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THE MIRROR OF INTENTIONALITY: READING A.ZHAKSYLYKOV'S "RETURN"

Abstract. This article explores the final part of A. Zhaksylykov's cycle "Dreams of the Damned" – the novel "Return" – through the lens of the author's representation as an active participant in the process of artistic communication. The analysis of authorial intentionality is conducted from the perspective of the communicative-discursive approach, which allows the semantic structure of the work to be interpreted as a complex system of codes. The novelty of the study lies in its attempt to uncover within the text the means of expressing the author's consciousness, by examining the individual principles used to construct an original artistic model of the world through techniques that shape the "author–reader" dialogue. The authors argue that the novel's discourse can be understood as both artistic and playful: Zhaksylykov creates a "game with the reader," immersing them in a symbolic realm and intertextual references from world culture. Through imagery (character, chronotope), speech strategies, and compositional elements, the writer conveys a deeply personal philological, aesthetic, cultural, and historical experience. His core idea – an artistic portrayal of the real conditions at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, which led to severe ecological disruption and natural mutations – is revealed through a mythological and allegorical narrative that acquires a critical dimension. The study contributes to the understanding of key trends in contemporary Kazakhstani literature.

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Keywords: author, intentionality, concept, narrative, artistic model of the world.

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А.ЖАҚСЫЛЫҚОВТЫҢ «ОРАЛУ» РОМАНЫ ИНТЕНЦИОНАЛДЫҚ КАТЕГОРИЯНЫҢ «АЙНАСЫНДА»

Аңдатпа. Мақала А.Жақсылықовтың «Қарғысқа ұшырағандар арманы» циклінің қорытынды бөлімі – «Оралу» романын автор тұлғасын көркемдік коммуникация процесіне қатысушы ретінде көрсету тұрғысынан зерттеуге арналған. Автордың интенционалдылығын талдау шығарманың мағыналық құрылымын кодтардың күрделі жүйесі ретінде түсіндіруге мүмкіндік беретін коммуникативтік-дискурсивті тәсіл позициясынан жүзеге асырылады. Шығарманың жаңашылдығы «автор-оқырман» диалогын ұйымдастыру әдіс-тәсілдерінің жиынтығы арқылы әлемнің өзіндік көркемдік үлгісін жасаудың жеке принциптерін қарастыра отырып, мәтіннен автор санасын таныту құралдарын ашуға талпынуынан көрінеді. Мақала авторлары роман дискурсын көркемдік-ойындық форма ретінде

түсіндіруге болатынын дәлелдейді: А.Жақсылықов «оқырманмен ойын» ұйымдастырып, оны рәміздер әлеміне, әлемдік мәдениет мәтіндеріне қанықтырады және бейнелеу (кейіпкер, хронотопиялық), сөйлеу стратегиялары, композиция элементтері арқылы жазушы жеке филологиялық, эстетикалық, мәдени-тарихи танымдық тәжірибесін жеткізеді. Жазушы идеясы (экожүйеге дәрекі араласып, табиғи мутациялар ошағын тудырған Семей полигонының шынайы жағдайын көркем суреттеу) сыни бағытқа ие болған мифологиялық-аллегориялық баяндау ұйымдастыру арқылы ашылады. Жүргізілген зерттеулердің нәтижелері Қазақстан Республикасының қазіргі әдеби үдерісіндегі тенденцияларды зерттеуге ықпал етеді.

Алғыс: Мақала BR21882298 «Қазақстанның әдебиеттану және өнер тарихы әлемдік гуманитарлық білімнің концептуалды эволюциясы контекстінде» жобасы аясында дайындалған.

Кілт сөздер: автор, интенционалдык, концепт, нарратив, дүниенің көркемдік үлгісі.

