

Symbolics of ‘The White Cloud of Genghis Khan’ by Chinghiz Aitmatov Through the Spectacle of Mythopoetics

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Abstract

The presented article is devoted to the most important aspects of the interaction between mythologization and the principles of constructing a symbol in the text structure of original prose fiction. The author attempted to reveal the process of transforming the mythologization and symbolization of the image into one of the conceptual components of the link-building mechanisms in a 'novella towards a novel' by Chinghiz Aitmatov - 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan'. The author focuses on the myth, acting in the structure of the novel 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' at the level of symbolic-ideological, idea-bearing, and spatio-temporal paradigm while being aesthetically implemented through composition, plot, image/coding system, certain motives, symbols, and other artistic and aesthetic means and thuswise forming various combining components of cited works into a single structurally whole artistic expression.

Aitmatov's artistic endeavour is characterized by the original focus of the myth in solving such universal ontological issues as 'good', 'evil', 'betrayal', 'meaning of existence', 'mystery of death', etc. Also, to depict the contrast between the eternal universal categories, Aitmatov often resorts to binary opposition. Thus, since the latter performs a structure-forming function in the architectonics of the artwork (determining the dynamics of the plot development), it also helps explain the dynamics and statics of characters and their actions in time and space.

The article reveals the features of mythopoetic means that perform auxiliary functions of expanding the philosophical, ideological, and original artistic concept of the literary work. The conducted study summarized and identified three ways of considering a symbol as a text-generating and text-binding factor: in terms of peculiarities of the author's writing techniques, from the standpoint of its involvement in the general poetics of the writer, and the point of view of the formation of a literary text's conceptual and philosophical basis.

Keywords: Chinghiz Aitmatov, The White Cloud of Genghis Khan, symbol, myth, mythologism, mythopoetics, neomyth, novella, genre, good, evil, The Mandate of Heaven.

1. Introduction

It is commonly known that at the end of the twentieth century, the genre of the novel has undergone significant contextual and structural changes. These changes included the volume, amplification, and backdates, which, due to various circumstances, did not make history with the original version and began to appear much later in the structure of the literary texts. Changes in the genre structure and novel content affected the work of many writers, along with the artistic heritage of the famous writer of the second half of the 20th century, Chinghiz Torekulovich Aitmatov.

The noted changes in the writer's work were expressed in those 'backdates' that Aitmatov performed in his novels 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' (1979) and 'When the Mountains Fall (Eternal Bride)' (2006 r.). In the 1979 version of 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years', the writer associated the absence of a 'novella towards a novel' in 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' with the political and ideological problems specific to Soviet society. Creative individuals, including the intelligentsia, were deprived of freedom of speech and the right to choose topics. Works of that era were meant to glorify Soviet achievements, promote the superiority of the political system, and portray communism builders positively, following strict socialist realism guidelines. A lack of propaganda slogans could reduce the prospects of publishing such a work to practically zero.

As far as is known, the problem of text integrity remains eternally relevant in literary criticism; it has occupied the attention of historians, theorists, and literature critics for ages. Recalling the experience of world literature, the classic of German literature, the great Goethe,

worked on Faust for fifty years. Having begun working on this topic while still a student, he first published the Urfaust (Prafaust) and then separate fragments (Faust's tragic love story). However, all these texts were never included in the final, canonical version of the tragedy, which to this day causes controversial theories among literary critics and biographers of the writer (as cited in Volodin, 2001, p.18-31).

Also noteworthy is the story of Henrik Ibsen's 'A Doll's House', which ends with the departure of the heroine from her husband and family (as cited in Admoni, 1989, p.272). Further, under critics' pressure, Ibsen inserted a happy ending into the play: Nora returns home. Still, it looked disingenuous, and later, the playwright returned to its first version.

Of particular importance is the story of the novel 'Eugene Onegin' by the founder of modern Russian literature, Alexander Pushkin (2013). The chapter evidence suggests that Onegin might show up, possibly as a Decembrist, but was excluded from the original text. Another proclaimed Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol, radically changed the text of 'The Tale of Captain Kopeikin' in chapter 10 of Dead Souls (as cited in Karpushkina, 2020, p.17-24).

