



ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЕ

LITERARY DIMENSION

DOI: 10.22363/2618-897X-2025-22-3-601-612

EDN: BIMYQZ

Research article / Научная статья

Evolution of the Author’s Picture of the World According to the Model ‘Self / Other’ in the Works of Chuvash Writers of the Post-Revolutionary Period

Vitaly Gr. Rodionov 

Chuvash State Institute of Humanities Sciences, *Cheboksary, Russian Federation*

✉ vitrod1@yandex.ru

Abstract. The relevance of this study increases in the context of the steady strengthening of the multicultural space in the modern world and the strengthening of the role of intercultural dialogue in it. In the process of searching for optimal forms of dialogue between different cultures, the artistic and verbal experience of national minorities (alias, ‘инородцы’ — inorodtsy) during the formative years of Soviet Russia is very useful. We are interested in the author’s picture of the world of writers in the prism of ethnic self-identification, their search for ways of further existence of the nation in the context of changing reality. The purpose of this article is to identify the author’s pictures of the world in their diversity and evolution. The material used is the works of talented Chuvash writers, which were composed (published, revised or staged) in 1917–1924. The borderline state of several sciences studying man and his culture is described. Literary, psychological and ethnological approaches are used. Comparative analysis with its focus on identifying the singular and unique prevails.

Key words: intra-ethnic conflict, literary canon, ethnic symbolism, ethnocentrism, turmoil, dialogue, N.G. Garin-Mikhailovsky

Article history: received 10.04.2025; accepted 10.06.2025.

Conflict of interests: the author declares that there is no conflict of interests.

For citation: Rodionov, V.G. 2025. “Evolution of the Author’s Picture of the World According to the Model ‘Self / Other’ in the Works of Chuvash Writers of the Post-Revolutionary Period.” *Polylinguality and Transcultural Practices*, 22 (3), 601–612. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2618-897X-2025-22-3-601-612>

© Rodionov V.G., 2025



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

Эволюция авторской картины мира по модели «свой — чужой» в творчестве чувашских писателей постреволюционного времени

В.Г. Родионов 

Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук, г. Чебоксары, Российская Федерация

✉ vitrod1@yandex.ru

Аннотация. Актуальность данного исследования возрастает в условиях неуклонного укрепления в современном мире поликультурного пространства и усиления в нем роли межкультурного диалога. В процессе поиска оптимальных форм диалога разных культур весьма полезен художественно-вербальный опыт национальных меньшинств («инородцев») в годы становления советской России. Нас интересует авторская картина мира писателей в призме этнической самоидентификации, их поиск путей дальнейшего существования нации в условиях изменяющейся действительности. Цель работы — выявление авторских картин мира в их разнообразии и эволюции. Материалами исследования стали произведения талантливых чувашских писателей, которые сочинены (опубликованы, доработаны или поставлены на сцене театра) в 1917–1924 гг. Охарактеризовано пограничное состояние нескольких изучающих человека и его культуры наук. Используются как литературоведческие и психологические, так и этнологические подходы. Преобладает сопоставительный анализ с его нацеленностью на выявление единично-уникального.

Ключевые слова: внутриэтнический конфликт, литературный канон, этническая символика, этноцентризм, смута, диалог, Н.Г. Гарин-Михайловский

История статьи: поступила в редакцию 10.04.2025; принята к печати 10.06.2025.

Конфликт интересов: автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Для цитирования: Родионов В.Г. Эволюция авторской картины мира по модели «свой — чужой» в творчестве чувашских писателей пореволюционного времени // Полилингвистическая и транскультурные практики. 2025. Т. 22. № 3. С. 601–612. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2618-897X-2025-22-3-601-612>

Introduction

The problems of the world picture are of great interest to specialists in a number of humanitarian disciplines. The identification of the dynamics of the author's (individual) picture of the world in the works of Chuvash masters of fiction is the goal of a number of our scientific developments (see: [1–3]). In this article we limit the chronological framework of the analyzed material to 1917–1924. To compare the essays about the Chuvash people, we took the works reflecting the world pictures of Russian and Chuvash authors of the famine years of the late 19th century.

