


The Degradation of Family Relations and the Tragedy of Human Fate in the Novel by Chingiz Aytmatov "The White Ship"

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Annotation: This scholarly article is devoted to a comprehensive academic analysis of the degradation of family relationships in Chingiz Aytmatov's short story *The White Ship* and its tragic impact on human destiny. In the context of twenty-first-century globalization, when the institution of the family as the moral core of society is subjected to serious challenges, the examination of this issue through literary works acquires particular relevance. The article argues that the inability of the family to function as a social and moral institution capable of protecting and spiritually supporting the child leads to a spiritual crisis not only for the individual, but for society as a whole. The primary object of this study is the novella *The White Ship*, whose thematic focus is centered on the disintegration of family bonds, the legitimization of violence, the loss of moral responsibility, and their impact on an individual's life trajectory. The aim of the article is to identify the artistic modes of representation and the philosophical substance of the process of degradation of the family institution. To achieve this aim, methods of textual and figurative-semantic analysis were employed, along with socio-philosophical and psychological approaches and the interpretation of mythological motifs. In the course of the study, the image of the child (Nurgazy) in the novella is interpreted as a direct victim of the family crisis. The position of the old man Momun, based on passive humanism, as well as the family relations of Oroskul and Bekey, grounded in violence, are analyzed as artistic representations of degraded family models. The deformation of motherhood, family relations, and sacred human values through the mythological image of the Mother Deer is conceptualized as a tragedy of civilizational scale. In the concluding part of the article, it is substantiated that *The White Ship* is a work in which the family crisis is interpreted as a universal humanistic problem that retains its scholarly and social relevance in the context of contemporary global society. The findings of this study may serve as a theoretical and methodological foundation for further academic research in literary studies, the humanities, and the philosophy of the family.

Keywords: family, *The White Ship*, family degradation, child's destiny, violence, spiritual crisis, mythology, cruelty, morality, ethics, moral character, values.

Introduction

Like many states in the modern world, Kyrgyzstan, having gained independence 34 years ago, became one of the countries that had the opportunity to independently develop its own history, culture, and literary process. Like other developing societies, it is facing the impact of globalisation processes and is striving to understand and overcome their diverse consequences. Under the influence of globalisation, the need for a comprehensive analysis of family issues in 20th and 21st-century world literature is becoming increasingly relevant as an indicator of the preservation or loss of basic human values. In this context, the works of Chingiz Aytmatov are of particular scientific interest. All of Aytmatov's works are essentially dedicated to the analysis of the moral crisis, this universal human affliction that has undermined its own foundations of existence [1]. Chingiz Aytmatov's novella "The White Ship" [6] is a work of fiction in which the destruction of family relationships transcends individual tragedy and is understood as a manifestation of a social and civilisational crisis. In this text, the author artistically and philosophically demonstrates the tragic trajectory of human destiny in the context of the family losing its function as a social and moral institution that provides protection

for the child. According to the researchers' position, the problem of the tragic, including its artistic embodiment in the works of Ch. Aytmatov, remains relevant within the framework of global philosophical, aesthetic, and literary thought [4, p. 148]. The relevance of this article is due to the fact that family crisis continues to be significant even in the context of modern globalised society. The main objective of the research is to conduct a scientific analysis of the forms of family relationship degradation in the novella "The White Steamer" and their tragic impact on human destiny. The key objectives are to: define the role of the concept of family in Aytmatov's work, analyse the main family models presented in the story, identify the consequences of family crisis through the image of the child, and demonstrate the connection between mythological motifs and the theme of family.

Materials and Methods

In the process of researching the aspects of family relationship degradation and the tragedy of human destiny in Chingiz Aytmatov's novella "The White Ship," the authors were guided by generally accepted norms and ethical rules of scientific research, including the principles of historicity, systematicity, comprehensiveness, scientific reliability, historical comparison, and the dynamics of development. In analysing theoretical sources and scientific publications related to this issue, methods of comparison, logical analysis, observation, content analysis, historical comparison, induction, and deduction were actively employed. The study also employed methods that ensure a comprehensive analysis of the literary text and the identification of the artistic representation of family relationships, such as textual and imagistic-semantic analysis, as well as a socio-philosophical approach. The method of psychological analysis was used to assess the psychological state of the child's image and its interaction with the family environment. Additionally, interpretive and comparative-typological methods were used to interpret the relationship between mythological motifs and the theme of family.