Unlike their foreign counterparts, Russian writers had removed certain 'pieces' from their texts solely for censorship reasons. The completeness of the classical texts of the greatest Russian writers has been restored (as far as possible) after many decades, not by the very authors but by researchers of their work. Therefore, the writer's fate of Chinghiz Aitmatov could be seen as way happier: he managed (throughout his lifetime) to amend the texts of the novels 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' and 'When the Mountains Fall (Eternal Bride)' with 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' and the short story 'Thou shall not kill' (Tuer, ne pas tuer). The latter is considered essential for understanding and revealing the author's intention.

For several centuries now, the personality of Genghis Khan has attracted the attention of philosophers, humanities scholars, and artists of different nationalities and religious backgrounds. Genghis Khan's legacy was reflected in multiple historical works; his actions were analyzed in political treatises, and his image was recreated in works belonging not only to different genres but also different kinds and types of art. The image of Genghis Khan entered the world literature, attracting and at the same time repelling with its mystery - a terrible mixture of human and hellish. Much that was written and told about Genghis Khan was a myth, more precisely, a constantly revived corpus of mythological and symbolic-mythologized ideas, assigning this formidable and mysterious figure almost divine features.

The myth associated with the birth of Genghis Khan recreated "different conceptions of the world and personality" (Tsurganova, 1990).

It is how famous Soviet specialist in Mongolian studies Sergey Kozin (1941) explains the relation between the birth and naming of the hero of his work:

Yesukai-Bahadur returned home, capturing the Tatar Temuchin-Uge, Khori-Bukh, and others. It was then that Hoelun-ujin was in her last month of pregnancy, and it was then that Genghis Khan was born in the stow of Deluin-baldakh, beside the Onon River. And as it came to be born to him, he was born, squeezing a clotted blood clot in his right hand, the size of an al'chik (hoof bone used for gaming and divination). (p.85-86)

Another interesting version was presented by Rashid ad-din (2011):

Genghis Khan was born with a favorable omen; he held a small piece of clotted blood in his right palm. It looked like a piece of the hardened liver; his face exhibited ambitions for world-dominant power while being enlightened with the warm glow of the happiness of sovereignty. (p. 138)

In the beliefs of the very different peoples of the world, a child born with notable signs such as a mole, hair, teeth, an extra toe or finger, or a blood clot is considered a unique sign given by the Almighty. The Mongolian tribes have a legend in which a child born with a blood clot in his hand was considered the son of Heaven since his progenitor was the grey wolf himself - the descender from Heaven to Earth. In many ways, the Mongols associated the birth of the invincible Genghis Khan with this particular legend.

Most researchers express unanimity in naming the future conqueror by the name of Temuchin. Thus, Rashid al-Din (2011), S.A. Kozin (1941), and others connect the birth and naming of the great conqueror with the capture of the Tatar Khan Temuchin-Uge. According to N. Mynbaev (2000, p.22), Yesukai-Bahadur, the father of Genghis Khan, "could not name his such an extraordinary child after his sworn enemy, all the more shamefully captivated by him ... It seems that Yesukai-Bahadur gave the name to his son, not in honor of the captured Tatar, but the honor of his heroic ancestors since the third ancestor after Borte-Chino (Grey Wolf) Khan was Temuchin. Besides, the name reflects the clannish craft of ancestors - iron miners and iron craftsmen" (as cited in Syzdykbayev, 2012, p. 107). The author tends to agree with the opinion of Mynbaev, who believes that Temuchin was named after heroic ancestors, but not some captive Tatar khan.

Most ancient peoples exhibited certain beliefs that 'the name determines the future of its bearer' while not a single parent wishes his child to honor a captive person. "With all the similarities and disagreements, researchers are unanimous that the name "Temuchin" - which means 'blacksmith' in ancient Mongolian and 'iron' in Old Turkic - in a metaphorically rethought meaning denotes a person with a strong, real-guts, persistent character" (Syzdykbayev, 2012, p.107). Thus, the unusual circumstances of the birth of Genghis Khan foreshadowed a special fate filled with all sorts of miracles.

A Glossary of Literary Terms explains the inclusion of myth in the text of literary works as follows:

To this day, myths occupy a large and relevant place in cultural studies and scholarship, being represented across studies in literature, religion, philosophy, and many other disciplines <...> ... the genres and individual plot constructions of many literary works, including those that at first glance seem intricate and realistic, are a reproduction of the basic mythological formulas (Abrams & Harpham, 2011).

Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips (2008) believe that “the choice of myth determines the key points of discourse”.

Numerous works devoted to the great commander picture his image in entirely different ways; researchers in their writings reveal previously unexplored qualities and properties of the character of Genghis Khan, thereby supplementing the symbolic and mythological corpus with new data and creating a neo-myth about the Great Khagan.

Aleida Assman (1991) defines the interspersing functions of mythological plots in a work of art as “... first of all, the transfer of knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and that obtains through generations in repeated stable images, archaic-mythological elements, archetypal plots; and secondly, contributes to the ability to create, reconstruct, and transmit a mythopoetic picture of the world by linguistic means in particular author's creation”.(p. 180)

Like other great shakers and conquerors of empires (Spartacus, Caesar, Alexander the Great, Amir Timur, Babur, Beibars, Napoleon), the personality of Genghis Khan terrifies and shocks the minds of millions whose historical lot was often fear and obedience. And, as always in such situations, people for centuries keep the memory of those who, being basically 'of no-one importance,' dared alone to take on all the mortal horror of confronting the terrible lord of death. Also, in addition to this traditional theme, Chinghiz Aitmatov in 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' (Aitmatov, 2014) describes another significant juncture when Life itself, seemingly suppressed and subjugated, suddenly reveals the power of Fate, equalizing everyone: both the ruler of half the world and the sewing-maid embroidering banners for his regiments with gold and jewels, as well as the tiny infant who was born contrary to all the prohibitions of the Supreme Power.

The critical feature of Aitmatov's story lies in the fact that the life material chosen by the writer as its basis and marked by unconditional historical authenticity was repeatedly recreated based on various scientific, cognitive, and aesthetic models, thuswise reaching the highest level of philosophical generalization and acquiring a figuratively rich texture of the cosmic myth. Therefore, any attempt to analyze a text with such a peculiar source material implies the need to at least 'allude' to the mechanism so miraculously transforming the real-life phenomena into a constructive element of myth. In other words, the myth should be considered not as the result of the completed process of its generation, leading to the creation of a particular closed text(s), but as a kind of glimmer of realistic and symbolic meanings that organize the content of the artwork.

Thus, each new reading of the history of Genghis Khan makes this glimmering (like any contextual factor) appear brighter again. Among such active myth-generating 'commence de novo' images in the world literature in general, and in the Turkic and Russian of the turn of the 20th-21st centuries in particular, are the images of Genghis Khan, Amir Timur, Babur, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, etc. Much has been written and is being written about Genghis Khan; his image and the mystery of the burial are presented in various guises.

As stated earlier, Genghis Khan was mainly presented as a cruel tyrant, bloodsucker, and despot; however, along with this somewhat similar description, one can also find the opposite, where this figure appears as a generous, benevolent, and hospitable Khagan.

Such was the description given by B. Ya. Vladimirtsov (1992):

Genghis was never much of bloodthirsty cruelty, nor a passion for unbridled destruction ... (Genghis) could not and did not want to be a bloodthirsty killer ... Still, this did not prevent (him) from sometimes betraying this or that city to destruction when that was caused by the need for war or military policy. (p.102-103)

Hence, the interest in forming a symbol as one of the 'switches' in the 'life-myth' system and an integrated approach in selecting methods of analysis when the factors under study included data from history, philosophy, psychology, ethnography, and cultural science.

2. Materials and Methods

The presented article is based on a 'novella towards a novel' by Chinghiz Aitmatov, 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan'. It is understood that the novella, written in this unusual genre and linked by the most complex philosophical relations to the novel 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years', is devoted to the eternal problem of the reciprocity of the past and the present and occupies a special place in the Aitmatov's artistic endeavor.

The theoretical statements of domestic and foreign researchers in a literary text's moral, aesthetic, and mythopoetic aspects guided the scientific path of conducting the presented study. Of particular note is the influence of 'Djami-at-tavarih' by F. Rashīd al-Dīn (2011), 'The Secret Story' S.A. Kozin's (1941), 'The life of Chingis-Khan' by B. Ya. Vladimirtsov (1992), 'Modern novel and features of literature of the second half of the 20th century' by E.A. Tsurganova (1990), M.M. Bakhtin's essays (1986), 'Myths of the World' by Yu.M. Lotman, Z.G. Mints, and E.M. Meletinsky (Lotman et al., 2018), S.S. Averintsev's 'Ancient Greek poetics' (1981), and monograph 'Kazakh prose of the period of Independence' by S.M. Altybayeva (2018).

