understandings of nation, community, knowledge, identity, and imagination [1]. As the most vulnerable members of society, orphaned children are frequently exposed to danger, exploitation, and violence, a condition that researchers increasingly interpret as an archetypal phenomenon [2].

Studies of Victorian literature and culture examine how the orphan figure was constructed both as an "other" within the family and as an archetype within broader social and imperial discourses [3]. In addition, contemporary scholarship explores representations of orphans in children's literature from a gender-based perspective, comparing male and female figures in order to reveal differences in social adaptation, identity formation, and strategies for finding a place within society [4]. Research on orphan characters in Newbery Award-winning children's literature demonstrates how these figures are shaped through recurring themes, behavioral patterns, modes of social adaptation, and their moral and educational significance for readers [5].

Although narratives about orphaned children vary widely, they nevertheless share a number of common elements [6]. One particularly persistent motif is the orphan's search for a family, which recurs across numerous literary works [7]. Beyond societal perceptions of orphans, scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of understanding how orphaned children themselves experience their life circumstances and construct their self-images [8]. A clear example can be found in the works of American writer Mark Twain and Uzbek writer Gafur Gulom, whose famous novels *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Shum Bola ("The Naughty Boy")* successfully depict social problems through the experiences of orphaned children [9].

Alongside the literary orphan, the figure of the abandoned child occupies an equally significant place in literature. By taking abandoned children under its protection and elevating their image, the

state seeks to cultivate a sense of guardianship and paternal responsibility within the collective consciousness [10].

In this study, several key theoretical terms are employed in a specific analytical sense that merits brief clarification. Linguistic representation is understood as the ways in which language structures, voices, and narrative strategies are used to articulate the experiences of marginalized characters, particularly orphans, within literary texts. The concept of artistic reality refers to a mediated form of social reality that has been reinterpreted through the author's creative vision, transforming lived experience into symbolic and aesthetic meaning rather than direct documentation. The term character system denotes the network of interrelated characters whose social, psychological, and moral functions collectively construct the thematic and ideological framework of a literary work. These definitions are provided to ensure conceptual clarity and to facilitate accessibility for readers who may not be fully familiar with regional literary-theoretical traditions.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Research Methods

This study employed hermeneutic and historical-comparative methodologies to examine the literary portrayal of orphanhood across selected works. Through close textual analysis, it was demonstrated that the destinies of protagonists in the novels and stories of Kazakh, Uyghur, Bashkir, and Yakut authors, who wrote within a shared historical period reflect a collective tragedy emblematic of the broader experience of many contemporaries. The disruption of universal human values and the transformation of collective consciousness are interpreted as indicators of profound societal crisis.

The research draws upon the critical insights of Galym G. Zhumaberdikyzy, who explored representations of orphanhood in world literature and conducted comparative analysis between the experiences of vulnerable children in Kazakh fiction and those in works such as Jack London's "Zholdan taigan (The Apostate)", Maxim Gorky's "Zhetymak (The Lonesome orphan)", and A. Serafimovich's "Torgay tun (The sparrow's night)" [11,55-57].

Further conclusions are grounded in the theoretical perspectives of leading Kazakh literary scholars, including Z. Akhmetov, T. Rakhymzhanov, B. Maitanov, R. Turysbek, and G. Zhumaberdikyzy, as well as folklorists such as H. Dosmukhameduly and A. Toishanuly. In addition, the research integrates the contributions of foreign scholars and

critics, including N. Baramygin, M. Kondratyeva [12], D. Syryseva, among others, whose works provide valuable comparative and contextual frameworks.

### 2.2. Material description

The aim of this article is to examine how the reality of contemporary society is artistically transformed through the novels "Kyltusau (Fetters of a Slave)" by the Kazakh author D. Beisenbekuly, "Kargys atkan tagdyr (Damned Fate!)" by the Uyghur writer Sh. Nazarov, "Tastamashy, Ana!" (Don't leave us, Mum!) by the Bashkir author A. Baimukhametov, and "Jogalgandardyn zhan syry (Confessions of the Disappeared)" by the Yakut writer N. Dyachkovskaya, all of which were written in response to significant socio-historical events.

The corpus of literary texts analyzed in this study was selected according to clearly defined criteria to ensure methodological transparency and representativeness. First, the works were chosen for their thematic relevance, specifically their focus on orphanhood, vulnerable childhood, and the linguistic representation of marginalized voices. Second, the selection reflects key socio-historical transformations of the post-Soviet and contemporary periods, allowing the analysis to capture continuity and change in literary responses to social upheaval. Third, the corpus ensures cultural diversity by including texts from Kazakh, Uyghur, Bashkir, and Yakut literary traditions, which enables a comparative examination of shared and context-specific narrative and linguistic strategies. Together, these criteria form a representative and analytically coherent body of texts for the purposes of this study.