When interpreting a fiction text, ethnological and other socio-historical conclusions must necessarily be corrected with the conclusion of literary analysis; otherwise, as it seems to us, the historical and ethnological view may lead to one-

sided conclusions that do not take into account the artistic analysis. Or, on the contrary, the origins of many images and characters of the heroes, as well as the fabula of the works go back to the processes of ethnological rather than purely artistic order. Here the literary scholar must go beyond the limits of his science and delve into the specific problems of historical ethnology. In particular, it is impossible to study author's pictures of the world without knowing the mechanism of formation of the ethnic picture of the world. As ethnologist S. Lurie writes, ethnic constants, which include a number of unconscious images, are not substantive, but operational; they refer to the image of human action in relation to the objects of the universe. This is a system of fixed attitudes, acting either as artifacts (models of action) or as cognitive artifacts. As a result, 'the basis is created for the external, (intentional) conflict to be reacted in a 'dramatized' way through the interaction of 'images' that have unique features in each culture.¹ Thus, each culture has its own canon of perception of reality. From this point of view, human activity appears as an interaction of 'images'. The traditional intra-ethnic conflict of a number of ethnic groups localizes the evil beginning outside of themselves, their ethnos². We partially tested such theoretical assumptions of historical ethnology on the material of Chuvash literature [1. P. 242, 246; 2. P. 218–219]. The identification of the dynamics of the image of the world according to the model 'self / other' allows us to link its change with the laws of functioning of the ethnos itself.

Our next methodological peculiarity as a literary historian is our conscious rejection of a number of terms that in the Soviet era became political labels (e.g., nationalism) [4]. In assessing the worldview in the work of writers, it is advisable to use a neutral (non-politicized) term, for example, ethnocentrism. The latter word is freed from axiological semantics, respectively, and from the researcher's biased position. On the one hand, ethnocentrism may prove to be a certain obstacle to intergroup interaction. On the other hand, ethnocentrism performs, according to psychologists, useful functions for an ethnic group (maintaining its positive identity, as well as preserving its integrity and specificity).³

Discussion

It is appropriate to begin the study of the problems of the development of the author's picture of the world with the characterization of people with personal consciousness, who in society perform the function of counselors. Some number of such people constantly "maintains the 'central zone of culture' in its integrity." In other words: they adopt the ethnic way of seeing the world so that the ethnos

¹ Lurie, S.V. 2004. *Historical ethnology: textbook for universities*. Moscow: Academic Project: Gaudeamus, p. 292.

² Ibid, p. 471.

³ Stefanenko, T.G. 2009. *Ethnopsychology: textbook for universities*. 4th ed., revised and additional. Moscow: Aspect Press, p. 278.

adopts the ethical norms and values to which people with personal consciousness have come, thereby activating ethnic constants.⁴ Such people, especially in times of turmoil, stand out for their active (conservative or creative) activities. And the turmoil, as S.V. Lurie explains, ‘serves as a tool to release the accumulated tension in the ethno-cultural system, is also a functionally necessary element of the mechanism of transformation of the ethnic picture of the world’.⁵

The Russian word ‘смута’ (turmoil) is closest to the Chuvash lexeme *pălkhav* ‘revolt, unrest, turmoil, rebellion, disturbance’ (from Pratyurkic *bulya* — ‘to stir, mix’, ‘to muddle’ + *aph. -v*).⁶ The main part of local turmoil of the Chuvash ethnos in the 17–20th centuries was caused primarily by the peculiarities of its intra-ethnic conflict (localization of evil outside the boundaries of its ethnos) and habitat area (frequent droughts and other natural disasters in the zone of risky agriculture). The Chuvash ethnos up to the beginning of the 20th century functioned in the mode of sharp confrontation of rural laymen with representatives of foreign authorities [3. P. 146–147]. The local authorities very rudely, without any explanatory work among the peasants, tried to implement any decisions of provincial officials. It was for such a reason that a major uprising of Chuvash and Mari peasants occurred by the middle of the 19th century. Akramov uprising (*Shurcha vărçi*) is well shown and studied in the works and ethnological works of Spiridon Mikhailov (Yandush), a Chuvash with a developed personal consciousness of that time [3]. Another of his contemporaries (Vasily Lebedev) ended his untitled poem with the following lines: ‘Eat, Chuvash, your black bread, / And sell your cattle; / You’ll save up more money, / If trouble comes to the clerks. / Eat, Chuvash, your black bread. / What can you do? — our ‘happiness’!’⁷