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РОМАН А.ЖАКСЫЛЫКОВА «ВОЗВРАЩЕНИЕ» В «ЗЕРКАЛЕ» КАТЕГОРИИ ИНТЕНЦИОНАЛЬНОСТИ

Аннотация. Статья посвящена исследованию заключительной части цикла А.Жаксылыкова «Сны океанных» – романа «Возвращение» – с точки зрения репрезентации в нём фигуры автора как участника процесса художественной коммуникации. Анализ авторской интенциональности проводится с позиции коммуникативно-дискурсивного подхода, позволяющего интерпретировать семантическую структуру произведения как сложную систему кодов. Новаторство работы видится в попытке обнаружения в тексте средств выражения авторского сознания, рассмотрения отдельных принципов создания оригинальной художественной модели мира через комплекс приёмов организации диалога «автор-читатель». Авторы статьи доказывают, что дискурс романа может интерпретироваться как художественно-игровая форма: А.Жаксылыков организует «игру с читателем», погружая его в мир символов, текстов мировой культуры, а через образные ряды (персонажный, хронотопический), речевые стратегии, элементы композиции писатель транслирует личный филологический, эстетический, культурно-исторический познавательный опыт. Писательский замысел (художественное изображение реальной ситуации Семипалатинского полигона, обернувшейся грубым вмешательством в экосистему и вызвавшей вспышку природных мутаций) раскрывается посредством организации мифолого-аллегорического нарратива, приобретающего критическую направленность. Результаты проведённого исследования вносят вклад в изучение тенденций современного литературного процесса Республики Казахстан.

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Ключевые слова: автор, интенциональность, концепт, нарратив, художественная модель мира.

1. Introduction

Creative writing as an important component of cultural heritage is undergoing a stage of qualitative transformation, demonstrating “new aesthetic principles” (Ananyeva, 2024: 29), which is accompanied by an update of the methodology of its study. An important determinant of literary science is the cognitive-anthropocentric factor, which determines

its focus on the study of a work in the context of living artistic communication with an emphasis on the active positions of its participants – the author and the reader.

When interpreted dynamically, a literary text reveals mechanisms for the actualization of the author's intentions. Categories such as the "author's position" (B.Bayzhigit, E.Shmakova, S.Begalieva, A.Kospagarova, R.Imakhanbet), "author's concept" (A.Khamraev), "author's worldview" (E.Shmakova), "author's entropy" (B.Yskak) and "author's strategy" (V.Prozorov, M.Kucherskaya, T.Lazareva) are actively engaged in philological studies that analyze the author's role within the text. Among the noteworthy aspects of such research is the exploration of a distinctive principle of artistic dialogue employed by the author – commonly referred to as "playing with the reader".

The work of Aslan Zhaksylykov appears to be a fragment of the literary process of modern Kazakhstan, reflecting important trends in the evolution of domestic fiction at the present stage: semiotic polyphony (interdiscursivity), philosophical richness of content, ramified intertext, mythologism, cyclization as a manifestation of the dynamics of the development of the epic form (enlargement of the genre). Kazakh literary scholars include the author's name in a number of writers of the "new wave" of "intellectual prose" (Altybaeva, 2018: 5). The pinnacle of the writer's creative activity is recognized as the cycle – pentalogy "Dreams of the Damned", created by A. Zhaksylykov for more than twenty years (1988-2012) and highly appreciated by the philological community. In academic literary criticism, "Dreams" has established itself as a cultural and aesthetic phenomenon that has caused a lasting research resonance (Valikova, 2015, 2019), (Dzhundubaeva, 2015, 2021), (Abisheva, 2016, 2021), (Ovcherenko, 2021), (Ensebay, 2023).

The idea for the cycle was born after the writer visited an orphanage in the Semipalatinsk region and met with children with congenital pathologies because of tests conducted at the Semipalatinsk test site. The main idea of the works is an artistic understanding of the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, their irreversible harmful impact on the natural environment and the population, warning humanity of a possible catastrophe that could be accompanied by threatening mutations in nature. The information space of Zhaksylykov's text is condensed and saturated with intertextual inclusions, associated with multiple cultural contexts.

The addressee of the cycle "Dreams of the Damned" is a special type of audience: according to the author, his books set the "tone of art" and are intended for representatives of the creative intelligentsia. Several works conceived as "fairy tale novels" are an example of an innovative genre, the implementation of the laws of which requires the author to develop his own system of principles of literary writing. The relevance of the research topic is seen in the understanding of the work of a modern writer in the mainstream of the communicative-discursive approach, which allows us to interpret the work as a way of explicating the author's attitudes, as well as to identify the author's characteristic techniques of dialogization of the epic form.