Results and their discussion

1. The Phenomenon of Family in the Works of Chingiz Aytmatov. In almost all the works of the world-renowned writer Chingiz Aytmatov (including "Farewell, Gulsary," "The White Ship," "The Scaffold," "When the Mountains Fall," "The Way of the Samanji," "Face to Face," "Jamila," and "My Little Poplar in a Red Kerchief"), the family is presented as the key spiritual foundation of the individual and the cornerstone of human morality. In the novella "The White Steamer," which is examined in this study, the process of the degradation of the family institution as a spiritual support for the individual is demonstrated. Chingiz Aytmatov depicts an era in which the external form of the traditional family structure is preserved, but its internal content – love, responsibility, protection – is lost. In the work, the family is emphasised as a spiritual space, rather than a biological or formal union. It is emphasised that the destruction of this space leads to the destruction of a person's inner world. The family is presented not only as a social institution but also as an indicator of human responsibility, and in its absence, the artistic depiction demonstrates the family's inability to protect a child.

2. The Degradation of Family Relationships: Concept and Artistic Representation.

Degradation is a process of gradual deterioration, decline, and loss of significant qualities, properties, or functions of objects or subjects, which is the opposite of progress. This process can affect both material objects (e.g., soil degradation or weakening of a communication signal) and living organisms (biodegradation), as well as culture, society, and the individual, manifesting as a loss of interest, the development of apathy, and a decline in cognitive abilities. In this article, the concept of degradation is examined as a process of alienating family relationships from their human essence. In Chingiz Aytmatov's novella "The White Steamer," degradation is manifested through signs such as the loss of emotional attachment, the normalisation of violence, a decline in moral responsibility, and the inability to provide protection for a child. It is evident that these phenomena

ultimately lead to a tragic outcome for human destiny. According to the author: "The story depicts the complex life paths of almost all the characters, difficult socio-economic conditions, and a distorted life borrowed from reality. Through an analysis of the relationships and the three-day existence of ordinary people immersed in everyday routine, the writer conducts an artistic exploration of humanity's problems as a whole, as well as the causal connections that give rise to these problems" [4, p.157].

3. The image of the child and the result of a family crisis.

The central character of the story is Nurgazy. The writer notes: "What is a child's conscience in a person – it's like a seed within a seed; without a seed, a seed doesn't sprout. And whatever awaits us in the world, truth will endure forever, as long as people are born and die. [3, p. 114]. Through the character of Nurgazy, the author expresses a philosophical concept that reflects children's worldview.

The artistic technique used by Chingiz Aytmatov elevates the images of the characters to a universal philosophical level. The central theme of the work is that the child (Nurgazy) is deprived of parental care and excluded from a full family environment. Nurgazy's psychological state is viewed as a direct consequence of family degradation, reflecting the dynamics of social and personal reality. The child seeks refuge from the outside world in myths, fairy tales, and the symbol of the "White Ship," and his life trajectory ends tragically. The main idea the author aims to convey is the demonstration of the child's defence mechanism when faced with such a fate.

4. The Image of Old Man Momun: Moral Purity and Tragic Helplessness.

In Ch. Aytmatov's novella "The White Steamer," the old man Momun is presented as a character who embodies traditions and humanistic values. As the author notes, "In the story, the old man Momun's attitude towards life and people is based on the principles of folk spiritual values." Of course, old Man Momun is lonely. He is the only one who preserves "old, outdated" spiritual values, and not just preserves them, but perceives them as food for the soul and as a guiding principle for his life," [4, p. 159] – this is how the image of the old man Momun is characterised. The character's tragedy lies in his inability to actively resist immorality, ignorance, indifference, and social injustice. As the plot unfolds, Orozkul's son-in-law becomes aware of the manifestations of violence, but is unable to prevent or counteract them. From a scientific perspective, the image of the submissive old man can be interpreted as a symbol of passive humanism. At the same time, it should be emphasised that such a life stance is insufficient for preserving a family.

5. The Orozkul and Bekey family: a model based on violence.

The family relationships between Orozkul and Bekey in Ch. Aytmatov's novella "The White Ship" demonstrate the most striking form of family degradation. Orozkul's power is not based on love, but on intimidation. Bekey's silent submission and excessive tolerance reflect the disenfranchised position of women in both the family and social spheres. As the researcher notes, "For example, both old man Momun, old woman Bekey, and even Orozkul himself are depicted as unhappy souls in their personal lives" [4, p. 160]. Through these images presented in the story "The White Steamer," the author critiques the degraded forms of the patriarchal system.

