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The Impact of Writers with Bmental Thinking on Readers' Positive Interpretation of Other Cultures (Evidence from Russian and Kazakh Literature of the XX Century)

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Abstract

Literature always was a reflection of stereotyped and private visions of the world, including perception of other cultures. With proper reading it is possible to distinguish authors whose oeuvre and world perception equally connects two cultural layers and objectively reveal the image of other nation. The analysis of these poets' works require the use of the term "bimentality", which has already found application in articles on cultural studies, political science and teaching methods. The purpose of this article is to define the term "bimentality" in literary criticism by employing the material of Kazakh and Russian poets and writers' oeuvre, including emigre writers' works, to reveal prerequisites for the development of bimental consciousness and particular artistic styles that affect readers' positive interpretation of other cultures. The investigation identifies appropriate aspects of studying, such as specific artistic features, interethnic communication, visions of Europe and Asia and ways of using this method of reading. The use of comparative analysis and context-hermeneutical method provides an opportunity to interpret works in light of literary, cultural, sociological and ethnographic questions that make the research applicable to interdisciplinary studies. Our results show that the development of bimental consciousness is caused by a country's social and political conditions; history of international relations; biographical factors and children's perception formation that influence the degree of ethnic identity, artistic style and vision of spatial and temporal boundaries. Poets and writers with bimental thinking can be intermediators between different mental realms and thus promoting the development of intercultural understanding.

Keywords: Bimentality; Bimental thinking; Eurasianism; National identity; Russian literature

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1. Introduction

As a part of multi-ethnic society literature always described different countries' images and presented them to readers. This subject has a special significance in the analysis of works of writers, whose personal and creative development takes place under the conditions of combination of two cultural layers. Investigating works of Russian and Kazakh writers of the XXth century, we faced a terminological problem, which did not allow us to combine specifics of artistic consciousness, integrating two cultures and affecting the poetic language: the choice of figures of speech, the perception of spatial and temporal borders, cultural features and mythology. At these levels an appropriate analysis was done, which showed that the use of the term "biculturality" allows to gather into one system specific features of one writer and to compare different writers' works. This analysis may include representatives of various national literatures.

The research contains two aspects of studying. On the one hand, it is necessary to justify the use of the word "biculturality" and to identify the criteria by which the thinking of an author may be called bicultural. On the other hand, the paper analyzes particular artistic worldview. The study of these aspects needs to solve the following problems: consideration of socio-political conditions of person's formation and factors, affecting children's perception; identifying of a problem of ethnic self-identity; relation to spatial and temporal boundaries and the choice of figures of speech.

According to assigned tasks and considered aspects, the purpose of the article focuses on the justification of the term "biculturality" in literary criticism by employing the material of Kazakh and Russian poets and writers' oeuvre, revealing prerequisites for the development of bicultural thinking and particular artistic styles that affect readers' positive interpretation of other cultures.

2. Theoretical Justification of the Term "Biculturality" in Literary Criticism

In the earlier years the term has been used in several scientific and journalistic articles on teaching methodology, cultural studies, sociology and political science. For example, one of the tasks in the article on the theory and methodology of training and education by Mukhametshina and Galimullina (2014) is the "consideration of organic transition from bilingual and bicultural competence to bicultural self-consciousness, particularities of which can be determined by ethnic, confessional and historical determinants". Thus, biculturality is the highest level of two- culture perception. At the same time bilingualism can be a factor, which may accelerate the transition to biculturality, but it is not necessary.

In literary criticism a writer with bicultural thinking is a writer, whose identity grew in two cultural environments and the perception of features of both cultures is equal and not marginal. It is reflected in works of authors in semantic and linguistic levels and creates bridges between nations. The inclusion of this term with all accompanying peculiarities in the analysis of literature can help in identifyingintermediaris past and present and description of artistic style that promote an objective image of another culture.

Approaches and methods, used in the research, construct a theoretical framework for the disclosure of other nation's image and the specifics of its artistic expression. In particular, the theoretical basis of the study includes works of Veselovsky, Bakhtin, Kristeva, Etkind, Madanov and other researches. This list represents historically significant works and contemporary studies in comparative literature and literary theory.

The theoretical significance is to introduce the term "biculturality" and its derivatives, such as "bicultural thinking", in literary criticism, to identify the specifics of artistic vision of other nations, its people, nature, historical past and interconnectedness in the poetic text by using the methods listed below.

3. Methods and Materials of the Research

Solution of assigned tasks involves the use of the following methods: a method of holistic analysis of art, comparative method using an intertextual analysis of the poetic text, context-hermeneutic method.