The study employed descriptive, comparative-historical, structural-semiotic, mythopoetic, and axiological methods of artistic analysis, as well as the principles of hermeneutics as a theory of text interpretation. The author believes that the methods and results will supplement Aitmatov's studies with new knowledge and give impetus to research the writer's artistic heritage and the internal structure of his literary texts and mythopoetics. Also, the identified features of the writer's poetic style may represent a certain interest for literary scholars, linguists, folklorists, culturologists, and even historians.

3. Results

The novel "The White Cloud of Genghis Khan" bridges different stages of the writer's creative path. There is a good reason why the author himself defined this work as part of his 'old new novel' (Aitmatov, 2014). As noted above, the story of Genghis Khan was crossed out by the

censors from the structure of 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' novel, and only in 1990 was it first published as a separate novella in the Znamya monthly literary magazine. Its publication became possible only due to the post-Soviet democratic transformations, when intelligentsia received the long-awaited freedom of speech, including the freedom to choose topics to work on.

The epic national tradition that characterizes the realistic method of Ch. Aitmatov feeds the narrative of 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' and pursues the traditions of the novel 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' while differing by the nature of the material. The novel is centred on a narrow sliver of modern life with emphatically recognizable signs of real historical times. The space of the historical time flow is filled with the air of myth. As known, "in any typical myth, the mythological (state) is separated from the 'present' by some significant period of time ... < ... > Mythological time is the time where everything was not like it looks now ..." (Lotman et al., 2018). Yet, the soil and source of the novel's myth is a reality considered from the standpoint of an era fully inscribed in a particular country's true history. The myth in the 'Stormy Station' (the magazine title of the novel) is the absolute measure of all things, the unmistakable moral differentiator of Good and Evil, manifested at full strength in the surroundings of a tiny steppe station.

The philosophical and artistic structure of 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' is a reverse model of the 'Stormy Station': the novel's epic scope is concentrated on a parable story. Although the protagonist appears to be a historical figure, both the protagonist and the world he exists in represent a multidimensional, multi-ethnic myth - equally inhabited by characters like the Great Conqueror, the unidentified sewing maid, Power, Fate, and Life. Indeed, the space of existence of such a myth is, to some extent, the global East, which exists primarily as an objectified philosophical concept and some Other World external to this East.

Thus, the basis and source for Aitmatov's 'novella towards a novel' was a completely unusual cultural and aesthetic situation: the dialogue of myths. This dialogue was joined by a mythologized 'sliver of life', born of the East of the Genghis Khan Era, and non-East mythology (including the very author's consciousness), trying, if not to explain, then at least to understand this strange mixture. Regarding the myth, Claude Levi-Strauss (2001) defined it as "its substance does not lie in its style, the form of narration, or its syntax, but in the story it tells". This means that the myth as a comprehensive and mobile phenomenon should not be limited in its actions only to the semantics of the linguistic phenomenon. It should reveal new meanings and interpret and analytically approach the decoding of the story told/created.

Including such a dialogue of the author's mythology and consciousness with pronounced cross-cultural thinking gave rise to a polylogue with fantastic versatility and unlimited semantic volume. Recalling the fact that the myth for Aitmatov was and remained (both in the first novel and the last parable-story) a reliable way not only to distinguish but also to separate Good and Evil, his attitude toward the founder of the Genghisid dynasty is also quite certain. Therefore, it is natural that with such a highly complex organization of the text semantics, the structural, semantic, and stylistic role of the symbol increases many times over.

The rich symbolism of 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' is built considerably differently than in the early stories (Face to Face, Jamila, Farewell, Gulsary!, The White Ship, Spotted Dog Running at the Edge of the Sea) and the first novel. Not a particular image is a symbol, but a whole series of images form a multidimensional symbol, correlated with such philosophically significant concepts as Power, Fate, and Life. For instance, the banner and the dragon represent Power. A horse with a black tail and a white mane, a white cloud, and a prophetic soothsayer symbolize Fate. An infant born against the Power, but according to Fate's law, a mother's white breasts and miraculously appearing milk in the bondmaid's breasts symbolize Life. Separate decoding of some symbols is discussed in more detail below.