The object of this study is the novel by A.Zhaksylykov "The Return" as part of the metatext that implements the author's intention; the subject of analysis is the category of author's intentionality, the technology of creating an "interpreted" text – techniques and methods, the use of which helps to convey the author's intention to the reader in its entirety and ensures the effectiveness of the artistic communication process.

The aim of the authors of this article is to study the final part of A.Zhaksylykov's cycle "Dreams of the Damned" – the novel "Return" – from the point of view of the representation of the author's figure as a participant in the process of artistic communication, the analysis of the work in the aspect of literary writing technique, the author's intention, which implies a targeted impact on the reader's worldview.

The innovation of the work is seen in the attempt to analyze the work of a Kazakh writer from the position of a communicative-discursive approach: discovering in the text the means of representing the author's thinking, examining individual principles of creating an original artistic model of the world through a set of techniques for organizing the "author-reader" dialogue.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Research materials

The study employs a range of methods grounded in the communicative-discursive approach to interpret the literary text. The research tasks are implemented through conceptual analysis techniques, including the examination of the internal form of words to identify semantic nuances and the contextual analysis of meanings as they are actualized in the text. Intertextual analysis is used to reveal layers of intertextual interaction and to frame the literary work as a cultural phenomenon. The mechanisms of text generation are explored through hermeneutic and structural discourse analysis. Instances of authorial neologisms are examined using methods of linguistic analysis. In addition, a set of empirical methods – observation, comparison, classification, and generalization of artistic phenomena – is applied to support the interpretation.

2.2. Research methods

The theoretical foundation of this study is informed by the work of leading Kazakhstani scholars – O.Abisheva, O.Valikova, G.Ensebay, A.Dzhundubayeva, U.Ovcherenko – whose research focuses on various stages in the development of A.Zhaksylykov's pentalogy. Collectively, their studies contribute to an understanding of the writer's creative method. The practical analysis presented in this article is based on the text of "Return", the final novel in the "Dreams of the Damned" cycle. Biographical insights are drawn from fragments of interviews with the author, conducted by journalists A.Artsishevsky, B.Gabdullin, D.Eldes, and published in the Kazakhstani press between 2008 and 2024.

3. Discussion

The novel "The Return" is an example of modern literary and artistic thinking, a work of complex communicative structure, fixing the principles of artistic world modeling. The title – a strong position of the text – contains one of the central concepts that form the motivic core of the novel and the cycle as a whole. "Return" is a philosophical concept around which the main meanings of the works of the cycle "Dreams of the Damned" unfold and to which they ascend. In the content of the final novel of the pentalogy, the concept of return implements mythological, historical-cultural, psychological semantic aspects. The very concept of return contains the idea of the cyclization of time, the circular form of its organization. Return is presented from the perspective of: a) mental state (the heroes return to the past through dreams, memories, hallucinations); b) physical displacement (the return of the Little Duckling, Koyan, Uku the Eagle Owl – "aged" children – home, to the village-

town that preserves the atmosphere of childhood); c) a fateful historical event (the return to the temple of the confiscated bones of ancestors – leaders, the remains of kings, the holy relics of the queen, the removal from the temple of which served as a prerequisite for the war); d) a philosophical concept of a spiritual return to moral original sources. Developing the motive of return, A. Zhaksylykov enters “into a dialogue with time” (Mirzoev, 2020: 3).

The place where the “aged” children return is the Zone. This toponym allows the author not only to designate a certain geographical territory, but also to note the property of its abnormality (compare: in the story “Roadside Picnic” by A. and B. Strugatsky, the Zone, formed as a result of the Visit of Aliens to Earth, is a place of strange and dangerous phenomena for humans: unknown diseases, mutations are a possible outcome of a person’s stay in such a territory). For Zhaksylykov, the Zone is a disastrous place: “*The Zone exists in a special way – it is a territory with artificially induced topological landscapes in the form of a military town, a silo tower, a reed field near a dried-up lake, where an overturned barge lies. The Empire repeatedly sent scouts to the territory of the Zone, almost all of them died <...>*” (Zhaksylykov, 2024a: 35). The Zone in “The Return” is a metaphorical image of the Polygon with its characteristic features, such as:

- isolation of the territory (“*iron bristle fence*” in the form of a double row of barbed wire, a sign with a warning sign: “*Stop! Danger zone!*”);
- signs of infrastructure (“*rat barracks*”, “*abandoned bunkers and military warehouses*”, watchtowers, “*iron carcasses of oil storage facilities*”, protruding “*boiler room pipes and skeletons of almost rusted cranes*”);
- transformation of the original natural landscape (a dried-up lake, a black reed field, wolf ravines, a dilapidated nest of the Grey Cuckoo dangling in rusty coils of wire, “*foggy-grey*” trees, a gloomy “*colonnade of the forest*”).

The description of the Zone is saturated with mythological images that impart sacred characteristics to the space. The central image through which the geographical space is understood is a reed field. One of the symbols of the Motherland, a vast territory usually developed by man and adapted by him for farming, in “Dreams of the Damned” becomes a place abandoned by man and occupied by reeds. The multifunctional meaning of this mythologeme is explained by A. Dzhundubaeva: “the mythologeme “field” acts as a symbol of the fate of the people, the memory of the first ancestors, a symbol of the connection of generations, a witness to the national history and a model of the world for man” (Dzhundubaeva, 2021: 181).

Fragments of the mythological picture of the world are reconstructed by the image of an overturned barge by a dried-up lake, dating back to the stories of Noah’s Ark, Charon’s boat, moving between the “living” and “dead” worlds across the river Styx. A lonely ark in the center of a dead reed field is an object that testifies to the course of history. Resting in the center of a reed field, “*an overturned barge, floating against the flow of time*” (Zhaksylykov, 2024: 41) in the context of “The Return” is an image that can be interpreted as a polar symbol expressing several meanings: the idea of time stopping, the ambiguity of the connection between the past and the future, the destabilization of the path of historical development.

The overall picture of hopelessness is complemented by the technique of color synesthesia: the gray color, which prevails in the description of the Zone at the time of its visit by Taibala

("lead-gray, dank-dark" clouds, "foggy-gray" trees, a black reed field, the Gray Cuckoo), "levels out" the other shades, enhancing the motives of loneliness and emphasizing the feelings of despondency and grief. This meaning is embedded in the metaphors "*webs of sadness entangling the heart*", "*the homeland is the Zone, closed behind the wilds of years, covered with rusty barbed wire. It is continuous melancholy*" (Zhaksylykov, 2024b: 29). The artistic discourse contains and conveys the author's reflections on his homeland (Aslan Zhaksylykov was born in Eastern Kazakhstan, in the village of Samarskoye Kokpektinsky district), the events that formed the factual basis of the work have the significance of being personally experienced.

Through the memories of forty-year-old Taybala, who returned to his homeland, the writer conveys the children's contradictory attitude to their hometown: the joy and spontaneity of communication with friends, the freshness of the emotional response to the child's usual pastime (a symbol of a carefree childhood - a patch of land near a silo tower flooded with golden sunlight) are replaced by a feeling of doom: the boy "*hated this place with all his childish soul and dreamed of breaking out of the Zone*" (Zhaksylykov, 2024b: 34). By means of techniques of symbolism, grotesque – on the communicative potential of the grotesque, see: (Osanova, 2024), metaphorization, contrast, which together perform the function of recreating a capacious artistic psychologism, the author shows a painful breakdown of children's consciousness, a traumatic experience acquired as a result of the loss of the harmony of the serenity of the world of childhood.