Such Chuvash figures were joined by some Russian writers who pointed out in their works the main reasons for the suffering of the Chuvash peasants during the famine and epidemic diseases — the irresponsible attitude of local government officials to the needs of rural communities. For example, the talented sketcher N. Garin-Mikhailovsky in his essay “В сутолке провинциальной жизни” (“In the hustle and bustle of provincial life”) (1900) showed by his own example (he was a landowner with views close to the narodniks’ picture of the world) that former Russian serfs were better protected from the arbitrary rule of kulaks and other opportunistic exploiters than poor ‘*inorodtsy*’ (members of ethnic minorities) who did not have an educated patron-adviser near them. According to the story of a Russian sketcher, the Chuvash-pagans from the village of Parashino (present

⁴ Lurie, S.V. 2004. *Historical Ethnology: textbook for universities*. Moscow: Academic Project: Gaudeamus, p. 416.

⁵ Ibid, p. 444.

⁶ Fedotov, M.R. 1996. *Etymological dictionary of the Chuvash language*. In 2 vol., vol. 1. Cheboksary: ChGIGN, p. 396–397.

⁷ *Revolutsichchenkhi chăvash literaturi. Textsem*. 1984. Vol. 1 (XX ěmërchen). Shupashkar: Chăvash kĕn. izd-vi, p. 98. Hereinafter, the translation from the Chuvash is ours. — V.R.

name — Karmalo-Adelyakovo) in the Samara region, suspecting the zemstvo authorities of another trick and listening to the rumors spread by bread merchants, refused to take public plowing, ‘in respect of which the zemstvo courageously withstood its ultimatum: take it or leave it... Only when the majority of people in the village had already eaten their livestock, thus becoming also the ragged, was the public plowing accepted’.⁸

In the above-mentioned Chuvash village by the end of 1891 a famine typhus broke out, and in June of the following year, as the narrator says, the author ‘happened to attend the Chuvash spring festival Uyav, in honor of Tur and the young goddess, daughter of the good and great god Tur’⁹ (on the basis of this fragment of the Chuvash festival and the description of subsequent events during the cholera epidemic, the Russian writer composed the drama “Zora”). ‘Much of what was attributed only to the people’s ignorance during the cholera riots,’ summarized N. Garin-Mikhailovsky, ‘should be written off from the people’s account and recorded at the expense of anyone but the people’.¹⁰ In his former estate, the writer organized literacy training for children and adults, conducted their treatment with methods and medicines available in those years, engaged in agronomy.

The same patron for the flock was the Chuvash priest and translator Daniil Filimonov, who in June 1891 sent his teacher N. Ilminsky a heartbreaking letter informing him about the beginning of famine in his parish (two years later he published an essay about it in the form of separate brochure¹¹). The envelope contained a small bag of green powder made from dried leaves of fat-hen and linden. It was a sample of food of the hungry Chuvash people. The letter was published in the “Moscovskie Vedomosti” through the Ober-procurator of the Synod, and the bag with the powder was presented to Emperor Alexander III. More than 6 thousand rubles in money, bread and goods were collected to help the starving. Such an act of the priest helped to save hundreds of lives of Chuvash parishioners. But the governor of Kazan province responded to such a noble deed of the writer in a cassock with a sharp accusation of exaggerated depiction of the famine in the letter, and the diocesan authorities responded with a reproach for the unauthorized publication of the letter in the central press.¹²

So, we have given two facts from the Chuvash life in the famine of 1891. In the description of the Russian landowner there is no deep sympathy and

⁸ Garin-Mikhailovsky, N. 1980. *Some years in the village: Sketches, drama / Composition*, afterword and notes to the drama “Zora” by F.E. Uyar. Cheboksary: Chuvash. book publishing house, p. 192.