Also, the same image can be included in the symbolic series and correlated with different concepts. Thus, the dragon spewing flames, depicted on the banner of Genghis Khan, is a symbol of Power; approved and supported by Genghis Khan himself, it is also a sign of a warrior who violated the law of Power since the very image was embroidered by a woman who violated the law of Power in the name of Life. The image of a white cloud is a multidimensional symbol that synthesizes the entire ethical system of the story, depicting manifestations of Power, Fate, and Life.

The cloud could be quite consciously called a symbol, a sign, and an image simultaneously. These concepts seem to be interdependent and mutually intersecting. A similar interpretation of the symbol was given by S. Averintsev (1981), who believed that "a symbol is an image taken in the aspect of its symbolism, and ... it is a sign endowed with all the harmony of the myth and the inexhaustible ambiguity of the image".(p.350) Further developing his thought, the researcher wrote that "every symbol is an image (and every image is, at least to some extent, a symbol) ...

The image turning into a symbol becomes transparent; the meaning 'shines through', given precisely a semantic depth, a perspective that requires a difficult 'entry' into oneself"(Averintsev, 1981, p. 352).

The white cloud is both a complex symbol and a real image with its own laws of development, correlated with milestones in the life path of people (Genghis Khan, a sewing maid, a baby), and a sign of Fate. The white cloud performs the same role of a guardian in people's lives, as do the stars in the lives of the heroes of the 'Spotted Dog Running at the Edge of the Sea' or as the dove above the head of Christ during his baptism, described in the Gospels. However, the symbolic meaning of this image is even broader: the cloud is not only the personal guardian; it also performs the nemesis function (Foreign vocabulary, 2010) - punishes the violator of the Law of Life by depriving the blessing of Heaven-Fate. Thus, the cloud is not a symbol of personal fate but rather a divine heaven.

In Confucianism, particularly among the Chinese, the doctrine of 'Heaven's will' (Mandate of Heaven) states that higher powers give the ruler the right to legitimate power. It is worth noting that the Mandate of Heaven does not require a legitimate ruler to be of noble birth. The ruler seeks favor and support from Heaven through sincerity, assurance, and sacrifices. Genghis Khan sought complete and undivided

dominion over the earthly world, believing that no one was more powerful or worthy to rule all Four Corners of the Earth.

In his secret thoughts, he increasingly believed that he had a special right to ask the Supreme Heaven for something that no one dared to express - unlimited dominion over the people - after all, someone should be the supreme ruler, so let there be one who can conquer others (Aitmatov, 1998). However, this mandate is not eternal; the ruler can lose it, and then tragic circumstances come into force: famine, rebellions, death of the dynasty members, or the ruler himself. This is exactly what happens to Genghis Khan when the cloud leaves him: he loses his Mandate of Heaven, being overtaken by misfortunes and death. Unfortunately, regardless of their social status, while considering themselves the most intelligent beings on planet Earth, people still “have not yet adopted some unshakable rules that in no case should be violated and that must be reckoned with” (Frolov, 1993, p.163-166).

While Genghis Khan, the leader and ruler, does both evil and good, using the given powers (for there is no Power without evil), he, embodying the dream of his warriors of wealth and glory, leads them, defeating peoples and countries, a white cloud accompanies him as if justifying and even encouraging his actions. However, as soon as he brutally dealt with the young mother - a sewing maid embroidering the banners of his army, the cloud left the lord, for he became a tyrant who dared to encroach on the very foundations of Life. Punishment from Fate and Tengri (supreme deity of the sky) became inevitable in this case.

The writer's attitude toward Genghis Khan's personality is unambiguously negative. The protagonist is depicted as a tyrant and despot who yearns for power over the very fact of the origin of life—the most secret of the laws of nature. Intervention into these laws is fraught with tragedy of an incomparably grander scale than the very event of intervention.

The cruel medieval rulers and feared warlords used to turn to art, often not only patronizing artists and poets but also trying their hand at composing poetry. Aitmatov also endows his Genghis Khan with the ability to compose poetry and sing songs in moments of good fortune. But a similar ‘inspired state of him (Genghis Khan – S.N.) served as a White cloud over his head, as a symbol, as a crown of great destiny’ (Aitmatov, 1998). However, this ability or condition does not enlighten and purify souls and, even more, does not make a tyrant a poet. While the lord possesses a ‘mandate of heaven’, a white cloud is floating ‘in the sky for the seventeenth day now - it follows him anywhere he goes’ (Aitmatov, 1998), so the verses of the ruler are another confirmation of his chosenness. The paths of the cloud and the ruler will diverge, and the gift of versification will disappear along with other signs of the benevolence of the higher forces.

