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REFLECTION OF SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY IN RUSSIAN PROSE

Abstract. The article explores the reflection of spiritual problems in Russian prose, focusing on the moral, philosophical, and existential concerns that have shaped Russian literary tradition from the nineteenth century to the present day. Russian prose has consistently functioned as a medium for examining crises of faith, morality, identity, and social responsibility. Through an analysis of key literary tendencies and representative authors, the study demonstrates how spiritual issues are articulated in response to historical, social, and cultural transformations. The research highlights the continuity of spiritual inquiry in Russian literature and its relevance to contemporary societal challenges.

Keywords: Russian prose, spiritual crisis, morality, philosophy, social responsibility, literary tradition

ОТРАЖЕНИЕ ДУХОВНЫХ ПРОБЛЕМ РУССКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА В РУССКОЙ ПРОЗЕ

Аннотация. В статье исследуется отражение духовных проблем в русской прозе, с акцентом на моральные, философские и экзистенциальные вопросы, которые формировали русскую литературную традицию с XIX века до наших дней. Русская проза неизменно выступала в качестве средства для изучения кризисов веры, морали, идентичности и социальной ответственности. Анализируя ключевые литературные тенденции и репрезентативных авторов, исследование демонстрирует, как духовные вопросы формулируются в ответ на исторические, социальные и культурные преобразования. Исследование подчеркивает преемственность духовных поисков в русской литературе и их актуальность для современных социальных вызовов.

Ключевые слова: русская проза, духовный кризис, мораль, философия, социальная ответственность, литературная традиция

Introduction. Russian literature occupies a unique position in world culture due to its sustained engagement with spiritual and moral questions. Unlike literary traditions that prioritize aesthetic experimentation or entertainment, Russian prose has historically been oriented toward ethical reflection and philosophical depth. Writers have often perceived literature as a moral mission, aimed at understanding the inner life of the individual and the spiritual condition of society as a whole.

The concept of “spiritual problems” in Russian prose encompasses a wide range of issues, including the search for meaning, moral choice, faith and doubt, the nature of good and evil, and the responsibility of the individual before society and history. These concerns have remained central despite changes in political systems and cultural paradigms, making spiritual reflection a defining feature of Russian literary consciousness.

The spiritual orientation of Russian prose was firmly established in the nineteenth century, often regarded as the golden age of Russian literature. Writers such as Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy developed literary models in which philosophical and moral inquiry became inseparable from narrative structure.

Dostoevsky’s prose focuses on the inner conflict of the individual, exposing the psychological and spiritual consequences of moral transgression, alienation, and ideological extremism. His characters are frequently placed in situations of existential choice, where freedom becomes both a gift and a burden. Tolstoy, by contrast, emphasizes moral self-perfection, spiritual awakening, and the pursuit of truth through ethical living. In his works, spiritual renewal is closely connected with personal responsibility and compassion for others.

These authors established a tradition in which literature serves as a space for spiritual dialogue, addressing not only personal salvation but also the moral direction of society.

The twentieth century introduced radical social and political changes that profoundly affected the spiritual landscape of Russian society. Revolutions, wars, repression, and ideological control led to a crisis of values that was reflected in prose of the period. Writers were compelled to reconsider the relationship between the individual and authority, faith and ideology, truth and survival.

In this context, the works of Mikhail Bulgakov represent a distinctive synthesis of spiritual symbolism and social satire. Bulgakov's prose reveals the conflict between spiritual freedom and totalitarian power, exposing the moral degradation produced by fear, conformity, and materialism. Through fantastical and allegorical elements, he critiques the loss of spiritual integrity in a society dominated by ideological dogma.

The spiritual problem in twentieth-century Russian prose is thus closely linked to questions of conscience, moral compromise, and the preservation of inner freedom under oppressive conditions.

The collapse of the Soviet Union marked another turning point in Russian literary discourse. Post-Soviet prose reflects a society experiencing ideological vacuum, moral disorientation, and a renewed search for spiritual meaning. Writers increasingly depict characters who struggle with loss of faith in collective ideals and attempt to redefine personal values in a fragmented social reality.

Contemporary Russian prose often addresses themes of spiritual emptiness, consumerism, and the erosion of moral boundaries. At the same time, it continues the classical tradition of ethical reflection by exploring individual responsibility in a rapidly changing world. Spiritual problems are no longer framed solely in religious terms but are expressed through existential anxiety, identity crises, and ethical dilemmas related to power, technology, and social inequality.

A distinctive feature of Russian prose is its treatment of literature as a moral and philosophical laboratory. Spiritual problems are not presented as abstract concepts but are embodied in characters, conflicts, and narrative choices. This

approach allows readers to engage emotionally and intellectually with complex ethical questions.

Historical Period	Author	Representative Works	Key Spiritual Problems	Literary Interpretation / Focus
19th century (Classical period)	Fyodor Dostoevsky	<i>Crime and Punishment</i> , <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>	Moral choice, guilt, faith and doubt, freedom and responsibility	Exploration of inner spiritual conflict, the struggle between good and evil, and the search for moral truth
19th century (Classical period)	Leo Tolstoy	<i>War and Peace</i> , <i>Resurrection</i>	Moral perfection, conscience, spiritual awakening, social justice	Emphasis on ethical self-improvement and the harmony between personal morality and social duty
Early 20th century	Anton Chekhov	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> , short stories	Spiritual emptiness, loss of ideals, passive existence	Depiction of moral stagnation and quiet spiritual crisis in everyday life
Soviet period (1920s–1930s)	Mikhail Bulgakov	<i>The Master and Margarita</i>	Faith, spiritual freedom, moral corruption, power	Allegorical critique of ideological oppression and loss of spiritual values

This table demonstrates the continuity and transformation of spiritual themes in Russian prose, showing how writers of different historical periods respond to changing social realities while maintaining a strong ethical and philosophical orientation.

Russian prose thus fulfills a dual function: it reflects the spiritual condition of society while simultaneously shaping moral consciousness. By confronting readers with unresolved dilemmas and conflicting values, literature encourages critical self-reflection and ethical awareness.

Conclusion. The reflection of spiritual problems in Russian prose constitutes one of the most enduring and significant aspects of the national literary tradition. From classical writers of the nineteenth century to contemporary authors, Russian prose has persistently addressed questions of morality, faith, freedom, and responsibility. These spiritual concerns emerge in response to historical upheavals and social transformations, yet they remain rooted in a continuous ethical and philosophical discourse.

As a result, Russian prose can be viewed not only as a mirror of societal change but also as a moral guide that challenges readers to confront the spiritual dimensions of human existence. The enduring relevance of these themes confirms the central role of spiritual reflection in the development of Russian literature and its contribution to world culture.

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