⁹ Ibid, p. 210.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 218.

¹¹ Revolutsichchenkhi chăvash literaturi. Textsem. Vol. 1 (XX ėmërchen). P. 192, 442.

¹² Aleksandrov, G. 2004. *Chuvash intellectuals. Biographies and fates*. Cheboksary: Tip. Shafro-nova G.K., p.77–82.

experience, because in the trouble were not their own, but ‘inorodtsy’-pagans. The act of the Chuvash priest can be explained first of all by his developed national feelings: he composed a letter and an essay for the sake of saving his dying fellow-tribesmen, to whom he is related not only by faith but also by blood. The narrator of the first writer’s essay acts as an abstract humanist who pities people other to him, while the narrator of the second one acts as a humanistic sufferer who is worried about the lives of his relatives and close fellow tribesmen. Consequently, the author’s picture of the world according to the model ‘self / other’ in Chuvash literature differed from the similar model in Russian essay prose about Chuvash people. The different ethno-cultural orientations of writers of Russian and ‘foreign’ origin contributed, as we shall see below, to the difference of worldviews and world pictures, as well as to the logic of the development of the plot. In these lies the uniqueness of the works of the two neighboring peoples.

In the conditions of the disintegration of a large clan family, the conflict between different generations of rural community members became actualized in Chuvash verbal creativity. In the poem “Narspi” by K. Ivanov (Kashkyra), the author argues not with the keepers of ethno-cultural tradition, as some researchers believe, but primarily with its destroyers, seeking happiness in wealth [5. P. 78]. His generation of poets created a new literary canon, which became the norm for Chuvash writers of future times. The originator of the new poetry based on updated poetics and metrics is *Chechpel Mishshi* (Mikhail Sespel). From the very beginning of his creative path, the poet was able to fit the pictures of the Chuvash cyclic world into the universe of linear space and time. Simultaneously with the above-described reformatting of the model of the Chuvash world picture, this classic of Chuvash poetry developed the tradition of depicting two worlds (‘self’ and ‘other’) as a more complex system of images and characters. His story “*Värman achisem*” (Children of the Forest, 1918, March) is a vivid example of such organization of the plot with the creation of a whole gallery of socio-psychological types of the Chuvash ethnos.¹³

The plot of this story is built, like the poem “Narspi”, on the principle of clear delineation of the boundaries of two opposite spaces. But time in them moves in opposite directions: in the Chuvash (‘self’, natural) — towards degradation (destruction and disappearance), and in the ‘other’ (Russian) — towards progress, but also towards the destruction of nature (the railroad and the steam engine as their symbols). Accordingly, the images of heroes by their value qualities belong to the types of people of different historical epochs.

To define and distinguish these types of heroes, we should recall the poet Endri Turhan’s essay “*Chavash Historië*” (“The History of the Chuvash People”, 1917),

¹³ Cespel, M. 1989. *Collected Works: Poetry, Prose, Dramaturgy, Letters*. Cheboksary: Chuvash. book publishing house, p. 204–221.

in which the historical epochs of the Chuvash ancestors are divided into the following epochs: 1) the epoch of the Huns; 2) the epoch of Attila and his descendants; 3) the epoch of the Volga Bulgars; 4) the epoch of the Golden Horde and the Kazan Khanate; 5) the epoch of Muscovy and the Great Russian State.¹⁴ The author evaluated the first three epochs as heroic, and the subsequent ones as regressive. Many military actions took place on the land of Chuvash ancestors, they fled from Mongolian *nukers* (henchmen) and Russian *ushkuyniks* (pirates) to the dense forests, so they became cowardly, afraid of any Tatar and Russian, shunned the whole outside world, which became not just other, but *çichĕ yută* (seven times other) for them. For this reason, the intra-ethnic conflict of the Chuvash ethnos in the years of its trials of national oppression (15th–19th centuries) was ‘outside itself, its ethnos’.¹⁵ In these centuries the Chuvash ethnos took the path of self-isolation and conservation, in the periods of the next turmoil more and more firmly fixing the world pictures and ethnic stereotypes of a man without any rights, except for the right to slave labor.

