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Intertextuality and Cultural Memory in the Literature of Folklore: A Study of Turkic Narrative Traditions

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Abstract The postmodern reception of folkloric motifs in Kazakh literature remains underexplored, particularly regarding how traditional narrative elements are transformed within a rhizomatic structure and contribute to the preservation of cultural memory. This study aims to identify how the works of the Kazakh literary classic Gabit Musirepov (2012) employ postmodern devices such as intertextuality, allusion, and simulation to reinterpret folkloric heritage and reconstruct Kazakhstan's cultural memory within contemporary literary discourse. Within the framework of discourse analysis, the study involved a practical literary-discursive analysis conducted with 375 philology students and examined the relationships between postmodernism and folklore as addressed in recent literary scholarship. The findings demonstrate that Musirepov employs folkloric heritage not merely at the level of content but through complex rhizomatic networks and multilayered interpretations, wherein folkloric motifs serve as simulacra, allusions, and intertextual references that enhance textual complexity, transmit cultural memory, and reinforce national meaning. These conclusions contribute to a deeper understanding of how cultural memory and national identity interact with global postmodern trends in contemporary literary processes, particularly within Turkic narrative traditions.

Keywords: *Folkloric motifs, Postmodernism, Discourse analysis, Simulation, Language*

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1. Introduction

Folklorism is a historical category. At each stage of literary development, literature's reliance on folklore is historically determined and allows for an assessment of a particular period of literary evolution. A review of the term's formation shows that, in foreign historiography, folklorism is understood as a phenomenon in which folklore can be represented outside its original context, endowed with new functional purposes, and assigned new

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values distinct from those inherent in authentic folklore. In Kazakh literary studies, the issue of folklorism and the relationship between folklore and literature began to receive systematic attention only after independence. During the Soviet period, the one-sided approach to folklore was primarily shaped by political considerations. The ideology aimed at erasing the spiritual memory of the people and detaching them from their national roots originated in the policies of the Tsarist Empire and became deeply entrenched during the Soviet era. One manifestation of this was the superficial treatment of national heritage and the delay in its comprehensive study. From 1991 to 2026, following independence, this branch of folklore studies has been significantly developed. Folkloric traditions and motifs in the works of individual writers and poets have been examined, and there is sufficient basis to assert that a distinct theoretical framework for the study of folklorism has emerged (Berdibai, 2017; Goldenberg, 2007; Medrish, 1987).

An examination of the historiography of folklorism demonstrates that this field continues to reveal new dimensions and remains dynamic, constantly evolving alongside broader intellectual and cultural shifts. The works of Musirepov (2012), which constitute the focus of this study, likewise continue to attract scholarly attention. One reason for their enduring relevance lies in the fact that the core of his literary work is deeply rooted in folklore. Having absorbed the rich heritage of oral tradition from early childhood, the writer skillfully integrates folkloric elements into each of his works. This deep connection to folklore places Musirepov's prose within a larger context where folkloric heritage serves as a key artistic resource in contemporary Kazakh literature. Folkloric works, as embodiments of the millennia-old cultural experience of the Kazakh people, are reflected in modern Kazakh prose (Abdullina et al., 2025). In particular, works within the postmodernism framework make extensive use of folkloric heritage. Recent studies in literary scholarship have increasingly emphasized the relationship between postmodernism and folklore (Binney, 2018; Kyyakhmetova et al., 2025). To date, the interconnection between literature and folklore has been addressed by numerous scholars. Berdibai (2017), Medrish (1987), and Goldenberg (2007) have sought to define the relationship between folklore and literature through their genre-specific characteristics.