Context-hermeneutical method consists in search of hidden historical and literary dialogues caused by "a single spiritual and cultural continuum of artistic consciousness of the era where writers communicate" (Zamanskaya, 2002). In other words, context-hermeneutical method provides an interpretation of any literary fact or event in the system of contexts, which, according to their nature, include a special work of literature in the maximum possible number of cultural, philosophical, ethnographical issues. Consequently, the resolution of these issues is larger than in the analysis of similar texts using comparative-historical method. In the words of Zamanskaya (2002), "the most important task of context-hermeneutic method is a reconstruction of united continental cultural space of one era that reveals the specificity and dynamics of artistic consciousness of national culture in the context of European and world culture".

We use this method in the analysis of Russian-Kazakh and Russian-European literary connections at the junction of literature, history, ethnography, cultural and other areas, identifying common and different in formation and development of understanding of certain images and phenomena by bicultural writers.

The research was conducted on the material of authors mainly of the XXth century's first- half, including Russian poets living in Kazakhstan (Martynov, Vasiliev), Russian emigre poets (Parnakh, Evangulov) and Kazakh writers, in particular, Suleimenov. As a result of a detailed study of above mentioned writers' oeuvre we gained a large practical material, ready for the comprehensive analysis in the context of our topic.

4. Criteria of Bicultural Thinking Formation

As a first task it is necessary to identify the criteria by which the thinking of an author may be called bicultural. These criteria include the analysis of socio-historical situation that form writers' thinking; biographical facts and features of childhood and upbringing. Russian-Kazakh historical links predetermined strong literary relations, which certainly influence works of authors, perceiving two cultures.

Transferring this problem to the level of world literature, we found examples of Russian emigre writers, whose thinking can be called bicultural, and determined the differences between consciousness, caused by voluntary- staying in other country, and consciousness, dictated by forced relocation. The consideration of this issue in the context of emigre Russian literature makes it possible to apply the results of the investigation as a background of a specific teaching method.

4.1. Socio-historical background of bicultural thinking formation

Image of Kazakhstan began to be actively used by Russian writers and poets in the XVIIIth century, when many Russian writers and researchers collected and recorded works of Kazakh folklore. The inclusion of image of the East, in particular, Kazakhstan in Russian literature had a very powerful poetic, but one-sided thematic expression. For example, the Russian lyrics of the XIXth century, describing the Central Asia, showed images of nature, mostly associated with steppe, and represented an exotic life. But nevertheless, regular literary relationship between Kazakh and Russian nations, common historical past and rich cultural heritage predetermined special binary perception of the world by Russian poets, who grew up in Kazakhstan.

Leonid Martynov and Pavel Vasiliev, Russian poets of the XXth century, represent objective and multifaceted image of Kazakhstan, which is justified by their biographies. Vasiliev was born and grew up in Kazakhstan, Martynov was born in Omsk, a city at the boundary of two countries, and his childhood was held in the Kazakh steppes. At that time Kazakhstan due to the Russian Empire's politics was a multinational and multilingual country. Therefore, their worldview, reflected in art, fully comply with bicultural consciousness. In the opposite side will be directed an analysis of Olzhas Suleimenov's oeuvre, the Russian speaking Kazakh poet.

We considered the work of some Russian poets and emigre writers, but for two reasons there will be no inclusion of works of many worthy authors. Firstly, images of other cultures, nations or nature can be called constant theme or motive instead of bicultural worldview. Secondly, the forced relocation to another country due to the external (social and political) reasons rarely influences the full positive acceptance of other culture. The feeling of "homesickness" imposes specific motives in a writer's oeuvre and in most cases excludes the process of self-identification with other nations that adversely affects the objectivity of a literary text.

Thus, it is necessary to clarify that the point at issue is the perception of another ethnic group as a native nation, when it is impossible to exclude other nation's images of writers' work. They dictate the author's worldview system from a "secondary" language, traditions, folklore, mythology, images of nature. Moreover, the implementation of components of another culture to a writer's artistic world should manifest itself not only with a specific topic, but throughout all his creative life.

Representatives of Russian literature in emigration of the first half of the XXth century, such as Valentin Parnakh, Georgiy Evangulov, little known to a wider audience, confirm the validity of a special term "biculturality" for authors, brought up by two cultures. Long stay in Paris influenced their formation, but emigration likely to have marked main stages of their creative activity, but their artistic features are laid much earlier.

