RESEARCH ARTICLE

Animalistic And Symbolic Aspects In The Prose Of Abish Kekilbaev

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Abstract

This article provides a scholarly analysis of the conflict between human ambition and the immutable laws of nature through two of Abish Kekilbayev's most renowned works. From the perspective of the artistic model of nature within existential and ecological paradigms, the novellas The Well (Shyngyrau) and The Küy (Küy) are examined as profound philosophical works that reveal various dimensions of the concept of nature in Kazakh prose. The study demonstrates that these texts embody a distinctive ecological worldview in which nature functions not merely as a background but as an active participant in human existence.

Keywords: Abish Kekilbayev; The Well (Shyngyrau); The Küy (Küy); animalistic aspects; symbolic aspects; nature; artistic model; existentialism; ecological paradigm.

Abish Kekilbayev's prose places particular emphasis on animalistic (animate nature) and symbolic-semiotic aspects. A deeper examination of his literary works reveals that their aesthetic paradigm is grounded in the metaphysics of a nomadic civilization based on a biocentric model of the world. Within this framework, the landscape is not a passive geographical space but a living subject endowed with animalistic qualities and its own form of consciousness. In the prologue to The Küy, the metaphor of "a mound crouching behind the black wormwood" is more than a landscape description; it symbolizes the protective instinct of the steppe landscape itself. The semantics of "crouching" suggest that nature possesses the ability to anticipate danger and protect itself as a living entity. This concept resonates with contemporary ecophilosophical ideas concerning the agency of nature and the active forces inherent in Mother Earth. The steppe functions as a reactive medium that absorbs historical tragedies and social cataclysms while responding to them on a transcendental level. Within the novella, the küy serves as a biocultural archive preserving the ethno-ecological information code and ecological memory of the people. By comparing the küy to "an ancient book that no one has ever read," the author emphasizes its semiotic structure. The structure of the küy constitutes the acoustic equivalent of the animalistic essence of the steppe. It represents the language of symbiosis between humans and nature, translating the voices of animals, the wind, and wormwood into human consciousness. In this sense, the küy becomes the ontological voice of steppe civilization and a spiritual-ecological instrument that sustains the equilibrium of the ecosystem. The characters' inner evolution and moral degradation are evaluated according to the symbolic nature of their relationship with the natural world. The küy performed by Qurban Aksakal

initiates a psycho-ecological transformation in Syrym's consciousness. In terms of Carl Gustav Jung's theory, this process represents the character's reintegration with the collective unconscious and the ecological memory of his people. Syrym no longer perceives himself as an isolated anthropocentric individual but as an inseparable part of the larger ecosystem, reflecting a biocentric worldview. The sorrow that settles in his heart symbolizes the enduring spiritual bond between humanity and nature. The character of Zhöneyit embodies radical anthropocentrism, viewing nature solely as an object of exploitation. His vengeance and cruelty reflect the collapse of his inner spiritual ecosystem - an ecological crisis manifested within the human psyche. Such an aggressive psychological type destroys harmony with the surrounding environment and ultimately leads to spiritual degradation. Nevertheless, the sounds produced by the captive musician awaken ethical reflection within him. His existential question -"What would have happened if the musician had not been buried alive?" - marks the beginning of the disintegration of his destructive consciousness and the archetypal revival of his ecological and humanistic conscience. Thus, nature in the novella is represented as a living subject endowed with agency, free will, and the capacity for choice, while the küy functions as the symbolic voice and breath of this living organism - the Great Steppe. Through these artistic images, Kekilbayev encodes the disruption of harmony between humanity and nature as a national, spiritual, and ecological catastrophe. The world of animals and plants in Kekilbayev's prose possesses the power to communicate with human beings on an equal footing. Several examples illustrate this idea. When the protagonists find themselves stranded in the desert, their only companion is the inexorable law of nature. In The Well (Shyngyrau), for instance, through the actions of Qaspan and Yensep, the author reveals the dual nature of the natural world as both a benefactor and a punisher. Although underground water is the source of life, it becomes an instrument of death for those who seek to exploit it for their personal ambitions. In this context, Kekilbayev advances a biocentric ethic: even the water beneath the earth possesses its own agency, and ignoring its intrinsic laws inevitably leads to catastrophe. The philosophy of nature in Kekilbayev's prose is fundamentally an attempt to redefine humanity's place in the world. Rejecting anthropocentrism - the notion that human beings occupy a position superior to nature - the writer invites readers to perceive humanity as an integral component of the natural world. Consequently, ecological consciousness in his works extends far beyond environmental conservation; above all, it concerns the preservation of the ecology of the human spirit. This study examines, through Kekilbayev's two most celebrated novellas, the conflict between human ambition and the immutable laws of nature. Considered within the framework of existential and ecological paradigms, The Well (Shyngyrau) and The Küy (Küy) emerge as profound philosophical works that illuminate different dimensions of the concept of nature in Kazakh prose. In both texts, nature is represented not merely as a conventional landscape but as a multilayered semiotic and existential system. In The Well, nature appears as a closed, oppressive space that draws human beings inward, whereas in The Küy, it is portrayed as an open, boundless realm that preserves historical memory. Through this

