

HPEPA 2019**Humanistic Practice in Education in a Postmodern Age 2019****SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE
POSTMODERNITY EPOCH: TENDENCIES OF DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

The article describes characteristic features of the postmodern epoch, which are volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. The purpose of this study is to analyze such different in their content social and cultural practices, as ‘the image of motherhood in the modern Bashkir paintings’, ‘graffiti’, ‘audiobook’, to indicate their peculiarities and trends in the epoch of postmodernity. The study is based on the theoretical findings of the Ufa school known under the name of ‘Pedagogical cultural studies’ within such general scientific approaches as cultural, system-based and interdisciplinary. We have considered the phenomenon of the audiobook as one of social and cultural practices. We have concluded that the topic of motherhood in art is still one of the most significant ones as through the image of mother people transfer all those enduring values, which connect generations and serve as a moral guide for a person in the modern world. Graffiti is shown as a successful attempt of transforming the urban environment in Ufa – the capital of the republic of Bashkortostan. Street art is oriented mostly not towards educative but towards anthropologic and design goals, which create novel cultural situations for people, make them direct participants of the events and help them to gain integrity.

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Keywords: Audiobook, cultural identity, social-cultural practices.



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1. Introduction

Each epoch has its own social and cultural dynamics and its own social and cultural practices, which reflect its specifics. The active study of peculiarities of modern social and cultural dynamics known as the epoch of postmodernity were started by Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist, in the middle of 1970-s (Giddens, 1976, 1979). The category of postmodernity is used to indicate the worldview attitudes of the modern culture connected, first of all, with a poly variant view of life with its local social and cultural content, defining characteristics of social time, which flows differently in different cultures, to determine 'intelligent' technologies, which have already become a characteristic of society, development of the phenomenon of individualization and value pluralism.

The world we live in can be described by means of four concepts, which reflect characteristic features of the given period of time. They are: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. This all according to Giddens can be called a 'runaway world' (Giddens, 2004, p. 59), in which the personality of an individual undergoes discontinuity, disjointedness resulted from the fact that their life experience is of a fragmentary character. It means that the abovementioned characteristics of the postmodernity epoch should be reflected in sociocultural relations and practices.

2. Problem Statement

Which way does the orientation and content of social and cultural practices under the 'global turbulence' change, when the life experience of a single person acts as 'a separate time slot, which is hardly connected with the intergenerational continuity' (Kravchenko, 2007, p. 26)? What are the peculiarities of social and cultural practices in the epoch of postmodernity and what are the tendencies of their development? The answers to these questions determine the problematic field of our study.

3. Research Questions

The culture as a concentrated and organized experience of a mankind in terms of people's social performance, tangible and intangible values created by them is known as axiological unity, society development basis. The essence of social and cultural approach, that being the case, can be accounted under the concept of Sorokin (1992), who specified that the structure of social and cultural interaction comprises three integral constituents: 1) personality as a subject of interaction; 2) society as a group of interacting individuals together with social and cultural relations and processes; 3) culture as a complex of meanings, values and rules used by the interacting persons and a group of bearers who objectify, socialize and reveal these meanings.

Thus, interrelation of culture and space intermediating by the activity of actors creates a peculiar reality which can be defined as 'social and cultural activity', where 'social' indicates the actor of activity while 'cultural' indicates the sort and field of their activity. These concepts, 'social' and 'cultural' are interconnected since in any social phenomenon there is always a person acting as a bearer of social roles and cultural values. On the one hand, cultural practices and values, which are preserved and modified by the subject of culture, predetermine the purport of society existence. On the other hand, sociality not only determines its bearer, who is the subject of cultural activity, but imparts content-related distinctness to the

artefact of culture (Markov & Birzheniuk, 1998, p. 89). 'In contemporary society, –Grin (2016) states, – individualization releases the biography of each particular person from any linkage to traditional values and institutions' (p. 143). Nowadays the life path of a person is mostly defined by their personal decisions. How does it influence the orientation of social and cultural practices?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze such different in their content social and cultural practices, as 'the image of motherhood in the modern Bashkir paintings', 'graffiti', 'audiobook', to indicate their peculiarities and trends in the epoch of postmodernity.

5. Research Methods

The study is based on the theoretical findings of the Ufa school known under the name of 'Pedagogical cultural studies' within such general scientific approaches as cultural, system-based and interdisciplinary.

6. Findings

Being an integral part of culture, visual art as a creative reflection of reality in artistic images performs several functions, among which there are modifying, compensatory, cognitive-heuristic, artistic-ideational, foresight, communicative, informative, pedagogic, convincing and aesthetic functions.