4.2. The role and features of children perception

In the context of Russian poetry of the XXth century we define the role and characteristics of the child's perception in the formation of bicultural person, based on certain factors such as place of birth and residence, features of family traditions, language factor and so on.

In autobiographical novels Martynov described his childhood: "Kazakhs! I think I heard their voices, the creaking of their carts, the neighing of their horses and the roar of their camels almost from the first day of my life..."* (Martynov, 1977, p.23), "Yes, I remember these Kazakhs selling kumis on the streets and meat on the bazaars, these riders in fox-fur colored caps, these riders on camels – Kazakh women in green and purple velvet coats and hats with feathers of birds. But except these children of nature I remember <...>" (Martynov, 1977, p.8). All these memories of Kazakhs are related to livestock breeding, which refers readers to the basis of Kazakhs' life at that time (camels and horses as the main steppe "transport", elements of clothing such as fox-fur caps and hats with feathers). That formed the child's sustainable and fair presentation of Kazakh people that Martynov formulates lyrically: "children of nature".

Martynov in the story "Family tradition" said that as a child, when he liked to draw, he always portrayed himself "in the image of a naked young man in a Tahitian breechcloth and Kyrgyz fur cap riding on a camel to the Topolev cape" (Martynov, 1977, p.26). Topolev Cape is a pier on the Irtysh River in the East Kazakhstan. Children's perception of the world caused the pursuance of exotic pictures that explains the Tahitian breechcloth.

* All translations are this author's own.

However, in the future these attempts of self-identity, supported by an idea of blurred boundaries between Asia and Europe and kinship of nations, grew up in a philosophical statement in the novel "Aksakal from Kokchetau": "I did not become an aksakal, mainly just because I shave with an electric razor..." (Martynov, 1977, p.251). The author does not make boundaries between nations, does not feel a dissociation in self-determination, but on the contrary combines in a single sentence continents and nations, seeing the difference between Asia and Europe only in the use of technology. Aksakal is an old and wise man in Central Asia and Caucasus. Also it is necessary to clarify, that literally meaning of the word "aksakal" in Turkic languages is "white beard", which was shaved with an electric razor.

Here, it is noted that in choosing of practical material we relied on the fact that author's childhood experiences are reflected in his autobiographies and art works, which contains author's digressions or where lyrical character is close to author's reality. The study of this material determines the factors that contribute to the formation of bicultural personality. In the analysis of Martynov's oeuvre the collection of his autobiographical short stories "Air frigates" is a basic material in this work, and also his poems, written under the influence of his family's stories and legends, heard in childhood, are remarkable.

According to these legends, Martynov's great-grandfather, a peddler, walked on the Kazakh steppe and sold books (poem "The Seeker of Paradise"). The poet's grandfather, a military engineer, worked in Almaty. He came to the steppe to dig canals and get water for local residents (poem "The story of Russian engineer"). Family legends enriched the poet's oeuvre and were a material, which he used as an example of multiculturalism, an example of recognition and acceptance of other nation.

The role of children impressions of bicultural author in Russian emigre writers' oeuvre is confirmed by examples from poetry of Evangulov, who was born in Georgia and wrote about his homeland a wonderful poem "The White Dukhan", where there is an excerpt: "And my great grandfather's riotous gift // have laid a snare in my poems. // And in a tie, not in Cossacks // I look back into the mists of centuries" (Livak & Ustinov, 2014).

Legends and traditions of Evangulov's family constantly brought him back to the theme of Georgia with the use of images of Georgian culture and Georgian language phrases. Garments emphasize the distance between the poet and his native culture ("in a tie, not in Cossacks"), but the memories allow him to write the following: "I remember everything through the centuries, // and I look to the past in the face... // Oh, the homeland of my fathers, // my outlying Kakheti" (Livak & Ustinov, 2014, p.476). Kakheti is a region formed in the 1990s in eastern Georgia.

Thus, geographical and ethnic environment, surrounding a writer's childhood, influences children perception. This obvious fact requires a specific consideration, which through analysis of literature defines what factors developed biculturality. Furthermore, family traditions as a source of inspiration for bicultural thinking are a good material, for example of multiculturalism, which a writer seeks and towards which he encourages readers.

5. Artistic Perception of Space and Time by Bicultural Worldview

Biographical facts of the poets primarily raise the question of self-identity. For Russian poets who lived in Kazakhstan, it was not a painful process of self-identification, as the Russian and Kazakh culture surrounded them since childhood, completing their worldview, including its language. History determined the absence of abrupt changes in the transition from one culture to another. Thus, in our case the question is contained in the degree of self-identification with a particular culture.

