

# On Issue of Character of Ethnic Identity Transformation of Tatar Writer Mirgaziyan Yunus<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The article deals with the work of the Tatar writer of the sixties Mirgaziyan Yunus. For a long time, Tatar literary scholars considered him as an artist of the word-marine painter, who expanded the horizons of Tatar prose, filled it with romance, enriched it with new topics. The literary debut of the writer took place in Russian. The writer wrote on “marine topics” in Russian and Tatar. In the 1960s the writer, under the influence of circumstances, makes a sharp turn towards a heightened awareness of his ethnic identity. In his work appears a number of works devoted to the comprehension of the Tatar emigration, the problems of the Tatar national character. The article systematizes material related to the reflection of the writer on the subject of his identity. Under pressure from Soviet censorship until the 1990s. his work was politically neutral. M. Yunis preferred writing about the problem of national and ethnic identity in his native Tatar language. During the perestroika period, the writer's work became more politicized and he turned into a fiery patriot of his people, who defended the right to its statehood. M. Yunis is moving from oblivion of his own ethnic identity, distancing himself from his native culture to the realization of its identity, and he is beginning to openly uphold his “Tatar” character.

**Keywords:** Tatar Literature; Tatar Prose; Tatar Journalism; National Identity; Mirgaziyan Yunusov (M. Yunus.)

## 1. Introduction

In Tatar literary criticism there are still no monographic studies devoted to the comprehension of the works of M. Yunusov. The work available in the arsenal of

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researchers is in the nature of reviews, anniversary and introductory articles. Among them, the articles of Rahmani (2003), Zagidullina (2015), which reveals the national identity of the writer. The theoretical basis of our study was the work devoted to the problems of the study of identity (Kamalieva et al., 2017; Zinnatullina & Khabibullina, 2015; Amineva, 2018), the national identity of Tatar literature (Mingazova et al., 2014; Safarova et al., 2016). We understand national identity as a combination of “collective opinions, beliefs, moods that characterize a group of people as a nation” (Kabanova, 2006; Peranginangin et al., 2019). Both individual and collective, it has a hierarchical structure: the “upper” layer is state-legal, the “lower” layer is ethno-cultural. Four aspects of national identity are also distinguished: historical (a nation has a past in which important historical events took place, a nation also has a future to which it is responsible); ethical (the people who make up the nation share some traits, perceptions, and principles that distinguish them from others); geographical (this group of people is attached to a specific geographical area) and cultural (common values, tastes, attitude). The totality of all these factors, as well as how other nations see this nation, is what, according to Popova, "in recent years they began to call" Englishness ", " Germanism ", " Frenchness ", " Russianness" (Popova, 2004; Sheralieva, (2016).

## **2. Methods**

The subject of our study was the prose and journalistic works of the Tatar writer M. Yunus, which touch upon the problem of national identity belonging to different historical and cultural periods of the 20th century. In the research process, the following methods were used: the dialectical principles of universal communication and development, the principle of ascent from the abstract to the concrete, the principle of unity of analysis and synthesis, the subject and the object, the principles and methods of historicism in the knowledge of sociocultural phenomena, a systematic approach, the comparative method, the method of interpretation analysis.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

In the history of Tatar literature, Mirgaziyan Yunusov (pseudonym M. Yunis) gained fame as the first Tatar writer-marine painter. His career was thorny. In 1973, he became a member of the Writers Union of the TASSR. Behind M. Yunusov, he served in the USSR Air Force (1950-1955), then worked in the Black Sea (1961-1967) and the Azov Shipping Company (1977-1987). In 1968, he was invited to work at the SoyuzmorNIIproekt Research Institute as a chief specialist in socio-psychological research. In 1969, Mr.. appointed to the post of head of department of the Ministry of the Navy of the USSR. In April 1972, he went to work in the journal

Science and Religion, where he headed the department. In 1987 he retired, and since 1988 began to be considered as a professional writer.

“Mirgaziyan Agay has been striving for Europeanization all his life, distancing himself from his village background from the village of Isergap. This made itself felt in his manner of holding on, dressing, especially thinking, and especially in his work. However, having wandered around the world enough, having seen a lot in his lifetime, having gained worldly experience, he suddenly changed his orientation and went to Isargap - he began to reach for the native soil, from where its historical roots feed.” Thus, his companion-in-arms Galiev (2011) characterized the process of ethnic identity transformation in M. Yunis very insightfully. The writer himself writes about this.

Yunusov is a striking representative of the post-war generation, who had to exist in the conditions when the course was taken in the USSR to create a new community - the "Soviet people". The writer's worldview was formed at a time when the scope of the native language in the USSR was steadily narrowing. The country pursued a policy of Russification of the population. Tatars, like other peoples of the USSR, fell into the “language bondage” of the Russian language. M. Yunusov received his primary education in his native language. Early orphaned, in 1941 he was forced to quit his studies in order to go to work on a collective farm.