6. Family Crisis and Mythological Consciousness.

One of the key artistic elements of Chingiz Aytmatov's novella "The White Ship" is the retelling of the legend of the mother deer. The deer is a symbol of motherhood, protection, and family values. Its destruction represents a spiritually dangerous phenomenon, a loss of meaning highly valued as maternal care, as well as symbolic death. It can be argued that this episode is the climax of the tragedy of family degradation. Through the image of the mother deer, Chingiz Aytmatov demonstrates to the modern generation the sanctity and inviolability of motherhood, embodied in a mythological context as one of the earliest forms of worldview.

The works of the writer, which are part of Chingiz Aytmatov's universal legacy, are being studied not only by domestic but also by foreign scholars from a scientific perspective. Specifically, analysing the episode in the story "The White Steamer," it is noted: "After the killing of the maralikh (from Orozkul's perspective) – the Horned Mother Deer (as perceived by the boy) – the

door to the ordinary world slams shut for the little hero, and he completely immerses himself in his own reality, following its laws – swimming away in the form of a little fish" [2]. This observation by the author is of particular significance for understanding the fates of characters who have been transformed into tragic manifestations of degradation.

7. The Degradation of the Family and the Philosophy of Human Destiny.

Chingiz Aytmatov's novella "The White Ship" demonstrates that a person's destiny is not predetermined, but is shaped by the social environment, primarily the family. Using various characters as examples, it is shown that the degradation of family relationships leads to tragic developments in a person's life circumstances. Overall, it should be emphasised that Chingiz Aytmatov views the causes of human tragedy not in individual personality traits, but in a systemic moral crisis within society.

Conclusion

In the process of preparing this article, the authors became increasingly convinced that the problem of family degradation in Chingiz Aytmatov's novella "The White Ship" has not only local, everyday significance but also rises to the level of a universal philosophical category. Considering Nurgazy's fate, we concluded that a child in the context of broken family relationships becomes not just a victim of a specific domestic injustice, but a symbol of the vulnerability of the human soul as a whole. His tragic death is not only an individual drama, but also an artistic warning about the consequences of ignoring the moral and spiritual obligations of the family as a social institution.

It is important to note that through artistic images, Aytmatov demonstrates the interconnectedness of personal destiny and social processes. For example, the position of old man Momun, based on passive humanism, allows me to reflect on how values that are not put into practice become decorative and are unable to withstand violence and indifference. Analysing the Orozukul and Bekey family, we realise that violence and forced submission, shaping the behaviour patterns of the next generation, become a mechanism for reproducing degradation.

The mythological image of the mother deer in the story allowed for a deeper understanding of how Aytmatov conveys the sacred meaning of motherhood and family values through symbolism. The loss of this symbolic core in the writer's artistic world becomes a metaphor for the spiritual crisis of civilisation. It seems to me that it is precisely the combination of the child's personal tragedy and the collective moral degradation that makes the novella "The White Steamer" particularly relevant for modern society, where globalisation processes often weaken traditional family structures and moral guidelines.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Chingiz Aytmatov's novella "The White Ship" is considered a work that, on artistic, philosophical, and social levels, demonstrates that the breakdown of family relationships is a key factor leading to the tragic development of human destiny. According to L. Ukubaeva: "In White Steamer, social problems of life in the Soviet era, the monotonous indifference and alienation rooted in interpersonal relationships are masterfully reflected through subtext" [5].

Thus, reflecting on the story, we are convinced that fiction can serve not only as a mirror of social reality but also as a tool for cultivating moral consciousness and awakening responsibility for future generations. Aytmatov's analysis inspires further study of the relationship between literature, family ethics, and the formation of humanistic values, which can undoubtedly be useful for pedagogical practice and the development of moral education in the modern educational process.

The study established the consequences of the loss of human values in a situation where the family phenomenon in the story ceases to function as an institution providing protection and spiritual support to a child. The image of the child (Nurgazy) is interpreted as an immediate victim of family crisis, and it is shown that his tragic fate is a consequence of the lack of parental responsibility, compassion, and care. The position of old man Momun, based on passive humanism, as well as the family model of Orozukul and Bekey, built on violence, demonstrate degraded forms of family

relationships and serve as an artistic reflection of the moral crisis in society. Through the mythological image of the mother deer, Aytmatov philosophically demonstrates that the destruction of family, motherhood, and sacred human values leads to a tragedy of civilisational proportions. The author emphasises that the reasons for human destiny should be sought not in individual personality traits, but in the systemic moral and spiritual crisis of society. Thus, the novella "The White Steamer" is considered a work in which the theme of family is understood not only in an artistic key, but also as a universal humanistic category that awakens public consciousness. This study contributes to the scientific understanding of the reevaluation of the role of the family institution and the preservation of human values in the modern conditions of a globalised world.

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