What human qualities do the characters in the story “Children of the Forest” have? The most positive character traits the author has given to the grandfather *Ukhille*, an elderly father of six sons, the head of the family, both a farmer and a hunter (a universal type of Chuvash from the pre-Christian era). He strictly observes traditional rituals and folk faith, including veneration of *Yră Kiremet* (a sacred spirit-ancestor that dwells in an old oak tree ‘that stands on a hill near the edge of the forest’). His married son *Sŷkhepi* ‘suffers’ from idleness and is most afraid not of the Chuvash Sacred spirit-ancestor, but of tax collectors and Russian chiefs from the volost office (a type of Chuvash from the fifth epoch). The bravest, young, industrious and creative heroes are *Çăltăr* (star) and *Çeçpĕl* (honeycomb). The first one sings a song about Attila's heroic actions and his funeral: ‘He died in battle, / In the fight he fell with the enemy, / He was buried / In a golden coffin, / At the bottom of the sea’.¹⁶ It depicts the so-called ‘golden age’ of the ancestors of the Chuvash people, the memory of which is partially preserved in their oral poetic creativity.

The singer with a unique name (there is another, more symbolic meaning of *çăltăr*:- *çăl*- ‘to save’ + *tăr* ‘let [him]’, i.e. ‘let [him] save’) is supported by the whole team of horsemen, who are amicably following the construction of the railroad, which goes to the territory of Russian people. At first glance, it is as if they resemble their ancient and glorious ancestors of the first three eras, who in the old heroic times regularly organized military campaigns into foreign spaces.

¹⁴ Turhan, Entry. 2010. *Yulashki yurrām. Çörnisen pukhi*. Shupashkar: Çĕnĕ văkhăt [My last song. Collected works], s. 58–86

¹⁵ Lurie, S.V. 2004. *Historical ethnology: textbook for universities*. Moscow: Academic Project: Gaudeamus, p. 471–472

¹⁶ Cespel, M. 1989. *Collected Works: Poetry, Prose, Dramaturgy, Letters*. Cheboksary: Chuvash. book publishing house, p. 210–211.

After Söldyr, Cespel, the son of Ugil's grandfather, proceeds to improvise a song about forest nightingales: 'Nightingale, nightingale, / Little bird, / Though small in stature, / Fills the whole forest with song.'¹⁷ Here is a picture typical of the fourth epoch of the life of the Chuvash ancestors. We can read about it in the above-mentioned historical essay by E. Turhan (this sentence connects the image of the nightingale with the fourth epoch): 'Only after the Tatar-Mongolian persecutors left did the nightingales of the black forest sing their joyful songs, calling the Chuvash people, who had managed to turn into people with a mouse heart, not to be afraid of the forest, to continue to work and live.'¹⁸