Concerning the eastern and western cultures, it should be clarified that the understanding of "borders" between East and West in different context will be determined or geographically or on the basis of combining of certain cultural features that are traditionally associated with the East or the West.

5.1 Question of Self-identity in the Perception of Spatial and Temporal Borders

The ideas of merging the space and the idea of Eurasianism are closely related to consciousness of a bicultural person, because spatial, temporal and cultural borders between two nations have a peculiar and objective vision in their oeuvre. According to Georgiou (2010), space is "a central category in relation to identity and representation in the context of diaspora, migration and the media research" (Georgiou, 2010).

Martynov deeply realised a contact of different cultural worlds at all levels: territorial (East and West), cultural (traditional Asia and "new" Europe), national (Slavs and Turks) and other levels. This realization determined the poet's attitude to the problem of self-identity, as it is presented in a poem "Sonnet": "I met you, the European brother, // who in the past was also Asian, // but now overtaken by the roar of the motor" (Martynov, 1977). This image symbolizes the significance of Asia as a cradle of Eurasia: all the people, according to Martynov, have common roots, and differences are only in a way of development of society. In addition to continental boundaries, temporal borders are clearly demonstrated as an interrelation of past and present. These ideas about the borders of Europe and Asia and the kinship of their peoples conform not only to the nature of a lyrical hero, but also a writer's personal self-identity, as was exemplified in the statement above about aksakal.

The similar excerpt was found in Vasiliev's poem "Asian", where the lyrical hero says: "Although I have blond hair, // But you and I are very similar: // I also can grab some earth, // riding a horse at full gallop" (Vasiliev, 1984, p.30). These lines are very illustrative for Vasiliev's poetry, combining two cultures in the plot, in the character of lyrical hero and in the choosing of figures of speech. In original verse the poet used the word "русый" (a tone of blond hair) for describing his light hair that has a common root with the word "русский" ("Russian"). It confirms that he used specific details, associated to a nation, to enhance the effect of two cultures and their peculiarities' merger.

For the analysis of Russian emigre writers' oeuvre the question of self-identification is characterized by an excerpt of Georgiy Evangulov's poem "Foxtrot and lezginka": "I will dance the foxtrot of Paris with the stubborn soul of kinto" (Livak & Ustinov, 2014, p.496). "Kinto" is a specific Georgian word that has many meanings and no direct translation. It is a Georgian man involved in trade or without a certain class, a humorist, dodger and sometimes a swindler. As we can see, Evangulov positively combines Georgian origin and culture with Russian culture, the language of which he used, but denies emigration, opposes its influence. Paris for him was associated not with the homeland, but, on the one hand, with escape, with forced relocation, that can not affect the positive acceptance of another culture; on the other hand, with freedom and hope: "Paris! Where the Eiffel Tower' // Iron and slender dream // Ascended as a mast - // Paris! There will be a solution!" (Livak & Ustinov, 2014).

Psychology in the question of self-identity allocates ethnic cultural identity – the sense of belonging to an ethnic community, the degree of identification with it. Initially, our choice of poets, who are primarily Russian poets, presupposes their affective feeling of belonging to another ethnic group, based on a long staying there that led to biculturality.

5.2 "Europe-Asia"

An oeuvre of Russian emigre writer Valentin Parnakh is always in a multicultural society that was determined by the history of his family as it happened with other poets considered here. According to a legend of his family, which has Jewish roots, in the XVth century his ancestors fled from Spain to the east and in the XIXth century settled in a Russian city Taganrog. Subsequently V. Parnakh traveled to Palestine, Egypt, Spain and Sicily, for a long time lived in France, then in Germany. His work is characterized by plenty of lines, where he combined realities of different cultures, such as "eastern

song", "Gypsies rushing around with bells, harps and cymbals", "drums rumble in St. Petersburg", melodies of "women of Damascus", "melancholy of Gypsies and Arabs" (Livak & Ustinov, 2014).

Parnakh, from the childhood pierced with stories of his family and getting over the half of Europe, was very sensitive to any manifestation of multiculturalism, watching and observing conventionality of spatial and cultural borders. His artistic style constantly connected East and West, contained words and phrases from different languages and generally reflected his poetry: "Colors of Arabia // Embrowned in Casino de Paris" (Livak & Ustinov, 2014).

Below are excerpts from poems by the poets lived in Kazakhstan. These excerpts contain examples of Eurasian motives predefined by bicultural consciousness of their authors. The spatial boundaries between Europe and Asia, have already demonstrated in part by the examples above, are metaphorically presented as a merger of two cultural layers, as well as past and present are shown as borders between historical worlds.