Folkloric motifs, which fulfill the artistic and aesthetic functions of literature, continue to evolve within the paradigm of postmodernism. However, despite growing scholarly interest, the specific ways in which traditional folkloric elements are transformed through postmodern devices such as intertextuality, allusion, simulation, and rhizomatic structures have not been systematically examined in the prose of Musirepov (2012). The present study addresses this gap by focusing on the postmodern reception of folkloric motifs in Musirepov's short stories. Accordingly, the objectives of this article are: (1) to identify how folkloric motifs in the writer's works are transformed through postmodern devices; (2) to analyze the manifestation of these motifs within a rhizomatic structure; and (3) to examine the relationship between intertextuality, cultural memory, and folkloric traditions in Turkic narrative traditions as reflected in Musirepov's prose.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Folklore and Postmodern Narrative Structure

Despite the diversity of perspectives on postmodernism today, it can be characterized as a distinct aesthetic paradigm by features such as intertextuality, citation, the rhizome, parody, and simulation. Postmodernism initially emerged in philosophy and is often associated with the idea that there is nothing fundamentally new in the world. This premise is reflected in postmodernist texts through references to previously produced works and the frequent use of simulation as a creative strategy. Within this framework, the relationship between folklore and postmodernism is examined through the works of the Kazakh literary classic Musirepov (2012).

Kyyakhmetova et al. (2025) approach the relationship between folklore and postmodernism from a genre-based perspective. More specifically, postmodernism tends to reject all preceding forms and dogmas, whereas folklore represents a cumulative cultural repository of established forms, norms, and even worldviews. From this standpoint, one might assume that there is no direct connection between folklore and postmodernism, as they appear to function as distinct systems with differing aesthetic principles, forms, and contents. However, drawing on the theoretical positions of Barthes (1977),

Bogdanova (2004), Epshtein (2005), Leiderman (2005), and Saulembek (2017), the defining features of postmodernism may be summarized as follows: linguistic play, the parody and satire of previously established values, intertextuality, and the manifestation of folk culture through coded representations. Folklore, by contrast, as a product of collective consciousness and worldview, is characterized by its national specificity and mythological foundations. Challenging this view of opposition, however, Binney (2018) offers an opposing viewpoint, arguing that fairy tales have significantly influenced the works of postmodern writers and that contemporary postmodernism can, in fact, be regarded as a continuation of folklore. Building on this perspective, the relationship between folklore and postmodernism may be realized through devices such as intertextuality, citation, parody, simulation, and rhizome, as well as through rhizomatic structures.

As an aesthetic mode, postmodernism is characterized by its mosaic composition, irony, and playfulness. Its most distinctive feature, setting it apart from other literary paradigms, is pluralism, the key to the coexistence of multiple perspectives within a single framework. According to scholars, key postulates of postmodernism include the following: the world as a chaotic text; the world as text; consciousness as text-like; intertextuality; contradiction; and fragmented narration. Literary theorist McHale (2004) emphasizes that the transition from modernism to postmodernism entails a shift in philosophical foundations: whereas modernist literature is primarily concerned with epistemological problems, postmodernist writing foregrounds ontological questions. In recent decades, postmodernism has emerged as a philosophical and aesthetic system and was established as a literary movement in the twentieth century. The development of contemporary Kazakh postmodernism has been significantly influenced by Soviet cultural paradigms. As a literary trend, postmodernism reinterprets Soviet cultural concepts through deideologization. Within the literary text, various textual components interact; as Bakhtin (1975) defines it, the original authorial text enters a polyphonic intertextual space alongside other texts. These other texts may include citations, allusions, reminiscences, references to historical events and figures, excerpts from poetry, and epigraphs. In her theory of intertextuality, Kristeva (2004) conceptualizes every text as a mosaic of quotations and as a transformation of other texts. Subsequently, Barthes (1977) argues that every text is shaped by prior cultural contexts and that meaning is generated through fragments of cultural codes, formulas, rhythmic structures, and textual elements. According to Derrida (2007), human culture itself may be understood as a unified text. The phenomenon of intertextuality is thus characterized by the decentering of the authorial self and is realized through such textual strategies as allusion, reminiscence, and citation, which together constitute the author's constructed system of meaning. Within the theoretical understanding of intertextuality and cultural memory in the folklore literature of the Turkic peoples, folklore is considered not only a means of preserving cultural heritage but also a dynamic space for its reinterpretation, in which traditional narratives are adapted to new socio-cultural contexts and audiences. Intertextuality is manifested in the ability of folklore texts to synthesize traditional forms with modern narrative strategies, ensuring intercultural communication and multiple interpretations (Pinontoan et al., 2025). In this context, the connection between folklore and postmodernism is revealed through the intertextual rethinking of cultural memory, in which traditional motifs, operating in a rhizomatic structure, acquire new levels of meaning and enhance the polysemy of the literary text (Kiryakova-Dineva, 2025). Furthermore, integrating folklore with modern technologies such as mixed reality enhances cultural literacy by allowing recipients to interact with traditional narratives in an immersive, contextually rich manner, thereby ensuring more effective transmission and actualization of cultural memory across generations (Abidin et al., 2023).