The most negative character is Migur, a bachelor, homeless, not brave at all, but a brawling Chuvash, who had been a longtime laborer for the Russians, and had poorly learned their language, which he was proud of among his kinsmen. The writer endowed this character with a rare name, which is most likely derived from the noun *măkăr*, which means 'embankment of the railroad', 'hill in the field', 'bump', etc.¹⁹ Indeed, he, who speaks Russian, considers himself civilized (the author of the work specifies: he is only an embankment of progress, leading the ethnos to death). This (Russianization and disappearance) is one of the two paths leading the Chuvash into the future. The other way would be chosen by Söldyr and Cespel (restoration of the real history of the ethnos in the memory, strengthening of the native people by the energy of the Cosmos and the Earth). Only in this way it was possible to get rid of cowardice and disunity of the Chuvash people acquired in later epochs. But Cespel, the son of Ugil, dies, leaving behind only a grave mound (the author-narrator expresses his deep disappointment on this occasion by retarding the plot and a lyrical digression). All hope is in Söldyr, who has returned to his father's house alive and unharmed. It is not by chance that the phonetic appearance of his name forms a second, more symbolic meaning: *çäl-* 'to save' + *tăr* 'let [him]', i.e. 'let [him] save'. The reader knows that of those who have returned alive, only *Çältăr* (the name of the star in the Chuvash language is derived from the imitative *yăltăr*, which means imitation of bright light or brilliance) will be able to enlighten his people and rid them of old and new faults. It is by light (the sun) that man is purified: '*Çută hëveľpe / Çutalsa tărar. / Tăvan chěłkhepe / Pěrleshse yular!*' (Man is lighted by the sun's destiny. / May our native language unite us forever! 1918. Russian translation by A. Dmitriev).²⁰ The twice repeated polysemantic word *çăltăr*, as the wings of the concept *halakh* 'people' (*çăltăr / halakha / çăltăr*), forms

¹⁷ Cespel, M. 1989. *Collected Works: Poetry, Prose, Dramaturgy, Letters*. Cheboksary: Chuvash. book publishing house, p. 210.

¹⁸ Turhan, Entri. 2010. *Yulashki yurrām. Çirnisen puhhi*. Shupashkar: Çeně văkhăt [My last song. Collected works], s. 76

¹⁹ Ashmarin, N.I. 1935. *Dictionary of the Chuvash language*. In 17 vol. Cheboksary: Chuvash. gos. izdvo, vol. 8, p. 299

²⁰ Cespel, M. 1989. *Collected Works: Poetry, Prose, Dramaturgy, Letters*. Cheboksary: Chuvash. book publishing house, p. 76–77.

a completely new semantics: ‘the savior-star / of the [our] people / let him save’. Thus, the Chuvash *çältär*, as a key word, reveals the meaning coiled in it, the idea-dream of the author-artist: there is still a bright hope for the revival of the people humiliated by centuries.

Thus, we can affirmatively say that the ideas and tasks of the post-revolutionary time articulated by Cespel are implicitly present in the story ‘Children of the Forest’. But there a special emphasis is placed on the epoch when the benefits of European technogenic civilization (construction of the railroad) spread to the Volga region. The author leaves the above-mentioned story unfinished, thus intriguing the reader and forcing him to at least mentally complete its end, of course, taking into account the changed reality by 1918 and the types of characters of the heroes who returned home.

The first Chuvash poet and playwright to create a vivid image of a servile and despicable fellow tribesman was Matri Yuman. His work “*Shevle vylyat*” (“The Sheet Lightning Plays”, 1917) is based on the contrast between the heroic past of the Chuvash people and their lowly state at present, which is successfully synthesized in the genre of the text *shārançhäk* ‘fusion’ (heroic poetry and down-to-earth prose). The genre of Tatar literature closest to this Chuvash term is *näser* (translated in old dictionaries as ‘white verse’ and ‘prose’). After a verse description of the epic hero *Ulap* (Ulyp) from Chuvash folklore, the author begins to narrate in prose: ‘Are my contemporaries the same? Ah, my dear, don’t remind me, don’t soothe your soul by exalting the people of today. They are sick, weak bugs, weak-minded and cowardly creatures; today’s people are freeloaders...’²¹

The picture of the first meeting of the narrator with the Chuvash people from N. Garin-Mikhailovsky’s essay ‘In in the hustle and bustle of provincial life’ we see: ‘Having run away, the rest of the crowd stopped. ‘Thought there was an official,’ condescendingly greeted me old man. ‘And if it was an official,’ Vladimir snapped contemptuously sitting on the driving-box, ‘would he bite you or what? Timid as hares...’ ‘— Well hares,’ said the old man, ‘nowadays a Chuvash is not a hare, whoever wants can come...’ ‘— And Chuvash himself turns his tail and flees from whoever it may be’.²²