According to statistics, from the TASSR in 1940-1958. about 100 thousand people moved. Among them was Yunusov, who after serving in the army did not return to his homeland and remained working in a foreign land, where the starting conditions were better. He again sat down at his desk during the years of service in the ranks of the Soviet Army (1944). Yunusov - graduate of the Military Aviation School (town of Kuznetsk), Kharkov Military Aviation School. Thus, the writer received secondary and higher education exclusively in Russian. The language identity of M. Yunusov was formed in the conditions of mastery of the second language. In this case, we are talking about the formation of a bilingual linguistic personality, who speaks two languages, has an idea of the cultures of different nations, shows the ability to learn a second language, thanks to mastering the second language it is included in the secondary society through integration with it. The literary debut of the writer took place in Russian. The writer took his first steps in the literary field in the 1960s after graduating from the philological faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University (1961). The future writer wrote in 1963 the first story “Iron Elephant” about an Arab boy in the port of the Egyptian city of Alexandria (Yunis, 2007). Success (prize for first place in the competition of short stories named after Paustovsky in the pages of the Odessa newspaper "Sailor") inspired Yunusov. “The sea, the oceans made me a writer,” he admits in one of his interviews (Yunis, 2007). Later, Yunis himself acted as a translator of his own books (The Science of Wanderings (1986)) (Yunusov, 1986). Subsequently, by virtue of service in the merchant fleet, he mastered the English language. The language

personality of the writer was formed in the conditions of interethnic communication not only in the USSR, but also in the vastness of the world. Far from the historical homeland, he had to actively use the Russian and English languages, which was reflected in the figurative system and the language of his works.

In letters addressed to a friend A.M. Gilyazov, M. Yunis more than once complains that Tatar writers met his works written in their native language “with hostility”. Paying tribute to the novelty of the content, fellow writers criticized it for the language of works far from perfect. They considered the writing language of M. Yunis Tatar “tracing paper” from the Russian language (F. Musin, R. Hafizova, V. Nurullin). The writer himself was dissatisfied with the literary editing of his works, believing that this work led to a depletion of their meaning. Yunis was indignant that his books could not reach the readers for years, getting stuck in the line for editing (Yunusnyn, 1980).

In “Road Reflections” (1983), Yunis (2007) admits that after leaving his homeland he became embarrassed to speak his native language. The Tatars in these years, indeed, due to the national policy pursued in the country, began to “be afraid of their native language” (Why be afraid of your own language? 2013). He began to adhere to the strategy of integration into a “foreign” culture.

Fate was destined for him to become a pioneer of the marine theme in Tatar literature (“The Iron Elephant: Notes of the Mariner” (1968) (Yunis, 1968); “Zanzibar behind the blue clouds of Zanzibar” (1970) (Yunis, 1970), “Salty Wind” (Kazan, 1974; Yunis, 1971), “The Storm of which they dreamed” (1977) (Yunis, 1971), “Seekers of pearls” (Kazan, 1979; Yunis, 1979). These books expanded the range of Tatar literature, enriching with new heroes - people who seek, fanned by the romance of distant wanderings and sea open spaces.

Yunusov, being a sailor, was often abroad. For a long time, by his own admission, fascinated by the “alien shores”, he did not feel any discomfort due to the voluntary distance from his native culture. The turning point was a meeting with an old compatriot in a cemetery in Genoa, which turned his worldview upside down. The shock was so strong that unexpectedly Yunis (2007) began to create works of art in his native Tatar language (“Our house was under willows” (1964).

In one of his interviews, the writer honestly admits the difficulties that involved his transition from Russian to his native language (Yunusnyn, 1980, p. 80).

The second event that prompted him to reconsider his ethnic identity was a trip to Kazan. Comprehending the significance of this event in his life, the writer draws the attention of readers to the fact that he met the Tatar capital city only after he visited Rome, Venice, Marseille, London, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Alexandria, Cairo, Istanbul, Barcelona, Calcutta, Singapore, Jakarta. Yunis admits that her image of Kazan was previously formed under the influence of Tukay’s poem “A Pair of Horses” and the Tatar radio program “Kazan Says”. Having been in the capital, he

writes bitterly, “modern Kazan cannot be called a Tatar city ....” (Yunusnyn, 1980, pp. 521-522).

The third event that shocked his worldview took place in Odessa, where he met the family of Mikhail Ishmukhametov, whose grandfather was an Orenburg Tatar and his mother a Romanian. The Volga Tatar was greatly impressed by the family library, which Ishmukhametov inherited from his grandfather and great-grandfather. These were books in saffian bindings and with silver corners in Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, French and Russian. Yunusov hooked on a lively replica of Ishmukhametov’s Bulgarian wife by nationality: “We are other Bulgars, our language is closer to Turkish” (Yunusnyn, 1980, p. 517). So he discovered for himself the whole diversity of the Turkic world and the cultural potential of his ancestors.