## 3. DISCUSSION

The plot of the novel "Kyltusau (Fetters of a Slave)" by the Kazakh writer D. Beisenbekuly opens with a visit by Richard and Mariana to Reagan's residence in Galveston. Through the brothers' dialogue, a hidden truth concerning Richard's son is gradually unveiled. It is widely acknowledged that literature often reflects the pressing issues of its time. "At any point in time, key issues in a nation's life become central themes in literary works. It is a well-known fact that the foremost poets and writers of world literature have consistently engaged with the critical concerns of their eras. Kazakh poets and writers, in turn, have drawn inspiration from prominent figures of both Russian and world literature. Regardless of the period, one theme that has continually stirred the souls of poets and writers, prompting them to take up the pen - is the life of

defenseless orphans. This theme occupies a prominent place in world literature" [11,55]. Building on this scholarly perspective, we may conclude that the plight of orphans remains a timely and resonant theme. This is evident in the prose of Kazakh, Uyghur, Bashkir, and Yakut authors alike. The narrative unfolds in parallel across two countries. Alongside Buddy's experience in the United States, the novel also presents students' life in Almaty, the southern capital of Kazakhstan, thereby shedding light on the realities faced by young people there.

Regarding the notion of artistic reality in literature, Z. Akhmetov observes: "Artistic reality is a form of life's reality that has passed through the writer's reflections and creative vision, synthesized and transformed into an artistic image within a literary work" [13, 119]. Following this scholarly perspective, the novel can be read as an artistic reworking of contemporary social tensions: lived realities are not reproduced mechanically but refracted through ethical judgment and narrative selection. Within this frame, the text highlights how imported models of "freedom" and "rights" become entangled with local hierarchies of power, producing tragedy rather than emancipation. The episode involving Marat's son functions less as a debate about personal identity than as a critique of patriarchal violence and institutional complicity: the father's act of murder is subsequently normalized through intimidation of the sole witness, Adish, and the quiet closure of the case. The narrative thus exposes a legal order vulnerable to wealth and coercion, where "truth" is manufactured and law becomes a mechanism that protects the privileged rather than the victim.

A parallel critique emerges in the storyline of Safura, Gabit, and Tamshy. Here the novel links the erosion of moral responsibility to a culture of hedonism and performative modernity (alcohol, drugs, nightlife). Gabit's confession to Tamshy - "My heart beats only for you. A drop of spring" - operates as a rhetorical strategy of seduction: language is used to fabricate sincerity and secure trust. The subsequent violence, culminating in Tamshy's murder while pregnant, shifts the focus from individual "bad choices" to structural vulnerability: young women become disproportionately exposed to manipulation, addiction-driven aggression, and the absence of protective social mechanisms. By contrasting Safura's carefree participation in this milieu with Tamshy's innocence and fatal trust, the author constructs a moral asymmetry that underscores how gendered harm is enabled by both personal irresponsibility and a broader collapse of

ethical and communal safeguards.

Another central theme is the fate of orphans in the early 1990s, a time when Kazakhstan had just gained independence. Many children with no one to protect them were trafficked overseas. This issue is subtly introduced in the opening dialogue between Reagan and Richard, when Richard mentions that he must reveal a secret to his son upon returning from a trip. The full significance of this secret is revealed only in the closing chapters of the novel.

The author's perspective is made evident in the novel's closing lines: "...All the sorrows that weighed heavily on his heart beneath the silver dawn of Almaty were forgotten; the humiliation he had endured faded like a distant dream, and Buddy awoke as a Hero, liberated from the burdens that had consumed his soul..." This resolution suggests the author's deliberate intent; otherwise, it would appear implausible that Buddy, after facing so many hardships would find his brother Amir in a single day. The widely known case of Zhanibek, a young man adopted by a Belgian couple after being separated from his birth mother, serves as a real-life parallel known to all Kazakhstan people [14, 1]. Clearly, the writer weaves into Buddy's story the belief that every child deserves happiness.