contrast, Kekilbayev proposes two distinct models of nature: the vertical model (The Well), associated with depth, enclosure, and the inner world; and the horizontal model (The Küy), associated with openness, freedom, and historical time. Together, these complementary models constitute the author's holistic philosophical worldview. The representation of nature in The Well is grounded in animalistic metaphors and biomorphic imagery. Consider the expression: “Fear surrounded him like a pack of hungry wolves. ”Through this metaphor, fear assumes the qualities of a predator, while the surrounding space itself is transformed into an aggressive living organism. From a scholarly perspective, this constitutes a zoomorphic metaphor, whose primary function is to externalize the protagonist’s psychological state through the surrounding environment. Furthermore, the interior of the well is described through details such as “layer upon layer,” “damp crust,” and “the search for water,” all of which present it as a living organism. This represents an example of biomorphism, whereby the earth is conceptualized as a body, possessing skin and an internal structure. As a result, nature is portrayed not as a passive background but as an active living entity endowed with its own vitality. Existential Space and the Philosophy of Solitude In The Well, nature functions as an existential category. Yensep’s life within the depths of the well ‑ characterized by isolation, darkness, and endless labor ‑ reveals the essence of human existence in conditions of profound solitude. The well itself symbolizes the unconscious, the dead end of fate, and the burden of human life. Consequently, the relationship between humanity and nature is presented not as an open struggle but as a process of silent confrontation and adaptation. This philosophical dimension brings the novella into close dialogue with existentialist thought. Nature in The Küy: Ecological Culture and the Semiotics of Space Nature in The Küy is depicted from an entirely different perspective. Here, the steppe is represented as an immense, tranquil space that preserves the historical memory of the nation. Descriptions such as “the endless plain” and “the dark wormwood” portray nature as a harmonious system, a witness to the passage of time, and a carrier of cultural memory. This artistic vision embodies the concept of ecological culture. Space itself functions as a semiotic system in which wormwood symbolizes the continuity, endurance, and permanence of life. Thus, The Well (Shyngyrau) and The Küy (Küy) stand among the most profound philosophical works in Kazakh prose, each revealing a distinct dimension of the concept of nature. In both novellas, nature transcends the role of a traditional landscape and is transformed into a complex semiotic and existential system through which the author articulates his philosophical vision of humanity, history, and the natural world.

In The Well (Shyngyrau), nature is portrayed as a closed, oppressive force that draws human beings inward, whereas in The Küy (Küy), it appears as an open, boundless system that preserves historical memory. The Well is one of the most profound works in Kazakh literature exploring the principles of ecological ethics. The central conflict unfolds not between individuals but between humanity and the elemental forces of the earth. The protagonist, Yensep, is a professional well-digger. His tragedy lies not in his attempt to master nature but in transforming it into a means of personal profit and social

recognition. Yensep exemplifies anthropocentrism. Trusting entirely in his physical strength and professional skill, he dares to compete with the mysterious forces of nature, particularly underground water. Rather than perceiving water as the source of life, he regards it merely as an instrument for achieving fame and prestige. From an ecological perspective, the moment when the waters at the bottom of the well consume Yensep metaphorically represents nature's retribution against one who has violated and humiliated it. Here, Kekilbayev advances an ecocentric worldview, asserting that human beings are not the masters of nature but an inseparable part of it. Yensep's fall into the depths of the well symbolizes the collapse of his excessive pride and arrogance. Thus, The Well serves as a philosophical warning that humanity's aspiration to elevate itself above nature inevitably leads to tragedy. For Abish Kekilbayev, ecological consciousness is not limited to protecting the natural environment; rather, it begins with the individual's ability to restrain personal ambition, greed, and the desire for domination over nature.

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