From a philosophical perspective, postmodernism suggests that we live in an era where all worlds have already been spoken. This statement by Averintsev (1995) highlights the centrality of the text in the postmodern age. An opposing idea claims that the text is reality. The text conveys reality in a virtual form, because reality itself is considered absent or unstable. Philosophers such as Barthes (1977), Baudrillard (1994), Derrida (2007), Foucault (2013) and Lyotard (1994) argue that postmodernism is shaped by alienation and symbolic representations that structure human experience. In Russian philosophical thought, postmodernism is often interpreted as a response to the crisis of modernity, including the two World Wars, global challenges, and ecological disasters, all of which revealed humanity's vulnerability.

One of the defining features of postmodernism is the principle of the rhizome. This concept was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1988). Postmodern realization involves narrative analysis and interpretative plurality. Scholars of this approach argue that every text can be understood through various *codes*, including literary, philosophical, political, and religious ones. In Saulembek's (2017) study, the rhizome is defined as a key concept in postmodern philosophy that resists hierarchical order and fixed structure. One characteristic of rhizomatic structure, according to the researcher, is the use of foreign lexical elements within a text. Such a structure is formed through intertextuality; more precisely, it emerges when meanings circulate across multiple texts, creating layered and shifting contexts of interpretation. Thus, the rhizome principle in postmodernism describes networked, non-hierarchical, and dialogic structures. This principle is also evident in folklore, as folkloric elements are interconnected yet do not conform to a fixed structure or system. Folkloric legends, fairy tales, epics, and proverbs interact with one another, generating new meanings and interpretations (Karagulova et al., 2025). A rhizomatic structure encompasses multiple intersections, overlaps, and forms of interaction. Folklore, in turn, is largely based on oral tradition, where the same narratives are repeatedly retold, transformed, and enriched with new meanings. In this sense, the repeated reinterpretation of folkloric texts may be understood as a rhizomatic process.

Within a rhizomatic structure, the transformation or development of one element influences others, thereby enabling continuous dialogue and renewal within culture. For example, different regions may produce multiple versions of the same tale, each shaped by specific social and cultural contexts. This demonstrates the dynamic and variable nature of folkloric material. Accordingly, the relationship between postmodernism and folklore, viewed through the prism of the rhizome principle, reflects multiplicity, diversity, and continuous transformation within culture.

2.2. Gabit Musirepov in Kazakh Literary and Cultural Context

Gabit Musirepov (2012) is a classic of twentieth-century Kazakh literature and a major literary figure who expanded the artistic horizons of the national verbal tradition. Under conditions of Soviet ideological restrictions, he not only preserved folkloric foundations but also reinterpreted them at a new aesthetic level, demonstrating genre and stylistic innovation in both prose and drama. Musirepov's literary legacy has been examined not only within Kazakh literary scholarship but also in the broader international academic sphere through diverse methodological approaches, with particular attention given to folkloric foundations, national cultural codes, genre transformation, and multilayered artistic structures. Therefore, the study of his works within the framework of contemporary postmodern theory is both academically justified and highly relevant. Musirepov's status as a writer who realized the national system of artistic thought and synthesized folkloric tradition with modern literary processes has been firmly established (Kerimbayeva et al., 2024; Koblanov & Kabilov, 2013; Suleimenova & Sakhaba, 2021; Yildiz, 2023; Zhumsakbayev et al., 2023).