The text of *The Return* is organized according to the principle of multi-level contrast, which also underlies the spatial composition. The central place of development of events in the novel is a new city, the construction of which lasted for 20 years in the basin around the Banzai cliff. In the depiction of the city and its central object – the Sphere – the author uses means of satirical discourse. The artifact of "*colossal cultural significance*" – a monolith in the form of a huge ball – was assigned a cult status even before the end of construction: it was intended to unite the warring tribes into a people on the basis of religion, to subordinate it to the will of the ruler with its scale (the dome of the Sphere-temple, visible from any point of the city, in its golden form should "*be cast in the soul of every person*"). The narrative takes on an ironic coloring and reveals a historical subtext. The construction of the Sphere by the efforts of slaves is a woman's idea: "*one day it occurred to Apke to turn the cliff into a great temple*" (Zhaksylykov, 2023: 19). The fragments devoted to the description of the Sphere contain multiple allusions to I.I. Lazhechnikov's novel "The Ice House"; the context prompts the reader to the possibility of imagining in the image of Apke the features of a real historical prototype – Empress Anna Ioannovna.

In an allegorical form, A.Zhaksylykov raises the problem of the internal confrontation of a common man with the despotism of the ruler: "*Oh, you!*" *someone said in your voice, and in the darkness shook his fist at the arrogant colossus <...>*" (Zhaksylykov, 2024b: 51) – by means of direct quotation, the discourse reproduces the "voice" of Eugene, the hero of A.S. Pushkin's poem "The Bronze Horseman", at the moment when the "little man" addresses the emperor as the authority captured in the image of the monument. The appeal to the classics scales the artistic conflict, raising it to the ideological level. The writer reflects on the role of the individual in the history of the state in an artistic format, ironizes

about the absurdity of the decisions made, and through the techniques of allegory and grotesque condemns the system of public administration in the version of the personality-centric approach.

The palace complex built on Apke's orders is told in a satirical tone. The writer deliberately violates the principle of traditional symmetry and depicts three "large" palaces (Golden, Silver, Emerald) as located behind the small one. The proper names, the bearers of which are the "large" palaces, reproduce the details of the fairy-tale model of the world. The construction of palaces surrounded by parks is the realization of the will of one man, his desire to create a "paradise on earth" at the expense of material (natural) and human resources. The motif of the confrontation between the will of the ruler and the people as the executor of this will is symbolically reflected in architectural details: the steps leading to the palace gradually deprive a person of the ability to self-control: *"the first hundred steps knocked the breath out of one's lungs, the second hundred took away one's strength, and the third hundred increased one's heartbeat. So, a person approaching the entrance was received by the palace chambers completely exhausted, overwhelmed by the power of the structure, confused and depersonalized."* (Zhaksylykov, 2023: 20). The individual loses his individuality and becomes a person-function, part of a single ideology; the city turns into a monopoly apparatus. Thus, the image of a settlement with the characteristics of a totalitarian state emerges in the novel.

The mythologized presentation of objects of the palace interior erases the boundaries between objects of animate and inanimate nature, gives the reconstructed world a shade of fairy-tale satirical reality. Thus, the jade throne in the novel is a substitute for the person (the ruler), it is attributed with behavior corresponding to a high social status, an emotional reaction to what is happening (*"The throne wrinkled its brow with displeasure, but looked expectantly from the depths of its stone nature"*, *"The throne was seething with anger"*), the quality of speech (*"– What are you talking about, barluga? – the throne looked with hostility, and you were amazed: the jade had a face, and it was wounded, blowing not so much with cold, but rather – a serious threat"*). In the appearance of the throne – in Taybala's perception of it – individual details of the physical portrait of a person emerge: a menacing face, eyes with icicle pupils, fingers clutching the armrests. Such descriptions demonstrate the fine line between the ontology of a thing and its magic.

The author's position can be seen in the way the characters are depicted.

Satirical pathos is present in artistic portraits of representatives of the ruling elite. The jade throne, endowed with the powers of state power, is a grotesque paradoxical figure of the ruler. Apke is shown as contradictory in the novel, in whose image the features of a grown-up teenage girl, one of the children with a difficult fate, inclined to self-sacrifice for the sake of friends and the future of the people, the queen of antiquity – the ruler of the tribes of the Kurgurs, Utugurs, Borisars, Kokbores – and the powerful empress, who did not spare countless human lives in the name of building a new city with luxurious palaces, palace parks and the construction of a *"cyclopean monster"* in the center of the crater, on which is tasked with total control over the inhabitants – the Sphere.