Another reflection of Kazakhstan's post-Soviet reality in the 1990s is found in the story "Kargys atkan tagdyr (Damned Fate!)" by the Uyghur writer Sh. Nazarov. The main narrative unfolds in the village of Karagaily in the Taldykorgan region (now Almaty region), capturing the turbulent years marking the collapse of the Soviet Union and the early independence of Kazakhstan through the misfortunes of a single family. The initial warmth and unity of village life characterized by national sports such as baige, kokpar, and kures gradually gives way to instability and transformation. The story centers around a family from the Karagaily state farm amidst the social and economic upheavals following 1991. In the prologue to this detective novel, rooted in the criminal realities of the 1990s, the author writes: "The characters in this book have been battered along the winding roads of fate - at times lost, at times redeemed - enduring the harsh trials of life. Yet this merciless world, which offers no forgiveness for human error, renders its own judgment upon each individual. Most tragic of all is the fact that not only the parents, but also their children, must bear the consequences of past failings" [15, 3-4].

Literary critic T. Rakhimzhanov notes: "When a writer creates a character, they approach it from a social, psychological, and moral perspective, striving

to individualize each image. Consequently, the system of characters in a narrative is interconnected, forming a unified whole" [16, 47]. Following this scholarly insight, the writer endeavors to thoroughly unveil the social, psychological, and moral complexities inherent in each of the characters.

The writer addresses several pressing social issues throughout the narrative. The first concerns the moral degradation of the wealthy, whose obsession with materialism has rendered them devoid of basic human values. This is illustrated through the conduct of the three rapists and the actions of their powerful fathers, who attempt to cover up their sons' crimes. The second issue is the growing socio-economic divide between the rich and the poor. This is portrayed through the stark contrast between impoverished villagers, who struggle to find food and are forced to sell their livestock at roadside markets, and the urban elite, who live in opulent two- and three-story residences, drive luxury vehicles, and employ private security and domestic staff. The third issue raised is the systemic oppression of the weak by the powerful, where the vulnerable are discarded like refuse. This is exemplified in a striking comment by a female officer of the internal affairs department, directed at Ainur when she and her brother are threatened with being framed as a thief and a hooligan: "Don't bother searching for the truth here. Truth is money and social standing. Whatever they say becomes reality. You and I are like cattle to them and if they wish, they'll sell us or for other willing, they'll sacrifice us. They are a machine that swallows a person whole and spits them out. Don't say you'll fight them - it's impossible" [17, 74]. This statement, voiced by a character working in the justice system, reveals the author's critical stance: when even legal institutions are corrupted, no recourse for justice remains. This theme of systemic moral collapse is reinforced in the subplot involving Amina Rustembekova.

Among the lesser-explored genres of Kazakh folklore is the curse - an expressive form that has yet to be thoroughly collected and studied. Renowned scholar Kh. Dosmukhameduly remarks: "The opposite of a blessing is a curse. A curse may be directed toward an enemy, or uttered by a father against a child who has deeply disappointed him, by a mullah toward those who have lost their faith, or by a tribal leader against traitors during times of war" [17, 21]. According to this scholarly view, pronouncing a curse is a serious act, one that is culturally and spiritually forbidden. Since curses spoken by deeply wounded individuals were believed to come true, people were taught to avoid

evoking them. In a society where the power of the spoken word was held sacred, Kazakh people often emphasized the value of positive language, believing in the maxim: "A good word is a half blessing." Consequently, individuals sought to speak well and receive blessings from their elders, rather than risk invoking harm. Gratitude, blessings, and curses played a significant role in shaping social conduct and spiritual awareness. Folklorist A. Toishanuly elaborates further: "It is clear that a curse constitutes a form of magic - more precisely, a dangerous form of magic. Its purpose is to inflict harm on the object to which it is directed" [18,183].

This exploration of moral decay is thematically resonant with the work of Bashkir author Aigiz Baimukhametov "Tastamashy, Ana!" (Don't leave us, Mum!), which is rooted in the tragic lives of seven orphaned siblings who lost their parents at an early age and were subsequently raised in a village orphanage in Salmanova. Narrated from a first-person perspective by the protagonist Ilyas, the novel's structure is organized around several thematic episodes. These include poignant sections titled "Don't leave us, mum!", "I wanna go home", "The orphanage has four more", and "My mother's song", among others.

When their mother, Gulnur passed away the youngest child was only three years old. Many people urged the father to send the children to an orphanage and remarry, advising: "Send the children to an orphanage and get married again. Gizzat, don't burden yourself unnecessarily, you still have many years ahead of you." To those who insisted that raising so many children alone was an unreasonable burden and that institutional care would be the more practical solution, Gizzat had a single, resolute reply: "As long as I am alive, not a single hair of my children's heads will fall. When we brought them into this world, it was never with the intention that they would grow up in an orphanage" [19, 3].