Previous studies have emphasized that the writer's works, originating from folkloric and epic foundations, undergo artistic transformation and are structured through multilayered composition and symbolic subtext (Koblanov & Kabilov, 2013; Zhumsakbayev et al., 2023). They have also demonstrated that these works are articulated through national cultural codes, gender models, archetypal images, and conceptual-semiotic structures (Kerimbayeva et al., 2024; Suleimenova & Sakhaba, 2021; Yildiz, 2023). From this perspective, folkloric motifs in the writings of Musirepov function not merely as ethnographic elements, but as profound semiotic and cultural codes. Therefore, examining Musirepov's (2012) prose within the framework of postmodern theory, particularly through the lenses of intertextuality, reminiscence, and multilayered (rhizomatic) structures, opens new possibilities for interpreting his literary works.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Discourse analysis was employed in the study, involving 375 participants, ethnic Kazakh students from the Faculty of Philology at K. Zhubanov Regional University. The participants were aged between 18 and 22 years and included 275 female and 100 male students. Students enrolled in the

educational programs *Kazakh Philology* and *Kazakh Language and Literature* are generally well acquainted with the works of Musirepov (2012). A purposive sampling strategy was employed to align with the study's focus on folkloric motifs in Musirepov's works. The selection of philology students was justified by their advanced competence in literary analysis and familiarity with the author's stylistic and lexical features. Participants were therefore chosen based on clearly defined criteria, including a strong background in philological studies and the ability to critically read and interpret Musirepov's early short stories.

3.2. Instrument

The discourse analysis was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, responses were analyzed using a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire served as the primary tool for collecting the respondents' (students') verbal perspectives. It consisted of seven open-ended questions, which enabled participants to develop innovative discursive reflections on the relationship between folkloric motifs and postmodernism in the works of Musirepov (2012). From a discourse-analytical perspective, these questions were designed to identify participants' rhetorical strategies and implicit meanings regarding the interplay between folklore and postmodernism as reflected in Musirepov's work. The questionnaire items were reviewed by specialists in philology and scholars of folklore studies to ensure their alignment with the research objectives. Particular attention was paid to the clarity and precision of questions. The respondents' answers were systematized through direct excerpts from Musirepov's short stories, and open-ended responses were subsequently categorized into three groups.

In the second stage, students participated in offline discussions. These discussions were structured around five guiding questions and focused on analyzing Musirepov's (2012) works within the framework of postmodernism. The following questions guided the discourse-based discussions:

1. What is the significance of folkloric motifs within the postmodernism paradigm?
2. To what extent are mythological consciousness and national worldview reflected in postmodern discourse?
3. What methods and techniques connect folkloric motifs with postmodernism?
4. What contribution do folkloric motifs make to the formation of postmodernist techniques characteristic of Musirepov's works?
5. How are folkloric motifs represented within the postmodernist framework of Musirepov's literary works?

3.3. Materials

The primary materials for this study consisted of thirteen short stories by the Kazakh literary classic Musirepov (2012), selected for their explicit incorporation of folkloric motifs and their representation of early twentieth-century Kazakh society. These works include *Tulagan tolkynda* (1928), *Kos Shalkar* (1929), *Algashky adymdar* (1932), *Shugyla* (1934), *Zhengilgen Esrafil* (1939), *Er Kaptagai* (1941), *Zhiyrma tort sagatta* (1942), *Birinshi fontan* (1943), *Kyran zhyry* (1943), *Targyl kauyn* (1944), *Tarlandar* (1944), *Soz zhok ozi* (1951), and *Borandy tunde* (1952). The selected short stories not only reflect the early stages of Musirepov's literary career but were also chosen for their representation of the historical, social, and political developments of the first half of the twentieth century. In these works, the socio-historical conditions of the Kazakh people during this period are portrayed with considerable authenticity while simultaneously incorporating elements characteristic of postmodernism.