In the drama “Zora” (after 1899²³) the author embodied the image of the narrator from the above essay in the main character Harry, a civilized Englishman-romantic, who dreamed of replacing the ‘animal peace’ of ‘unhappy slaves’ and

²¹ Yuman, Mëtri. 1987. *Suilasa ilnisem. Kalavsempe novellasem, novella, drama, essays, asilysem, articlesem, çyrusem*. Shupashkar: Chävash kën. izd-vi, p. 39.

²² Garin-Mikhailovsky, N. 1980. *Op. cit.*, p. 210.

²³ In the Notes the compiler of the book Hveder Uyar writes: “As in the essays and stories of the peasant cycle, the main part of the drama is the overbearing invasion of capitalism in the remote corners of Russia, in particular, in the Chuvash village. But the author realizes it in the form of drama. In these years Garin-Mikhailovsky just tries his hand at the dramatic genre (so, in 1898 he wrote the drama ‘Orchid’)” (Garin-Mikhailovsky, N. *Op. cit.*, p. 378–379).

‘submissive people’ with the technogenic ‘happiness of consciousness’.²⁴ This hero (on cue another character, a disillusioned ‘good utopian’), intends to lay railroads on the land of ‘savages,’ bring cars along them, and build palaces. But the Chuvash old man (in the drama he is a priest) and his pagan flock take the traveler for a messenger of the evil Irik (*Yěřěh*). The priest reproduces the mythological pre-diction of the Chuvash: ‘...Oh, woe to us! The prophecy has come true. Yes, that’s right, our old man said: hard times will come, and Tura Irik will give us the will...’²⁵

M. Yuman got acquainted with the above-mentioned works of N. Garin-Mikhailovsky about the Chuvashs, most likely, after 1916 (the drama “Zora” was first published that year²⁶). He could have read the essay earlier, during the years of his work in the editorial office of a Moscow newspaper or his studies at the Moscow Imperial University and A. Shanyavsky People’s University (1912–1915).²⁷ The author’s picture of the world of “*Shevle Vylyat*” is more in line with the dynamic model of ‘self/ other’ depicted in the drama “Zora”. The Russian playwright showed the beginning of a spontaneous revolt of the Chuvash peasants (‘A SERVANT. They want... that we all leave these places forever...’²⁸). But because of Harry’s stubborn resistance (he takes a gun in his hand) he is killed by Zora’s fiancé (Zoraim): ‘Die, cursed one!’. Before his death, the master of the castle declares that he is dying in office, and his work will be carried on by others. Still, at the end he regrets that he ‘broke the heart of a noble, the heart that one loved’.²⁹

In the drama “*Eli*” (*Ui chýkě* “Field Sacrifice”, 1922, 1924), the foreigner (he has a different name there, *Engirei*) is depicted as more brutal than in Garin-Mikhailovsky’s drama, and the groom *Eli* (< *Elime* ‘a female pagan name’) is more courageous, like the ancient *bogatyr*s from M. Yuman’s mythological *sharanchak*. The lyrical subject of this rhythmic text by the Chuvash author is tormented by doubts: he is looking for the way to the Sheet Lightning, the symbol of national happiness and freedom. On that eternal path black clouds and evil mythical creatures await him. The hero (he is a symbol of the entire Chuvash people) is called by the glow of the long-awaited dawn, and he eternally walks towards the heavenly radiance. That path through great obstacles is the road from slavery to the free world, to the civilized future of the Chuvash nation.

As is known, in 1922 I. Maksimov-Koshkinsky translated N. Garin-Mikhailovsky’s drama into the Chuvash language and staged it at the Chuvash theater in Cheboksary, and then together with M. Yuman they wrote the script of the future

²⁴ Garin-Mikhailovsky, N. *Op. cit.*, p. 346.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 346.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 378.

²⁷ Yuman, Mětri. *Op. cit.*, p. 427, 443, 521.