However, an even harsher fate awaited the fatherless orphans. While the two eldest sons and one daughter attended a city school, the younger children - Alsu, Aliya, Ilyas, and Zulfira - remained at home. As their father's health deteriorated, Aliya, still in the fifth grade, was forced to assume adult responsibilities, learning to manage household tasks. Shortly before his death, the gravely ill father summoned his son and urged him to maintain unity, care for his siblings, and endure life's hardships, hinting at an important message he could not finish due to his illness [19, 5]. The following morning, he passed away, and the villagers buried him beside their mother, sealing the children's transition into

complete orphanhood.

Commenting on the formal characteristics of the short story genre, R. Turysbek noted: "The realities and secrets of contemporary life are vividly conveyed through the short story or novella. The dynamic evolution of society and its organic engagement with life, the representation of the world through novel and authentic perspectives, the deep wellspring of ancient intellect, the influence of market paradigms, and democratic ideologies - all define the nature and thematic structure of the short story" [20, 41]. In light of this observation, it becomes evident that the narrative powerfully portrays the grim conditions faced by children in state-run institutions. The tale of a child whose untreated toothache led to infection and disfigurement, whose aching tooth was not treated in time, which festered and left several scars on his face, and Ilyas's own story of traveling to the city to have a tooth painfully extracted, reveal the harsh and often neglected reality of life in the orphanage.

One of the key artistic techniques in the narrative is the use of dreams. In moments of pain or despair, Ilyas's mother appears to him, gently admonishing him and urging resilience, reminding him that his suffering affects her even in death. These dream visions intersect with memories of real-life abuse by teachers and authority figures, reinforcing the child's sense of vulnerability. Despite her inability to intervene directly, the mother's symbolic presence functions as a moral anchor - "Mum is watching" - helping Ilyas resist delinquency and maintain ethical self-discipline, even as he is subjected to coercion and exploitation by the orphanage leader Dayan. The author employs the technique of character contrast to underscore moral and emotional dissonance. For instance, the character of Raifa, a teacher who ridicules and belittles orphans is sharply contrasted with more compassionate figures. Raifa is convinced that Ilyas, a tall boy with bowed legs and thin arms should portray the villainous character Koshchei in the New Year's performance. When Ilyas resists, she retorts with derision: "There you go again, Ilyas! Who do you think you are? One day you say you'll be an actor, another day a writer, and sometimes even a scientist. Look at your crooked legs! You've been assigned to play Koshchei, and that's what you'll do!" [19, 36]. Her words and behavior reveal a heart seemingly hardened beyond compassion, Raifa fails to recognize the children as individuals with emotions, aspirations, and dignity. She does not fulfill the pedagogical role of a teacher who is attuned to the psychological needs and choices of children.

The story "Jogalgandardyn zhan syry

(Confessions of the Disappeared)" by Yakut author Nina Dyachkovskaya is also rooted in real-life events. It narrates the fate of the central character Maya, who migrated to Uzbekistan from Yakutia with her two young children in the 1990s, a turbulent period following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which once united 15 republics.

The story opens with the poignant image of two small, frail children unfamiliar to the region, trudging side by side across the searing yellow dunes and scorching sands. They had arrived in Uzbekistan, only to lose their documents and money. Their mother had ventured with them into the desert lands of Karakum and Kyzylkum in search of happy life. The narrative unfolds across two locations, Yakutia and Uzbekistan, interweaving the difficult realities of the mother and her children. Simultaneously, the story touches on the fate of other wandering children who had stowed away on trains bound for Kazakhstan, later integrating into the life of a neighboring republic, working and surviving in the sprawling marketplace.

The narrative is conveyed in the first person, from the perspective of the protagonist: "We wandered in a foreign land for ten years. For a decade, our souls scorched by the burning sun of the desert yearned for the northern wind, for the white snow that creaked underfoot, for the vast steppes of our native Yakut land..." [21, 3].

The work contains ample evidence attesting to its historical basis. Firstly, it references the Afghan conflict, which cast a long shadow over the Soviet Union. Secondly, it depicts the disintegration of the USSR, an event with far-reaching sociopolitical consequences. Thirdly, the emergence of psychic healers in the 1990s, such as Chumak, Kashpirovsky, and Junos, who captivated the nation through televised sessions, is a documented cultural phenomenon of the era. In a desperate attempt to locate her missing sister, Sargylaana sought participation in these televised sessions, turning to psychic consultation as a last hope for familial reunification.