From a conversation with Leonid Martynov: "– Here, on this bridge, said the poet [Martynov], I once saw how Asia and Europe met – Bactrian camel, dusty because of roads of the steppe, and brand new shiny car. <...> The camel and the car with interest examined each other..." (Dementiev, 1971). In this excerpt he used chains of metaphors: the camel - Asia – story, the car - Europe - technical progress. These links are related, from the one hand, inside their metaphorical chains and, from the other hand, between these two chains, representing mutual influence between Asia and Europe in terms of continuity of cultures and eras.

Vasiliev has lines with the similar meaning in the poem "The story of the river Kuldzha" (Vasiliev, 1984):

In different ways years ran away.
Camels - have you seen? -
Suddenly turned into trains
And, rattling, flew there,
Where bridges were established.

As Martynov, Vasiliev presented image of a camel, an animal typical for steppes of Central Asia, as a symbol of the past. Trains, like the car in the Martynov's poem, symbolize the present Europe with its rapid technological progress. In addition, the final word of the Vasiliev's metaphorical chain - the bridge - means the future, where the present "flies".

As is visible, bicultural consciousness tends to search binary relations, and a poetic thinking of bicultural person enriches these pairs by metaphorical components. Also it is clearly seen from the poetry of Olzhas Suleimenov, Kazakh poet writing in Russian. His oeuvre is characterised by an excerpt from the poem "It seems to me...": "Only in comparison with the past // the present lives, // your sullen camel // reminded me of a pangolin of Tertiary Period. // There is a log of a baobab // and that is why there is a thread, // there is no a substance at all // if there is nothing to compare it with. <...> // Only in comparison with Asia // Europe exists" (Suleimenov, 1979).

This passage is based on the unity of the pair "source of a substance – a substance" and has some interrelated pairs: the past – the present, a pangolin – a camel, a log of baobab – a thread, and finally Asia – Europe. These elements, correlated inside their binary combinations, prove that any substance assumes its source (as the present follows from the past), and, in addition, they are related to the final opposition "Asia – Europe": sources of substances "baobab" and "past" characterize Asia and their derivatives "thread" and "present" mean Europe. In general, Suleimenov understands the infinite interconnectedness of the continents.

Due to these peculiarities works of considered poets met the requirements of multi-national politics, but at the same time moved apart cultural frameworks. This search of deep metaphorical connections at the points of contact between Europe and Asia makes it possible to go beyond the territorial boundaries.

6. Conclusion

The ultimate goal of the investigation is not the analysis of works of individual authors, but the practical application of the material for the construction of a method of reading, studying and teaching literature. This method in case of amateur reading or in the context of literary disciplines should promote the development of skills to identify certain criteria to find authors with bicultural thinking aimed at creating of truthful image of other nation or country.

Thus, this research, on the one hand, identifies the criteria by which the author's thinking may be called bicultural and, on the other hand, analyzes the features of artistic world of the author. According to the investigation our findings show:

1. Criteria for bicultural person's formation are following:
 - a) Socio-political conditions of identity formation. The analysis of Russian poets, lived in Kazakhstan, demonstrates historical interconnectedness of Russia and Kazakhstan that creates bicultural thinking. Forced relocation in another country rarely contributes to positive perception of another culture, but does not eliminate it.
 - b) Factors affecting children's perception: geographical and ethnic environment surrounding the poet or writer since childhood; place of birth and duration of living in another culture. Family traditions are a source of inspiration for bicultural thinking, a material, which is used as an example of multiculturalism. The degree of rethinking of childhood experiences affects the ability of authors to identify themselves with other ethnic groups.

Under these conditions, the inclusion of components of other cultures to the artistic worldview of a writer is manifested not only with a certain topic, but throughout all his work.

2. The features of artistic perception:
 - a) The degree, with which a writer identifies himself with another culture, affects the general attitude towards intercultural communication, the characters of lyrical heroes, themes of works and system of images.
 - b) Spatial and temporal boundaries, reflected artistically, are very conditional and influence the following features: the combination of different cultures' realities; the use of words and phrases of a "secondary" language; the use of figures of speech specific to different cultures.

As it is visible, bicultural thinking of a writer, formed by a number of conditions, dictates the artistic features of his work, including themes and motives, images, figures of speech and more. The findings of our investigation are fully applicable to writers of different nations and in the context of world literature. Poets, developed in themselves propensity for bicultural thinking, are mediators between nations, bringing to readers an objective perception of other people, breaking stereotypes and promoting the development of intercultural understanding.

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