These three events prompted M. Yunis to rethink his ethnic identity. He firmly embarked on the path of ambassador of his native culture. Wherever he was, the writer strove to tell about his people, collected information about his rich history, trying to determine his place among other peoples. For a long time, Yunis did this carefully, as he was afraid that this could negatively affect his career. The writer admits that he had to bypass many things in silence, because The “internal censor,” which awoke in him in 1927, prevented much from being said directly. The fear was too strong in him to lose a good job, fly out of the party, fall out of favor with the authorities, lose the ability to go abroad (Yunusnyn, 1980, p. 80). For a long time, Yunis remembered how for a long time the Soviet bureaucrats obstructed him by preventing him from registering at his place of residence in Simferopol, where he got an apartment, because his passport indicated his nationality in the column: "Tatar."

For these reasons, he basically did not translate a number of his resonant works addressed to compatriots into Russian (“Our house was under willows ...”, “The fire burns only by candlelight ...”) (Yunis, 2007, p. 524). These works were recognized by Tatars living not only at home, but also abroad (Finnish Tatars) (Yunis, 2007, p. 524).

Yunis (2007) believes that in the 1960s. did not become a Russian-language writer only because of the warm reception by his compatriots of his story written in the Tatar language (pp. 524-525).

The writer admits that during long business trips he was more than once embraced by a deep sense of nostalgia associated with love for his native land, for his ethical roots. M. Yunis in his “Road Reflections” recalls how he took a volume of selected poems by Tukay and collections of Tatar folk songs on a business trip to satisfy his homesickness (Yunis, 2007, p. 81). To cope with the nostalgia that befell him in Moscow, Yunis came to the Kazan station to listen to the conversations of Tatars passengers (Yunis, 2007, p. 73).

The result of his reflections on his own ethnic identity was the story “Gains and Losses” (1965) (Yunis, 2007, pp. 253-301), “Fire burns only with candles ...”

(1979) (Yunis, 2007, pp. 434-582), "Seekers of pearls "(1971) (Yunis, 1979), stories" Our house was under willows ... " (1964) (Yunis, 2007, pp. 68-76), "The peeled potato" (1964) (Yunis, 2007, pp. 77-82), "When the father died" (Yunis, 2007, pp. 90-94), "A B C" (1971), (Yunis, 2007, pp. 137-142), "Death Sentence" (1975) (Yunis, 2007, pp. 155-160). M. Yunis in these works comprehends the problem of Tatar emigration, contributes to the development of the Tatar national character and national image of the world.

In the 1990s, when in all citizens of the Russian Federation experienced rethinking in which country they live with its new territorial outlines, ethnic composition of the population, political structure, birth and dying values, changing social stratification, M. Yunis turned into Tatar writer - a fiery publicist, supporter of the creation of the Republic of Tatarstan. He, as a public figure, made a huge contribution to strengthening the ethnic identity of the Tatars. In a number of his articles M. Yunis systematized material on language, culture, territory, interests of the Tatar people, expressed his emotional attitude towards him, readiness to act in his interests (Yunis, 2007).

From under his pen, works of art began to arise in which the tragic pages of the history of the Tatar people came to life ("Revenge for the faith") (1997) (Yunis, 2007). His work has become increasingly politicized. The writer accused his fellow tribesmen of the inability to soberly look at what was happening, criticized for inertness and indecision in solving national problems. M. Yunis passionately defended his Tatar character in each article. At the same time, he did not close his feelings with a regional framework.

#### **4. Summary**

A review of the work of M. Yunis in the light of the problem of national identity showed that the writer, in front of the readers, having made his way from a Soviet person to a mega-European, suddenly makes a sharp turn to realize his ethnic identity and begins to passionately uphold the Tatar, his Tatar character. The writer himself defines his specificity in this way: "Some Tatar writers still criticize me for writing in Tatar, but I think in Russian. Perhaps partly they are right. Reality made me live for 46 years in a Russian environment. I dreamed of introducing into my work in my native language European thinking, the richness of poetics and the figurative world of oriental literature, the sharp publicism needed in our era, - looked for opportunities to appeal directly to my reader" (Yunis, 2007). Yunis by the end of the 20th century overcomes political neutrality and turns into a deeply nationally-oriented Tatar writer, an ardent patriot of his native land.

## 5. Conclusions

The history of the writer Yunis's awareness of his own ethnic identity allows researchers to dynamically track the process of formation of his creative personality. The works, which contain the reflection of the writer on this subject, represent, in addition to artistic value, historical, as they are documentary evidence of the era.

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