²⁸ Garin-Mikhailovsky, N. *Op. cit.*, p. 356.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 357.

film “Zora” (Sarpige), which premiered in Moscow on March 12, 1927. Maximov-Koshkinsky, who imitated the Russian playwright in the formation of his pseudonym, did not follow the plot of his drama (for example, the heroine does not freeze, but drowns herself in the lake near her house, and in the last version she is killed by a cold-blooded shot of the landowner Engirey). The screenwriter removed everything fairy-tale, changed the names of many characters, and introduced social motifs into the plot. The originally modest but active guy, the groom Eli (Atner), turned into the leader of the Chuvash rebels.³⁰ The depiction of the troubled state of the Chuvash ethnos allowed the author to show the process of transformation of the picture of the Chuvash national world in the post-revolutionary years of the 20th century.

Conclusion

Chuvash literature on the basis of oral and written traditions of the early 20th century synthesized a new literary canon with the fabula and axiological modus ‘self’ and ‘other’. In the circle of the ‘stranger’ Chuvash writers initially included all foreign-speaking people, which was connected with the peculiarity of the intra-ethnic conflict of the Chuvash ethnos. With the emergence of educated people from their own environment, ‘others’ could also be called some of the former ‘selves’ who began to despise their national and social origin. The traditional equilibrium between ethnic communities was disturbed in periods of turmoil, when the word ‘self’ acquired a salutary semantics against the background of the appearance of the danger of the ethnos’ disappearance. The author’s pictures of the world became more complex, acquiring utopian and anti-utopian tones. The world picture of the Chuvash writers of 1917–1924 is oriented primarily to maintaining the integrity of the Chuvash ethnos and preserving its vitality in the constantly changing external world.

References

1. Rodionov, V.G. 2021. ‘On the folklore and author’s pictures of the world in the works of the first Chuvash classics.’ *National literatures in the context of cultural integration: materials of the International round table*. Kazan: IYALI named after G. Ibragimov publ., pp. 240–248. EDN: WTVMVU Print. (In Russ.)
2. Rodionov, V.G. 2023. ‘Different pictures of the world in terms of the author’s self-identification (based on the poems of Peder Huzangay of the 1930s).’ In *National pictures of the world. On the 100th anniversary of R.G. Gamzatov’s birth: report summary*. Moscow: IMLI RAS, pp. 213–223. Print. (In Russ.)

³⁰ In a later version of the drama “Uy chŷk” Atner calls the rebellious Chuvashes with these words: “Natives! Stop! Listen to me! Burn the whole city. Let the cursed city burn! Let us destroy our enemies!” (Maximov-Koshkinski, I. 1928. *Uy chŷk. Yutra*. Muscav: USSR-ti halăkhsen tēp editions, p. 56).

3. Rodionov, V.G. 2021. “Works of Spiridon Mikhailov (Yandush) in the aspect of some problems of historical ethnology.” *Bulletin of the Chuvash University*, no. 4. pp. 135–148. <https://doi.org/10.47026/1810-1909-2021-4-135-148> EDN: GOHGXX Print. (In Russ.)
4. Kirchanov, M.V. 2020. “Polish-Chuvash ‘fantastic’ parallels’ in the literature of the 20th century.” In *The Fifth Lem Readings*: collection of materials of the International scientific conference. Samara: Samara Humanitarian Academy publ., pp. 261–270. Print. (In Russ.)
5. ICHL. 2015. History of Chuvash literature of the 20th century. Part 1 (1900–1955): collective monograph.’ Cheboksary: Chuvash. book publishing house. Print. (In Russ.)

Bio note:

Vitaly Gr. Rodionov is a Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor, Leading Researcher in the Philological Department, Chuvash State Institute of Humanities Sciences, 29/1 Moskovsky Prospekt, Cheboksary, 428015, Russian Federation. ORCID: 0000-0003-0143-7952, eLibrary SPIN-code: 6148–9261, E-mail: vitrod1@yandex.ru