3.4. Procedure

Discourse analysis examines the ways in which mental structures are employed in understanding a literary text. This approach requires consideration of several key elements: the type of discourse underlying the text, the context in which it is used, and specific features of its interpretation by the audience. The discourse analysis conducted with students included three main levels: the textual level, the discursive practice level, and the social practice level. The textual level involves identifying meanings within the literary work, analyzing the historical context, and determining its artistic

features. At the initial stage of the study, a questionnaire was conducted using Google Forms. Selected works of Musirepov (2012), including *Tulagan tolkynda, Kos Shalkar, Algashky adymdar, Shugyla, Surapyl Esrafil, Er Kaptagai, Zhiyrma tort sagatta, Birinshi fontan, Kyran zhyry, Talpak tanau, Targyl kauyn, Tarlandar, Soz zhok ozi,* and *Borandy tuned,* were provided to students in advance for literary analysis. At this level, participants examined textual features such as folkloric motifs, intertextual references, narrative structures, symbolic elements, and postmodern literary devices embedded within the works.

At the second stage, the findings of the study were discussed with the participants in an offline format, enabling the identification of the specific features of the use and perception of folkloric motifs in literary texts. In addition, the analysis focused on the processes through which meaning was produced, negotiated, and shared among participants. Particular attention was paid to the participants' interactive strategies, including their identification of implicit meanings, symbolic structures, folkloric codes, and postmodernist textual techniques. Conducted within the framework of interpretative discourse analysis and reader-response theory, this stage examined how recipients constructed meaning through interaction with the literary text and with other participants. The analysis further focused on the ways in which folkloric motifs were transformed through fragmentation, intertextuality, non-linearity, and mythological reinterpretation characteristic of postmodern discourse, thereby revealing the discursive mechanisms through which literary meanings are generated and circulated. At the third stage, the works of Musirepov (2012) were reread, allowing for the identification of explicit and implicit information that had not been noticed during the initial reading. On this basis, the significance and defining features of folkloric motifs in the literary texts were examined within their broader social and cultural contexts. Particular attention was paid to the role of these motifs in preserving and transmitting cultural memory, constructing national identity, and reflecting collective values embedded in Kazakh society. This stage also explored how the postmodern reinterpretation of folklore contributes to contemporary understanding of cultural heritage and mediates the relationship between national and traditional global literary processes.

4. Results

The results of this study are presented in three subsections corresponding to the three stages of discourse analysis outlined in the methodology. The first subsection presents the findings from the questionnaire administered to 375 philology students. The second subsection summarizes the outcomes of offline group discussions conducted with the same participant cohort. The third subsection presents the findings derived from the research team's rereading of Musirepov's (2012) thirteen short stories. All numerical values reported in parentheses indicate the number of students out of 375 who expressed a given interpretation, unless otherwise specified.

4.1. Stage One: Questionnaire Findings

This stage primarily addressed the first objective of the study, which sought to identify how folkloric motifs in Musirepov's works are transformed through postmodern devices, and the third objective, which examined the relationship between intertextuality, cultural memory, and folkloric traditions in Turkic narrative traditions. Following the administration of a seven-item open-ended questionnaire, student responses were coded inductively to identify recurring themes regarding the role of folkloric motifs in Musirepov's (2012) works. Inter-coder reliability was assessed on a randomly selected twenty percent of responses, yielding a Cohen's kappa of 0.84, indicating a high level of agreement. Disagreements were resolved through discussion between the two coders.

The results were presented in three integrated figures to avoid data fragmentation and to facilitate a comprehensive thematic analysis. The seven questionnaire items were designed to identify three principal thematic dimensions. Accordingly, they were grouped as follows:

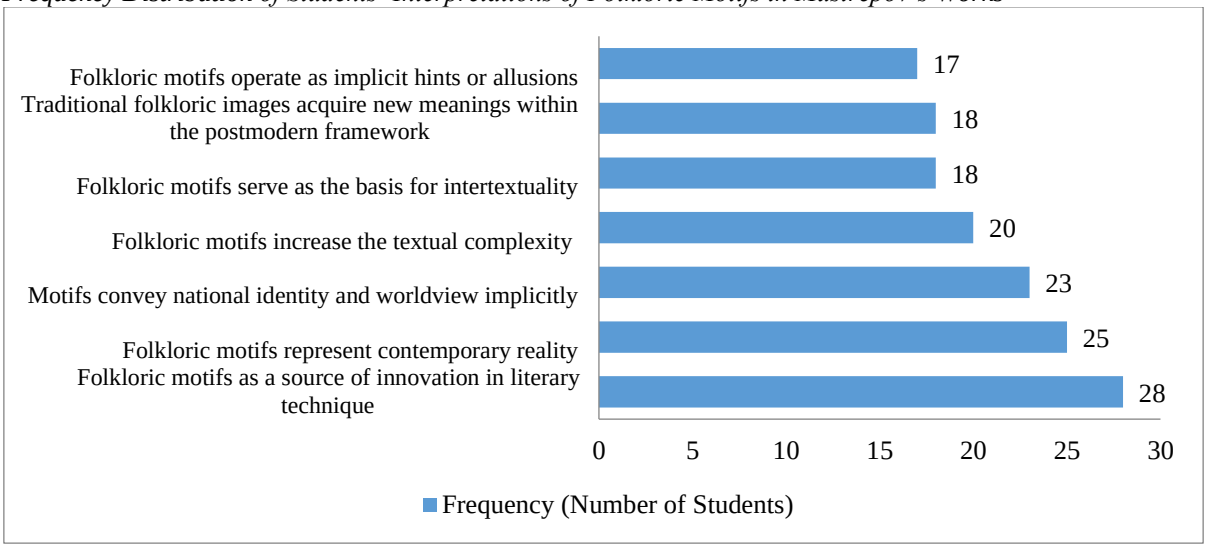
1. Questions 1-3 focused on the textual level of analysis.
2. Questions 4-5 examined the relationship between folkloric motifs and postmodernism.
3. Questions 6-7 explored issues related to authorship and the identification of Turkic narrative traditions.

At the textual level, analysis focused on the identification of meanings within literary texts, the interpretation of historical context, and the evaluation of artistic features. Accordingly, during the first stage of the study, a Google Form questionnaire was administered. Participants were provided in advance with the thirteen selected works of Musirepov (2012), which served as the basis for textual-level analysis.

Regarding the functions of folkloric motifs, students identified several distinct roles (Figure 1). Twenty students stated that folkloric motifs increase the textual complexity of Musirepov's (2012) works. This observation was reflected in participants' comments, with one respondent noting that *"the textual structure becomes more complex through the incorporation of folkloric motifs"*. Similarly, another participant emphasized that *"the artistic quality of the works is closely intertwined with folkloric motifs"*, suggesting that folklore contributes not only to thematic development but also to the complexity of narrative and compositional organization. Eighteen students reported that these motifs serve as the basis for intertextuality, while another eighteen noted that traditional folkloric images acquire new meanings within the postmodern framework. This interpretation was reflected in participants' comments. One respondent stated that *"folkloric motifs constitute the basis of intertextuality"*, emphasizing their role in establishing textual connections across cultural and literary traditions. Another participant observed *"the emergence of new interpretations of folkloric images"*, indicating that traditional folkloric characters and symbols are recontextualized and assigned new meanings within postmodern literary discourse.

Figure 1

Frequency Distribution of Students' Interpretations of Folkloric Motifs in Musirepov's Works