To study the topic of motherhood in Bashkir paintings it is important, in our opinion, to distinguish those functions which contribute to the formation of particular values in society. We will define the notion 'values' in accordance with the concept of such scholars as Lapkin and Pantin (2001), who have defined values as 'universal ideas of people concerning the most important goals and rules of behavior, which define priorities in perception of reality, set guidance on their actions in all spheres of life and considerably form the 'life style' of society'. There are various classifications of values but in the context of our study it is important for us to single out such values as currently important and traditional ones.

Traditional values recur in many generations or during a long period of historical-and-cultural development of a certain society. Currently important values appear as the result of the development of society and its views. Traditional values are: family values, religious values, labour, patriotism, etc. (Lapkin & Pantin, 2001).

Among the most important traditional values there are family values, which are based on such concepts as love, trust, understanding, respect. Nowadays family values are still quite topical. However, they undergo some transformations. Today starting a family is not a priority task for many young people. It has been superseded by such values as career progression and self-fulfillment (Kagan, 2002, p. 65). Love as an important value of family relations, recedes into the background. Starting a family more and more people become supporters of a 'childfree' ideology which is characterized voluntary unwillingness to have children.

At the same time, the topic of motherhood has inspired artists throughout human history. Starting with sculptures made by prehistoric artists, Madonnas by Renaissance men, iconographic images of Holy

Mother and ending with the works of modern artists – that is how the ideal image of a woman developed in art. The image of mother has always been sacred for people and served as a moral guide for society. Each epoch has its own image of motherhood, that is why it is topical and significant to study and analyze it in contemporary sociocultural space (Guzik, 1999, p. 78). We have addressed to the topic of motherhood in contemporary paintings of the Republic of Bashkortostan.

Speaking about Bashkir fine art it must be said that it appeared relatively early, at the beginning of the 20th century. Before that period of time the development of fine art had been restrained by the Islamic religion, which forbade to depict living beings as it considered to be the imitation of Allah (Gafarova, 2010, p. 876). Nowadays fine art in the Republic of Bashkortostan holds one of the leading positions both: in Russia and in the world. The topic of motherhood is one of the key points in it.

One of the first Bashkir artists who portrayed a mother was Akhmat Lutfullin. His canvas ‘Three women’ painted in 1969 impersonifies splendor, wisdom and pride of Bashkir women. V. Vanslov remarked that Lutfullin ‘embodied proud beauty and goodness of national characters having created an image evoking contemplations of the destiny of generations, the course of life, of the past and the contemporary period in the history of the nation’ (as cited in Popova, 2007, p. 156).

The art of modern Bashkir painters is rather versatile. To conduct a sociocultural analysis, we have chosen the works of three artists: Salavat Akhmetshin, Vera Frolova and Vera Sharigina. All of them are related to one and the same topic – the image of motherhood.

The canvas by Salavat Akhmetshin, who was a follower of realist school of painters, is entitled precisely ‘Motherhood’. The painting portrays a woman holding a son in her arms. She seems to be standing on a hill surrounded by a river and plains. The woman is holding the baby a little above her showing him the beauty of nature. It is noteworthy that the painter depicted a naked baby, which emphasized his childhood purity and innocence. The boy is looking carefully into the distance. There is no fear on his face, it expresses only undivided attention. The woman’s countenance speaks pride in her son. There are sunbeams peeking through the dark sky. They are shining on the mother and her baby, which makes the scene some kind of sacred. Although the painting shows the mother in a modern dress, it conveys the true national spirit. The faces of the characters and the nature around them reflect the love of the artist to them and to Bashkortostan, his connectedness to his homeland.

Speaking about the works of a young artist Vera Frolova, Rif Abdullin once said, ‘Vera Frolova is one of the leaders of the modern youth visual art of the Republic of Bashkortostan. However, the definition ‘youth’ is relevant only to her age as her art level is quite ‘adult’ if speak about the level of inner profundity, meaningfulness and competence. She is an artist with a definite civic-mindedness, a figurative artist working in the traditional style of Russian realist school. We can observe the influence of Mikhail Vasilevich Nesterov, our famous countryman, on the works of the young artist. Following his traditions, she refers to the demonstration of spiritual dimension of human life promoting the moral value of this very facet of life’ (as cited SuperUser, 2014, 2017). One of the most significant topics in the works of Vera Frolova is the image of a mother. Her paintings show the image of an adoring and gentle mother. For example, the canvas called ‘The Joys of Winter’ depicts a mother and a child playing with snow. The scene which is familiar to many people. One can hardly imagine a mother who hasn’t played with her baby in winter. Another painting of this artist entitled ‘My Joy’ shows a mother and her daughter with sunflowers

in the background. The child is sleeping on her mother's shoulder. The woman sitting on her knees is holding her daughter trying not to wake her. In our opinion, these very scenes, which are familiar to all people, help the artist to play with so unerring a hand upon the heartstrings of each spectator and make them a participant of each scene.