The allegorical content is given to the multifaceted image of a rat. In "The Return", the atmosphere of the action itself, as perceived by the hero, is endowed with a rat-like

quality: "*<...> you understood who the rats were – they were marauders of time, instigated warriors from archaic history who were late to meet the present. Having once shed innocent blood, they lost the opportunity to get to the Present. All creatures with such a fate have the appearance of rats*" (Zhaksylykov, 2024b: 34-35). The focus is on the meanings of the image, accumulated by world culture: these are marginal creatures, often bearers of a warlike mood, whose activity is characterized by mass character, calculation, and clearly thought-out tactics.

Zhaksylykov's innovation is seen in the philosophical generalization of the "rat" principle, its presentation as a historical, social phenomenon.

The writer presents his version of "rat behavior": it is a shadowy implementation of actions, the ability to strictly follow a strategic task, preferring methods of secret surveillance. "Rat behavior" is personalized at the end of the novel, in the episode of the transformation into a rat of a man who performed the functions of several personalities: a captain of the special services, a colonel, a ruler, a kahan: "*You sank knee-deep into the sand, you were again a captain of the special services, and all your other personalities - a colonel, a ruler, a kahan – seemed like a dream of someone who got lost in the worlds. Before becoming Ryzhik, and then inevitably – a rat – scientist with a long naked tail, you screamed: "Curse you! Fire! Fire!" <...> Ryzhik folded in half and turned into a rat.*" (Zhaksylykov, 2024: 73). The rat is the final stage of transformation: the writer shows the chain of gradual "depersonalization" of a person wandering "in dreams": captain of the special services – colonel – ruler – kahan – Ryzhik – rat (scientist – rat). A satirical context unfolds before the reader, in which the path of a historical figure is symbolically recreated.

The closest to the author in terms of the nature of the ideas expressed is a character named Taybala. The author assigns one of the main roles in the plot to Taybala – to scout the road to the Zone and later accompany those returning to the town-village of childhood. Taybala's special quality is the ability to move quickly (the character's nomination uses the technique of a "talking" name: "tai" – "two-year-old stallion"), in the text Taybala receives the author's characteristics "*deer man*", "*foal man*". In terms of content, the fragment depicting Taybala's run, in the structure of the novel "The Return" is a "text within a text", a short story with a relatively self-sufficient plot, a completed chronotope, a compositional frame. The image of Taybala mythological: its content is enhanced through allusions to the legends of the winged messenger of Tangara, about the shural – a demon with copper claws. Taibal's run is endowed with a sacred meaning: this run-flight is a symbol of human history moving along the vector of goodness and justice: the author appeals to the memory of the people, preserving the belief in the Flyer, who will save the world. The writer's philosophy is revealed through Taibal's life convictions: "*All these cities, fortresses, temples, civilizations are attempts to overcome eternity, to drive a wedge into the body of time. To walk, like a breeze, along the face of life – this is Taibal's ideal*" (Zhaksylykov, 2023: 18). Taybala complements the gallery of corresponding archetypal images in world literature: the wanderer Odysseus returning to his homeland, Aeneas attempting to find a new homeland to replace the lost one, Moses leading the people to the Promised Land, etc. The purpose of Taybala's journey is to find the abandoned homeland.

The writer's ideological position is expressed through the character's voices: the text of the novel condemns the totalitarian form of government and criticizes the limitations and short-sightedness of the ideology imposed by the authorities. One of the possible consequences of such a political strategy is the loss of national identity, historical past, and oblivion of memory by the state: "*We, not aliens, must decide our own destiny. Otherwise, other people's diseases will become ours, and other people's gods will become evil spirits for us. Slavery is a bad disease. Bad is he who begins his history with slavery*" (Zhaksylykov, 2024: 35) – dialogue between Anta and Apke.

The author's thought appeals to environmental values, formed in the reader's mind: the text reveals the idea of nature, untouched by human activity, as a natural habitat for humans: "*You smiled. Yes, it was happiness! This is your element – you must know that you are the son of the open spaces, created to run through the valleys. Living in the city, a person cannot but commit violence. Do not be smart – live according to the nature of your essence!*" (Zhaksylykov, 2024b: 27) – Taybaly's internal monologue. With Taybaly's words, the writer offers a solution to the issue of the balance of the natural and the social in human life. Staying in a developed social environment means submission to the dominant will. In conjunction with the natural principle, a person is able to return to his original purpose – to be a son of the earth, reuniting with the power of which, he finds harmony and happiness. A.Zhaksylykov returns us to the pre-social foundations of existence, to the idea of the origins of prosperous life on Earth.