The white cloud, accompanying Genghis Khan in his great campaign, is a sign of the will of Tengri, “... a sign of approval and blessing, a harbinger of great forthcoming victories” (Aitmatov, 1998, p.242). Another sign of approval and blessing is Genghis Khan's pacer named Khube; experts of the time claimed that ‘such a horse is born under a special star once in a thousand years’ (Aitmatov, 1998, p.243).

Describing Khube's features, the author resorts to many epithets and comparisons: ‘silk move’, ‘musclebound chest’, ‘tireless pacer’, ‘serene-eyed Khube’ (Aitmatov, 1998, pp.230, 282). ‘Khube slowed to an amble but at a constantly intense pace, pouring hot breath onto the ground like a dragon. He carried the rider like a boat, like the one with a rower. If not a bar bit, such a horse could dry up in ardent zeal; dry up to the drop, like that pouring rain’ (Aitmatov, 1998, p.243). Not every rider could handle such a horse; only the chosen, strong and courageous, as Genghis Khan, could ride him: ‘He sat on a horse as if on a throne: straight, with his head held high, with a seal of stone calmness on his high-eyed, narrow-eyed face. He emitted the strength and will of the great lord, leading countless troops to glory and victories...’ (Aitmatov, 1998, p.243). The horse of Genghis Khan, similar to the owner, symbolizes strength, courage, and freedom.

The wonderful accompanying animal complements the chosenness of the hero in the myths of many nations. Thus, for example, the characters of ‘The Ballad of Forgotten Years,’ a prose piece by the Kazakh writer A. Kekilbaev (1983), evaluating the horse owned by the protagonist:

The elders, shaking their beards, meticulously evaluated the stallion, checking his muzzle, poking their fists in his stomach, and, groaning, probed the hooves. Moreover, they were satisfied. The black mark on the tail - the elders decided - is a good sign, a symbol, and a divine sign. So, the stallion was honoured by their blessing... (p.37)

The horse embodies the hero's connection with the supernatural world in the epic tradition. The horse is the essential attribute of the mythological character; its presence often performs a particular semantic load in the construction and development of the narrative, complementing and revealing the personality of the acting characters. A brave assistant and faithful friend, the horse, along with his master, travels the most dangerous journeys, participates in battles, and shares hardships and joys. For an Asian person, it may also serve as a symbol of fidelity. According to S. Altybaeva (2018), “a horse as a semiotic zoo-code is the only animalistic image with stable positive semantics: friend, helper, companion”. (p. 369-370)

The wide prevalence and recognition of the traditional image-mythologeme ‘the horse of the epic hero’ allows Aitmatov to create against this background its completely original modification: the image of Edigei's steady friend-enemy, his pupil, whose stormy love and obstinate striving for freedom gave him many worries and problems - the handsome Karanar. This genuine friendship that characterizes the hero and his horse represents a classical myth, transformed by the writer into a relationship of complex and not always a serene partnership between Edigei and his camel. However, even in the realistic setting of the Sary-Ozek localities, the nobility, honesty, and beauty of these relations do not diminish at all. On the contrary, a living creature, urgently needed in the brutal prose of life, but precisely because of this rarely becoming the object of poetic reflection, is reasonably and convincingly included in several legendary creatures, testifying to the unusualness, unique fate, and chosenness of the hero himself.

The completely realistic and, one might even say, prosaically mundane image acquires the potential of symbolic meanings. Such

symbolization of prosaic elements is quite peculiar to Aitmatov. Thus, while retaining the complete authenticity of what is depicted, as it were, it revives the symbolic halo of the image anew and on new, individual psychological grounds. At the same time, the entirely beaten and stereotyped symbolic meaning of the periphrastic phrase 'ship of the desert', familiar to the European perception of the animal, gets neutralized because its symbolic content, though already very much 'faded', was based on a different system of perceptions - 'a leisurely and majestic overcoming of the boundless ocean of sands.' For Aitmatov, Sary-Ozek is not a deserted, lifeless space but a vast living world. No matter how it looks on the outside, life goes on here with boiling passion, and the complexity and multidimensionality of not only the laws of nature but also the laws of morality are exposed here in a very special way.