Socially sensitive topics connected with motherhood are also reflected in the works of Vera Sharigina, a young artist from Ishimbai (SuperUser, 2017). To conduct a comparative study we have chosen several works from her one-person exhibition. One of them is called 'Fairy tales'. The painting depicts a mother rocking her baby to sleep. The woman is wearing a traditional Russian shirt. Her face is gentle and calm. She is fondly looking at her baby. The baby is swaddled in a Russian babushka, a traditional Russian headscarf. The painting is dominated by the red-flame colours. There are traditional Russian ornaments and the characters of Russian folktales around the mother and her baby. In the left corner of the painting we can see the sun with a face gently and movingly looking at the woman and the child. The painting provokes only positive emotions in a spectator as it is full of mothering care and fondness.

However, another painting of this artist which is called 'Two lines' provokes totally different feelings. It touches upon a very sensitive issue – unintended pregnancy. The colours of the canvas are mainly dark-grey, the background is almost black. One can see a young woman sitting in the left corner of the painting. She has put her head against her hand. Her posture expresses despair. She has to make a tough choice. She should either terminate her pregnancy, or become a mother. There are also two more scenes in separate frames on the right side of the painting. They show a mother and her daughter having fun on the playground. The mother is holding the girl high above her head looking at her with joy. There are butterflies flying at the bottom of the painting. They symbolize the soul and resurrection, which probably gives an idea about the choice of the main character.

One more canvas painted by Vera Sharigina also shows an urgent social problem – the problem of unwanted children. The work is called 'The cuckoo'. It is also drawn in pencil, in dark-grey colours. It depicts a cot with a sleeping baby. There is a cuckoo, which has turned her back on the baby, sitting on one of the sides of the cot. The posture of the bird shows that it is going to fly away. If the painting 'Two lines' leaves hope to a spectator, 'The cuckoo' is full of the artist's pain for the child, who was left alone by the mother. A spectator can feel this pain expressed through the painting.

In our opinion, it is pedagogic and inculcating functions which can become those factors able to reverse negative trends in modern society.

Summing up, we can say that the topic of motherhood in the visual art is still quite significant as the image of the mother transmits those eternal values which can interconnect generations helping people to develop moral principles in our complicated, erratic and ambiguous world.

Another sociocultural practice that we have chosen to analyze is graffiti or street art. Scholars call it the phenomenon of the 20th century. It appeared in the USA in the mid 1950-s and is defined as a unique form of the cultural urban space organization. As the phenomenon of graffiti is quite complicated, it is difficult to give its precise definition:

Graffiti is writings or drawings made on a wall or other surface, usually as a form of artistic expression, without permission and within public view. Graffiti ranges from simple written words to elaborate

wall paintings, and has existed since ancient times, with examples dating back to ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, and the Roman Empire. (Kuznetsova, 2010, p. 162)

A graffiti artist creates compositions the purpose of which is to render some artistic idea. Such an artist combines together the processes of creativity and its study. It is a kind of art or, to be more precise, an intelligent practice involved into the its own language analysis. The task of such practice is to switch from the process of art creation to proclaiming of intangible ‘artistic ideas’ (Chistiakova, 2012, p. 76).

Contemporary Russian graffiti-community is a complex cultural form. It unites people of various social groups. It is a multicultural community (Kolosov, 2015, p. 59). There are no particular requirements to behavior or appearance of a member of graffiti-culture. Leaders of this community share various ideas and belief systems promoting them. The age of an average member of a Russian graffiti-community ranges from 10 up to 40 years old.

The Russian graffiti-community consists of many societies – teams of graffiti artists. At first graffiti artists form a team of people living and working on the same territory. Later they unite around their common interests. People are mostly interested in the following graffiti movements: scratching, tagging, street, train writing, throw-ups, writing, post-graffiti. Members of each team are not restricted to one movement they have initially chosen. It is often possible to see one graffiti artist working in several movements simultaneously. Team members actively communicate both: in real life and in cyberspace. One graffiti artist may belong to several teams simultaneously.