Sakha journalist N. Baramygin comments on the story as follows: "The narrative "Jogalgandardyn zhan syry (Confessions of the Disappeared)" is more relevant today than ever before. This book serves as a poignant reminder to the world of the importance of humanism and a compassionate approach towards others. In every era, during challenging times for the country people have preserved their humanity, transcending politics, through acts of kindness and philanthropy" [22, 1]. Based on this

perspective the story reveals Maya's journey as she navigates life in a foreign country without legal documents, constantly encountering individuals who offer kindness. Maya interprets these acts of generosity as blessings from her father in the afterlife. A series of compassionate figures appear throughout her journey: the Uzbek elder who shelters her from the pouring rain, taking her to his home and cares for her children when she is bedridden for nearly a month; Oksana, who, when Maya has lost all hope in Tashkent takes her to Nukus and helps her find work picking cotton, despite her lack of legal status. Additionally, Maya finds success in selling her delicious pies at the market, attracting numerous buyers. Konstantin and his sister Tatyana, owners of a Grill-bar restaurant in Nukus hire her to work in the kitchen, and she later rises to the position of head chef. Sergey, a Chuvash man who undertakes long and dangerous journeys with loads of goods, also extends a helping hand. He registers the house in Maya's name, and despite her outward appearance as a lucky individual, it is clear that her hard work and commitment to others have won the hearts of those around her. As a gesture of her dedication, when Sergey embarks on a long journey, Maya does everything in her power to care for his ailing mother.

However, just as Maya begins to experience brief moments of stability, new hardships continually arise. D. Sryseva interprets this trajectory as an existential collapse, arguing that Maya's eventual alcoholism results from her rejection of cultural values and disregard for Nyurgun's warnings, leading her into cyclical memory and spiritual ruin [23, 71]. While this reading attributes her suffering to cultural estrangement, the narrative invites a more empathetic interpretation. Maya's vulnerability is shaped by youth, lack of guidance, and deliberate silence surrounding Nyurgun's death, which left her waiting in ignorance for the father of her child. The secrecy of his burial – "They were not allowed to open the carefully closed and sealed coffin..." – underscores how the Afghan war penetrated even distant Yakutia, exposing the gap between official narratives and lived tragedy. In this way, Maya's personal downfall is inseparable from collective historical trauma, the consequences of which remain visible in post-Soviet societies, including contemporary Kazakhstan.

The narrative structure is enriched with flashbacks and letters, which serve to fill in the emotional and biographical contours of the main characters. Many of these are connected to the youth of Maya and Nyurgun, recounting their passionate love during their student years, their last night

together before Nyurgun's departure for military service, and the letters he wrote from the army. These elements help reconstruct the past, adding emotional weight and context to the lives of the characters.

As Kazakhstan transitioned through a period of significant socio-political change, numerous challenges emerged across all spheres of society. Literary critic B. Maitanov characterizes this era, stating: "The market economy arrived with brute force, overturning everything in its path. The intelligentsia could not immediately find its footing and found itself disoriented. There was a pervasive sense of existential fatigue" [24, 259]. In a time when the intelligentsia itself was in crisis, it is only natural that undocumented individuals faced extreme hardship. Among the many street children of the 1990s were not only the Yakut brothers left without identity papers, but also numerous Kazakh orphans. It is a painful reality that little Aidos was lost at a train station during those desperate years because his mother, worn down by hunger and destitution, abandoned him in a public place. Murat, another boy, fled the Fergana Valley after his parents were killed during the Osh riots. A train crew joined the vivacious Makatay, somewhat naïve Serdar, whose age often misled others, and the quick-handed Aidos and Timur – they were all orphans forced to fend for themselves and survive without parental care. The author reflects on their plight: "The orphans, cast aside by the brutal fate of a fractured country, wandered through the deserts of Karakalpakstan together. They were inseparable, even in moments of war and danger. What bound them was the shared grief and hardships they endured. Both boys carried within them vivid memories of their distant homelands. The traumatic events they experienced through forced them to grow far too soon. Each of us harbored an unspoken fear and a constant sense of unease" [21, 99]. Pressured by homeless adults to survive, the four boys roamed beyond the outskirts of Nukus, eventually reaching the vast "Barakholka" market in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Their bond was tested and proven when they were caught stealing in the large marketplace. Despite their predicament, the group remained loyal sharing the five thousand tenge that Murat had hidden away (equivalent to nearly ten million tenge today) and managed to escape. Algys, skilled in persuasion, defused the situation by offering a bribe to a young police sergeant – an amount greater than the officer had likely ever imagined. The four children, cloaked in the anonymity of darkness, eventually scattered and went their separate ways in life. Despite their youth, these children demonstrated foresight and

pragmatism by saving money in anticipation of future hardships. It becomes clear that their circumstances had forced them to develop resilience and maturity far beyond their years.