The author's focus on conveying an objective event through the prism of universal cultural and cognitive experience is manifested in an appeal to the mythopoetic tradition: symbolic and mythological meanings are present in the anthroponymy (Abisheva, 2019: 151-154), toponymy of the work: "*divine basi*" "Otuken – "sacred capital", also the name of mother earth in the language of the ancient Turks; Banzai – a giant cliff in the center of the crater, transformed – according to Apke's wish – into a temple – a Japanese wish for health and longevity. In the context of the novel nomination, conventional symbolic and mythological shades of meaning are acquired by the author's common nouns – names of animals and plants: *zulon, zuflin, jubars, dzhupard, dzhunagr, juyagur, hyenodon, dzhubezyana, zubuivol, jubab, banyan*, etc. We consider such a series of the author's nomination as a technique of "playing with the reader". The author, giving a system of "hints", invites the reader to reconstruct the content of neological lexemes himself: a) through the form of a morpheme or phonetically modified, but recognizable word (preserving part of the literary name: *ziraf, zubuivol*); b) through the means of context, in which details of the appearance, lifestyle, behavior of representatives of the fauna and flora are mentioned: "*Flocks of impudent Dzhubezyan*", "*uring the day, fabulously beautiful zuflins walked along the garden paths along streams and pools, wonderful fountains*" (Zhaksylykov, 2023: 19-20). Mentions of individual representatives of the natural world, unfamiliar to the reader, are accompanied by a more detailed author's description, on the basis of which a fairly complete definition of the species can be compiled: *Dzunagr is larger than a camel, the vast hollow between the humps is comfortable for sitting. A hardy and powerful animal can amble or trot <...> tied to a tree all day, it grazes in the weeds, and by morning it is full* (Zhaksylykov, 2024b: 29). The mythopoetic function is also performed by the author's

nominations formed by the method of addition: “*man-deer*“, “*man-foal*“, “*man-meerkat*“, “*girl-spider*“, “*boy-elephant*“. The characters of A. Zhaksylykov – chimerical images – appear as if at the junction of the human and animal worlds, acquiring unusual qualities (for example, the ability to move quickly in space for a long time, to exist for a long time in independently dug underground burrows-labyrinths, equipped for long-term life in extreme conditions).

The writer’s philological thinking periodically involves professional academic discourse, introducing special concepts and primary texts. This type of discourse in the novel performs a number of functions: 1) it acts as a means of creating irony: “*He knew that Apke would listen to him attentively, and the report, especially the author’s point of view, would be carefully analyzed*” (Zhaksylykov : 2023, 25); 2) it expresses the attitude to what is happening through the author’s assessment of the event and its assessment by the characters: “*<...> a ball is a fat point at the end of a long story. And a big point, ha-ha-ha!*” (Zhaksylykov: 2024a, 18); 3) directs the reader’s attention to the stages of narrative development: “*This Sphere should become a point at the end of the narrative, both figuratively and literally*” (Zhaksylykov : 2024a, 18), “*You liked the metaphor you invented about the big, fat point that you put yourself at the end of the story*” (Zhaksylykov: 2024a, 29). Philological discourse can be considered as a special metatext , within the boundaries of which the symbolic attributes of philological knowledge are introduced: “*he began to write, to waste ink and pens in order to find that very first letter with which it all began, and world madness began. In his free time he raised his adopted daughter, you, and kept an eye on the other kids at the orphanage, trying to figure out how to steal them so that they would get lost not in a field or a forest, but on the pages of his yellow, sleepy writings, like thickets of black, wolfish reeds*” (Zhaksylykov: 2024, 49). In the text about the first letter, we recognize the interpreted New Testament story about the word as the source of all that exists: “In the beginning was the word” (the first line of the Gospel of John). The quoted fragment of the part “Apke and Anta” continues and develops the through allusive meaning of “*Dreams of the Damned*”: the image of the reeds that overgrown an abandoned field goes back to the myth of the god Pan and the nymph Syrinx , who escaped from his persecution and turned into a reed, from which Pan made a pipe; the sound of the reed musical instrument is filled with sadness, melancholy and sorrow. In the poetics of the cycle, the content of this allusion is formed as the idea of the opposition and interaction of life and art, two fundamental dialectical principles – unity and opposition – of the real world and the artistic world.