The cruelty of the great ones and their claims to omnipotence at any cost often find both reflection and support in the cruelty, even among the most minor members of the crowd. Hence, the consistent appeal of the writer to the theme of the mad, brutalized crowd as a symbol of the inhumanity of man. Indeed, it is no coincidence that one of the few explicit thematic echoes linking 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' with later novels is the scene of Dogulang's execution, beating of Christ in 'The Place of the Skull', the scenes of Bork massacre and the death of a girl on Moscow Square in 'The Brand of Cassandra'. The destructive energy rages over the bloodthirsty unanimity of the crowd, thirsting for reprisal against anyone who dares to be at least something different: the crowd destroys and tramples anyone who does not want to be part of its senseless rage. The ability of a person to behave unlike everyone else is comprehensible by very few. Even those ruling over the millions cannot always resist the greedy expectations of the crowd.

Aitmatov's image of Genghis Khan looks solid but not one-dimensional. Temuchin is a brave warrior and a daring commander, inspired by the idea of becoming the ruler of the world. He is a tyrant-ruler; the hearts of the wider public merely stop beating at his first glance. But he is also an ill-fated person in his way, forced to live and act by requirements of the law of Power (the murder of his brother, the execution of the sewing maid, etc.) and to forfeit all manifestations of humanity. Earthly rulers, especially those whom fate has long patronized, tend to forget about their human nature. So, the cloud that accompanies Genghis Khan as a sign of his chosenness left the ruler at the moment when he exceeded the measure of evil allowed to man and encroached in his cruel headstrongness on something that has never been the prerogative of people: the birth of the gift of life. The cloud disappears, the winner's fate takes its course, and his era ends.

One of the most striking features of a 'novella towards a novel', which put this work beyond the boundaries of traditional genres, was the thematically unexpressed but conceptually quite clearly outlined parallelism of the fundamental philosophical and moral situations. Their construction, development, and resolution are with the most significant collisions expressed in 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years', followed by 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' and subsequent novels. This includes the most recent 'The Brand of Cassandra' and 'When the Mountains Fall (Eternal Bride)'.

The tragic and pretty real story of Abutalip Kuttybaev, a convicted 'enemy of the people', doomed to incredible torment by the unbridled lust for power and dirty plans of MGB (former NKVD) investigator named Tansykbaev, is organically combined with the legend of the inhumanity of the great ruler Genghis Khan, who sought to subjugate the whole world. "It was to this paranoid idea, to the inevitable thirst for all-dominion that the cruellest essence of the steppe ruler, his historical destiny, was ultimately reduced" (Aitmatov, 1998). These stories, being organically linked together, form the semantic centre of the novel's narrative structure.

4. Discussion

The peculiarity of 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' poetics involves the fact that this small work was shrewdly 'anchored' by the author to his very first novel while having no plot echoes or intersections with 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' and other novels - not only in terms of raised problematics but also, so to speak, in the types of moral conflicts. The plot of the real tragic story of Abutalip Kuttybaev (the teacher and political prisoner who became a victim of greed and inhumanity generated by the era of the unlimited power of the One) intersects with several spiritual and moral chapters of the legend of Genghis Khan. However, the most significant, although implicit, point of intersection is the idea that the power belonging to a tyrant, at any time, among many peoples, leads to the death of the bearer of evil himself. Moreover, his death (and this is the terrible paradox of history) is paid for by the life of the best, followed by irreversible destruction in the spiritual world of those who lived in the poisoned atmosphere of tyranny.

'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' tells a piercingly truthful, almost documentary story of how an honest man who went through the war, was captured and retained his honour, showing unprecedented courage, later returned home to his family, and involuntarily became the cause of his family's troubles.

'Suffering unbearably' from such involuntary guilt, Abutalip cannot understand what is happening: he was in captivity. He did not hide it because everything was "paid for with both blood and concentration camps" (Aitmatov, 1998). And it seemed to him that the legend of the Sarozek execution, which he wrote down in the sufferings of his father and mother, executed by the tyrant, also reflected his sufferings, misery of a man, tortured by separation from relatives and friends. The distant past is recreated in the structure of a literary text largely through the feelings and experiences of the main character. "The world of feelings truly is the other world where an act or external deed is performed - the only world that is being concretely experienced: visible and audible, tangible and conceivable; all imbued with emotional-volitional tones of the approved value significance" (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 509).