Graffiti is an ever-evolving art. To create something unique graffiti-artists try live art performance, optical illusions, volumetric sculptures, earthworks, etc. Street artists strive for cooperation, they want to identify, mainstream and raise problems of the modern society with the help of graffiti. Graffiti contributes to the transformation of the cultural environment, creates new conceptual messages, guidelines and even some specific philosophy, which is quite significant for several generations of its lovers. That is why nowadays graffiti is one of aesthetic constituents of the city cultural space. It is an object of monumental-decorative art. Such forms of mural painting are closely interconnected with architecture and have a great impact on life processes in society. Studying such forms of art one can identify the level of social, economic and cultural development of society, its political ideology. On the other hand, making paintings on buildings exteriors, fences and other surfaces may be seen as the way to overcome the monotony of identical grey buildings. Such an attempt to transform the urban environment proclaims a new vision of the urban space concept, where architecture coexists together with contemporary visual art (Kuznetsova, 2010).

Nowadays there is a social demand for the urban environment decoration. Thus, graffiti has been officially recognized as one of modern art forms in Ufa. The urban community doesn’t perceive wall and fence paintings as an act of vandalism. A range of the city multistorey buildings is decorated with high-level graffiti. They include ‘Madonna’ or, as it is also known, ‘Spring’ by Pavel Dorofeev. The work can be seen in Inors (one of the urban districts in Ufa) and has changed the image of that part of the city a lot. The portrait of Yuri Gagarin, the famous Russian cosmonaut, made in the urban district of Sipailovo has become a real sightseeing of the city. It is symbolic that the portrait of the first Russian cosmonaut appeared in the same-name street. The work was performed by three street artists, whose names are Oleg Kaibyshev, Mariya Massalimova and Artur Lukianov. The same urban district is famous for another graffiti depicting

portraits of the veterans of the Great Patriotic war. The authors of that graffiti are Oleg Kaibyshev and Aleksandr Kaidalov. The portraits are based on the real photos of young front-line soldiers. However, the initial pictures have been changed to represent the epitome of all militants' images. Under the photos one can see the text of the song 'Thanks for the memory, descendants' with the lyrics by Robert Rozhdestvenskii.

Oleg Kaibyshev is also one of the authors of the currently biggest portraits of Marshal Georgy Zhukov, which can be found in the same-name street of Ufa. Its square is 380 square meters, which is 1.5 times bigger than the portrait made in Arbat in Moscow. The same artist has made a portrait of Musa Gareev, a pilot, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, which can be found on house front where he had lived.

Thus, it can be affirmed that graffiti is a successful attempt to transform the urban environment of the capital of Bashkortostan, where the architecture is combined with modern art reflecting the reality around us and challenging the burning issues of the times. Street art as a part of modern art, unlike the classic one, doesn't have a mission to improve people by appealing to them in terms of verity, kindness and beauty. It is not aimed at educating. It has anthropological and constructive goals, which create situations totally new for a person and make this person a direct participant of them expanding the sentimental sphere of a personality and contributing to regaining integrity.

Artistic self-education, which represents the most flexible while simultaneously complicated kind of independent activity, is also aimed at constant imaginative renewal, spiritual growth and individual improvement. According to Shuklina (1999), artistic self-education is the top level of educational freedom, the freedom to create, which helps to establish and integrate goals, methods and conditions for one's career development and achieve revolutionary new results, in which individual peculiarities of a person manifest themselves.

A traditional source of self-education, as an integral and indispensable element of culture, along with a word of mouth, is a Book. Modern computer technologies have given an opportunity to combine these two phenomena. However, one should not consider an audiobook only as some sound recorded on electronic media. It also includes a powerful and important artistic and aesthetic component.

Listening to works of literature contributes to formation of artistic and aesthetic taste and the need in mastering the values of the world culture; enhancing the knowledge of styles and schools of the World Art and their characteristic features; the best works of art in national and world culture; mastering the ability to evaluate artistic peculiarities and give your own assessment of these works. Another important advantage of an audiobook is the naturalness of information perception.

The concept 'audiobook' implicates not only an electronic media recording but also people's real life manifestation in a work of art. An audiobook is a universal pervasive phenomenon, which represents an aggregate product of artistic activities. The term 'aggregate' implies that an audiobook embraces all kinds of artistic activities (literary, musical, theatrical, etc.), includes all the processes in the field of art (creation, storage, perception, etc.) and the processes in charge of its effective functioning (bringing up of artists, public, critics, etc.). An audiobook combines tangible and intangible values. They intermingle and interpenetrate creating a third form as they do not simply unite as they do in material and nonmaterial spheres, but they naturally merge and be reciprocally equated. This kind of integrity is known as artistic

merit (Kagan, 2002). An audiobook functions in a sociocultural sphere and represents one of the sociocultural practices.