The author presents the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s is not merely as a geopolitical event, but as a profound human experience through the intimate lens of one family's fate. The story of the Chugdarov family symbolizes the shared destiny of the fifteen former Soviet republics, whose transition to independent statehood was marked by fragmentation and uncertainty. The disintegration of communication and institutional ties between the republics left families like the Chugdarovs, who lived in Siberia, disconnected from their "lost" relatives for nearly a decade.

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

1. In his novel "Kyltusau (Fetters of a Slave)", D. Beisenbekuly [25] draws a comparative portrait of the lives of American and Kazakh youth and the destinies of individual families, addressing critical issues that have become hallmarks of the XXI century. These include the erosion of national values in the era of globalization, the rising trend of body modification and cosmetic surgery among Central Asian youth in emulation of Western ideals, the global proliferation of the drug trade, and the trafficking of Kazakh orphans overseas during the 1990s. The author offers a reflective and poignant portrayal of these realities, transforming the fate of orphans in both societies into an artistic narrative with profound social resonance.
2. In his detective novel "Kargys atkan tagdyr (Damned Fate!)", the Uyghur writer Sh. Nazarov explores the enduring power of verbal magic, reminding readers of the traditional values that are increasingly being forgotten. The narrative presents a compelling depiction of how every spoken word carries weight, with the downfall of the Iskendir lineage attributed to the effect of a curse. Set during the uncertain 1990s, an era when the intelligentsia found itself paralyzed and directionless the novel captures the bleak existence of villagers left to navigate life's hardships. The author sought to uncover these harsh realities by constructing a web of interrelated crimes set in both Kazakhstan and Istanbul, using the criminal investigations as a narrative device to reflect broader societal decay and moral crisis.
3. The XXI century has witnessed a steady rise in the number of abandoned children. In his story "Tastamashy, Ana!" (Don't leave us, Mum!), Bashkir writer A. Baimukhametov offers a deeply moving account of the global orphan crisis, illustrating the trials of young people who persevere through adversity and strive to define their own futures. Through the experiences of his characters, the author not only portrays the struggle for survival but also critiques the failures within the education and child-rearing systems, using the actions of individual educators to shed light on broader systemic issues.
4. In her work "Jogalgandardyn zhan syry (Confessions of the Disappeared)", Yakut writer N. Dyachkovskaya offers a vivid and realistic portrayal of the hardships endured in the 1990s within major urban centers such as Taas Olom in Yakutia, Tashkent and Nukus in Uzbekistan, and Almaty in Kazakhstan. During this period, even local inhabitants struggled to meet basic needs such as food and shelter, while undocumented individuals faced far more critical challenges. For them, obtaining employment, accessing essential services, or attempting to return to their country of origin posed nearly insurmountable obstacles, reflecting a profound failure of state systems to accommodate the displaced and marginalized.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the selected prose works demonstrates that writers from different cultural and national contexts articulate shared human values through the fates of individual characters. By situating their narratives across diverse geographical spaces - including Kazakhstan, Bashkortostan, Yakutia, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and the United States - the authors affirm that fundamental human concerns transcend nationality and borders. In this sense, the examined texts transform socially conditioned experiences into an artistic reality that reflects universal ethical questions.

The works are united by their focus on pressing issues of the twenty-first century: the vulnerability of children, the marginalization of the defenseless, human trafficking, drug addiction, and the erosion of moral and national values in the context of globalization. Through intimate family histories and personal tragedies, these narratives expose broader structural injustices, revealing how contemporary social systems often exclude the weak and

unprotected. The juxtaposition of contrasting characters and moral positions – cruelty and compassion, greed and generosity, betrayal and solidarity – underscores the coexistence of ethical extremes within modern society.

From a broader cultural and interdisciplinary perspective, the findings highlight literature's capacity to serve as a space for ethical reflection at the

intersection of literary studies, cultural analysis, and social inquiry. By giving voice to orphans, widows, migrants, and other marginalized figures, the analyzed works contribute to a deeper understanding of collective trauma and resilience, reaffirming the role of literature as a vital medium for articulating shared human responsibility in an increasingly fragmented world.

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