The social climbing and meanness of the investigator Tansykbaev, a low-ranking 'holder of power', dooms the teacher to death in the name of affirming a truly cannibalistic philosophy preached by such Tansykbaevs and, of course, by those they serve: "Our government is a stove that burns only on one kind of wood - on human. Otherwise, this furnace will stall and blackout, and there will be no need for it. But the very same people still cannot exist without the government..." (Aitmatov, 1998, p.227). The loss and destruction of established social and

universal values and the degradation of humanism lead to the loss of a humane attitude, to the death of the individual and humanity as a whole. When a person loses his human qualities - he 'emerges' into an animal, which is already "...a sign of human regression, a return to wild and primitive forms of existence" (Środa, 2020, p.39). An artist needs historical parallels in their philosophical interweaving to identify points of contact between people and circumstances of the passing of time. Therefore, the heroes and villains of our recent but terrible past and the people who lived during the reign of Genghis Khan naturally find themselves in the same line. Grief and troubles, courage and betrayal, love and death always make the sons of men related.

5. Conclusions

The history of literature development in the twentieth century manifests a particular surge of interest in myth, fiction, and scientific writings. Writers and poets actively began to employ mythological narratives and images in their creations, including developing original and unique mythologems and new layers of myth-making. Chinghiz Aitmatov, embodied in the literature of the second half of the twentieth century, surely poses no exception. The artistic endeavour of his works is inconceivable without a mythopoetic context and intertextual connections that refer readers to both recent historical reality and cultural and literary tradition. Aitmatov's cultural contribution was designed for a thoughtful and intellectually comprehensively developed recipient. His critics have repeatedly noted these features of the writer's artistic world, and 'a novella towards a novel' certainly could be considered as one of the vivid examples.

'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' is unique in its genre, not only because of the author's intention to create this cross-referenced 'prequel'. This artwork is also unusual in terms of the very method of creation, the nature of the fictional narrative organization, and the cross-referential markings and positioning in the series 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' - 'The Place of the Skull' - 'The Brand of Cassandra'. Having no clear thematic associations with the preceding novel or two subsequent works, the text represents a philosophical parable-commentary, containing the metamessage with encoded main conceptual structures reflecting the most acute moral problems of the threefold world, described in Aitmatov's legacy: Man and Power, Fate and Power, Life and Power. The figurativeness and implicitness of the representation of such structures, firstly, give artistic authenticity and persuasiveness to the moral and philosophical conclusion to which the narrative of 'The White Cloud of Genghis Khan' leads, and secondly, allows closely linking all three novels into a single history of the threefold world, with its beginning and natural ending. The combination of realistic and mythological narratives in the structure of an artwork is the most important component of the poetics of the novel 'The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years' and the entire artistic heritage of Chinghiz Aitmatov.

Against that backdrop, myth and symbol play an exceptional role in Aitmatov's narrative. At the level of the factual technology of the author's writing, they act as the most important means of concentrating the figurative-narrative texture of the wording. In terms of the general poetics of the writer, myth and symbol are one of the main, if not the most important, means of organizing the relationship Life (Reality) - Myth, and, finally, in conceptual and philosophical terms, the symbol in Aitmatov's story-parable takes on the most complex and less currently studied function of a peculiar source of high ethical and moral energy, uniting the spiritual and constructive beginning of the master's works into a single whole. Of particular note is the significant role of mythological symbols and motifs used in the structure of artworks to explore themes, ideas, and images. This way, by synthesizing literary and mythological motifs in a literary text, the author gets his reader across the main conceptual idea of the work.

Thus, the artistic endeavour of Chinghiz Torekulovich Aitmatov represents a vivid example of Central Asian literature. It is featured by an appeal to the richest narratives, motifs, and images of oral folk art and synthesis of national and world cultural traditions while enriching the latter with new poetic techniques and means. Aitmatov's narrative builds a unique artistic model of the world, employing mythological and symbolic textual structures. The appeal of writers and poets to myths, legends, and parables, and the use of images-symbols, archetypes, various rituals and beliefs in the architectonics of their artworks testifies to the fact that mythopoetics is a characteristic feature of the modern literary process.

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Authors' contributions

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