The functions of an audiobook, the same as the functions of art in general, are determined by the fact that it exists over space and time. When talking about the social space, i.e. the life of people of a country, region, the whole humanity, an audiobook is aimed at establishing of artistic values and the process of their perception by the public depending on its spiritual needs. If we consider the historic life of a work of art audio recording, i.e. its existence over time, we will see that its major functions are to provide preservation of artistic values, to transmit them over time and space as social life historical continuity requires updating and introduction into the spiritual life of each new epoch. At the same time, an audio recording of a work of art should provide a continuous renewal of art in accordance with the changes occurring in social life, in other fields of culture and should be in compliance with art development itself (Kagan, 2002, p. 198). The continuity of audiobooks recording process is provided by both professional recording studios under a contract with stage and film actors and by amateur users.

Arrangement of conditions for production and operation of works of literature audio recordings permits to determine a three-dimensional structure of art. One of these dimensions is of nonmaterial content, a second is morphological and a third is organizational and institutional. The nonmaterial dimension considers individual peculiarities of historic, ethnic and social types of art awareness, i.e. it shows the way a book pictures the world vision and a person's place in it. The morphological dimension characterizes the peculiarities of artistic culture in different types of art. Thus, an audiobook here is one of the forms of literary and sometimes of literary and musical art combination. Literary art (fiction in its poetic and prosaic forms) breaks the direct connection with ideology and establishes pure artistic structures such as poems, stories, novels, etc. Organizational-and-institutional dimension comprises the forms of audiobooks recording forms of organization as an agency system.

Initially, an auditory perception of stories, narratives and other literary genres was connected with folklore. Then the development of automated forms of reading began. They were represented by radio plays, vinyl records, audiotapes, CD- and DVD-discs. It contributed to more vivid ascertaining of sound recordings as only information technologies were able to ensure the self-management of literature. For instance, such works of Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732 – 1799) as 'The Barber of Seville', 'The Mad Day, or The Marriage of Figaro', a vivid manifesto of a person starting a brave fight for the greater happiness, which was perfectly embodied in the same-name radio drama (Gafarova, 2010, p. 877). Thus, the original work of literature can become a contribution to sociocultural practices and enrich the book stock of the country.

Functional organization of the process of book recording on an electronic medium is reflected in art production, in creation of a nontangible form of a work of literature; art consumption producing work of art perception; art critique. In the middle of the 20th century audiobooks in the modern sense didn't exist. Their function was performed by the radio. That is why the first audiobooks originated from radio shows where a narrator was reading some work of literature intermingled with music bridges. Later such audioplays appeared in the Internet. For example, there is a web-site called 'Audioknigslushaemonlain' ('Audiobooks online' – <http://audioknigi.club/>), which consists of 3 sections, such as genres, authors and performers. The section called 'Genres' (though it would be more appropriate to name it 'Genres, fields,

topics') represented by science fiction, detective stories, thrillers, history books, novels, prose, poetry, books for children, classic literature, psychology, philosophy, adventures, humour, esoterics, business, nonfiction, miscellanea.

To conclude we may say that an audiobook is a link element between art and modern information technologies; a conductor which has been changing in the course of its historic development turning the content of culture into the content and form of art (Grin, 2016, p. 149). An audiobook is a sort of sociocultural practice as it is the result of practical activities of a social group and the contribution to the development of a cultural sector. Listening to the national and world works of art and thinking on them, together with a traditional form of reading, frame virtuosity of a person and their worldview attitudes. It all proves that audiobooks are not only a means of self-education but also a tool which helps to form behavior patterns of a person in the modern world.

7. Conclusion

Postmodern worldview is based on the principle of relativity, ambiguity of everything, personalism idealization, personal experience and personal view accentuation, which causes a feeling of fragmentarity and social reality diffusion in the public consciousness.

The postmodern person in various forms of sociocultural practices acts as an object and agent of creativity. They attempt to adapt to social realities through cultural relations by including those realities into the essence of their 'Self', to obtain stability in the society in the form of cultural identity based on consolidated evaluation of various phenomena. Under the influence of sociocultural practices people change their background knowledge as well as their cultural standards, transform the cultural space around them, their sensuality, view of life and mentality.

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