4. Research results

The category of authorial intentionality is expressed through a complex array of artistic parameters: the development of the plot, the organization of the chronotope, the structure and evolution of character systems, dialogic speech, the author’s poetics, figurative symbolism, compositional elements, and subtextual information. The features of intentionality in “*Dreams of the Damned*” are shaped by the writer’s creative concept, where the principle of oneiric determination serves as the foundation for motif development.

In the process of analyzing authorial intentionality, the following findings were obtained:

4.1. A.Zhaksylykov’s authorial thinking is marked by archetypality, allusiveness, and multi-level symbolism, all of which enable him to convey a complex and nuanced

vision to the reader. In *The Return*, the reed field and the Zone serve as metaphorical representations of the Semipalatinsk Test Site. These artistic spaces reflect a deep sense of loss – of childhood wholeness and of an ecosystem destroyed by anthropogenic forces. The mythological and allegorical framework of the novel underscores the author's critical stance toward humanity's impact on the natural world.

4.2. Historical events are rendered in a satirical mode. Zhaksylykov employs techniques of paradox, satire, and grotesque to construct caricatured representations of rulers and expose the tyranny, despotism, and inadequacy of a state governed by the will of a single individual. The narrative critiques totalitarianism and reflects on the role of the individual in history, highlighting the failures of autocratic governance and the tragic trajectory of such regimes. The theme of conflict between the ruler and the people is framed through a satirical lens.

4.3. The character system functions as a central vehicle for articulating the author's position. Characters are constructed through the use of artistic prototypes. Among them, the figure of Taybala – tasked with guiding the now-grown children back to their homeland – is ideologically closest to the author. Through character dialogue and interior monologue, the writer articulates philosophical insights, reflections on human relationships, and responses to existential questions. The subplot involving the transformation of characters into their miniature representations – such as toys and dolls (in the "Sculptor" section) – depicts a world turned upside down and symbolically addresses the subjugation of fate to a higher will.

The allegorical figure of the rat also emerges as a significant artistic construct. In the novel, "rat behavior" is depicted as a social phenomenon, receiving an artistic generalization that reflects systemic patterns of behavior within society.

4.4. The novel's discourse can be interpreted as both artistic and playful. Zhaksylykov creates a "game with the reader", inviting them into a symbolic world rich with cultural references and intertexts, offered for active interpretation.

The metaphysical dimension of the novel is reinforced through compositional structure. The title itself encodes the symbolic motif of "return", which runs throughout the narrative. The philosophical concept of cyclical, existential time is emphasized through a compositional ring: the novel opens with the emergence of a gray moth from a "funnel" into which a jay, an owl, and a butterfly had sunk; it closes with their transformation into nocturnal moths. The concept of eternal return is deeply embedded in mythological tradition, which functions in the novel as a source of archetypal meaning – resurrected by the author and reintroduced to the contemporary reader through original narrative construction.

5. Conclusions

The communicative-discursive approach, from the position of which the problem of the author's intentionality, allows us to interpret the semantic structure of A.Zhaksylykov's work "The Return" as a complex system of codes, thought out by the author and offered to the reader. The large-scale concept (the consequences of the real situation of the Semipalatinsk test site, which resulted in a severe interference in the ecosystem and caused an outbreak of natural mutations) is revealed through the organization of a mythological-allegorical narrative, which acquires a critical focus.

Through imagery (character, chronotopic), speech strategies and compositional elements, the writer conveys his personal philological, aesthetic, cultural, and historical cognitive experience. Literary play techniques, organized in accordance with the author's intention to fully artistically convey the tragic events of reality, help to convey the multifaceted content to the reader.

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