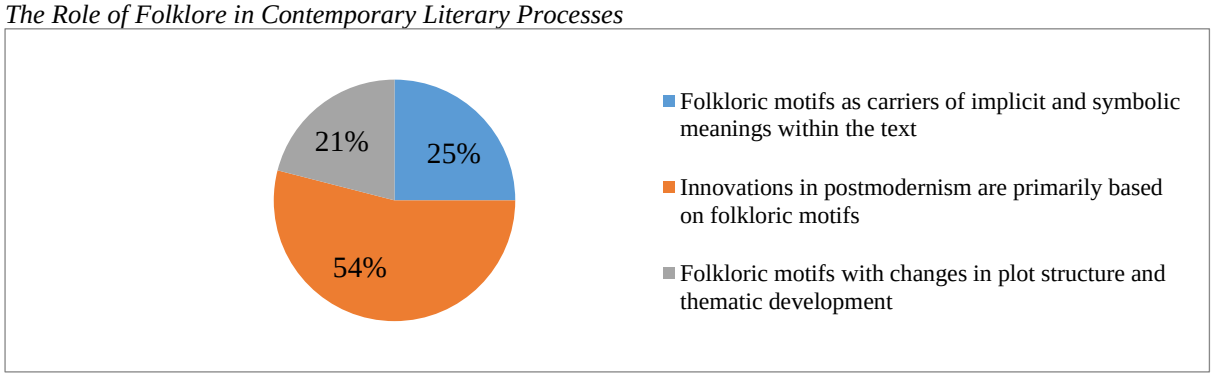
Seventeen students indicated that folkloric motifs operate as implicit hints or allusions. This finding was supported by participants' qualitative responses. One respondent described these motifs simply as *"implicit hints"*, emphasizing their indirect and symbolic nature within the narrative. Another participant noted that *"the conflict between Soviet authority and the Alash Orda movement is conveyed through allusions"*, suggesting that folkloric motifs function as a means of communicating historical and ideological meanings without explicit reference. Twenty-three students emphasized that these motifs convey national identity and worldview implicitly. This perception was reflected in participants' comments. One respondent observed that *"national identity and worldview are represented through implicit meanings"*, highlighting the role of folkloric motifs in transmitting cultural values and collective consciousness. Another participant noted that *"the reinterpretation of traditional concepts in contemporary contexts"* enables folkloric motifs to preserve elements of the national worldview while adapting them to modern literary discourse. Twenty-five students observed that the author uses folkloric motifs to represent contemporary reality. This view was reflected in participants' responses. One respondent stated that *"the author uses folkloric motifs to represent*

contemporary realities", indicating that folklore functions as a mediating framework for interpreting modern social and cultural processes. Another participant noted that *"folkloric motifs in Musirepov's works are presented in the forms of allusion, quotation, reminiscence, and simulacrum"*, suggesting that traditional elements are recontextualized to reflect contemporary realities through postmodern narrative strategies. Finally, twenty-eight students characterized folkloric motifs as a source of innovation in the writer's literary technique. This interpretation was supported by participants' responses, one of whom stated that *"the use of folkloric motifs clearly demonstrates the innovativeness of Musirepov's works"*, emphasizing their role in shaping artistic originality. Another participant noted that *"folkloric motifs have contributed to the emergence of new literary forms"*, indicating that folklore functions as a productive force in the development of postmodern narrative techniques. No participant explicitly denied the presence or functional role of folkloric motifs in the texts under examination.

When asked about the relationship between folklore and contemporary literary processes, student responses clustered into three thematic categories (Figure 2). The largest category, comprising fifty-four percent of respondents, held that folkloric motifs have significantly influenced postmodernism as a contemporary literary phenomenon. This position was reflected in participants' qualitative responses. Participants noted that *"the integration of folkloric motifs has transformed narrative structure into a rhizomatic form characteristic of postmodern literary discourse"*, emphasizing their role in shaping contemporary postmodern aesthetics. Twenty-one percent of students maintained that folkloric motifs primarily function to change plot structures and thematic development. This interpretation was reflected in participants' responses, with one stating that *"the most noticeable feature of the work is the transformation of the compositional plot into a rhizomatic structure"*, highlighting the structural reorganization of narrative form. Another participant noted that *"the rhizomatic structure is constructed through an intricate and multilayered plot"*, emphasizing the role of folkloric motifs in generating complex narrative architectures and shaping thematic progression. The remaining twenty-five percent of students considered folkloric motifs to act primarily as carriers of implicit and symbolic meanings within the text. One respondent stated that *"folkloric motifs in Musirepov's works are presented through allegorical and symbolic forms"*, emphasizing their role in conveying layered meanings beyond the literal narrative level. Another participant noted that *"folkloric motifs reveal hidden meanings through allegory and cultural symbols"*, highlighting their function as vehicles of implicit semantic and culturally embedded interpretation.

Figure 2

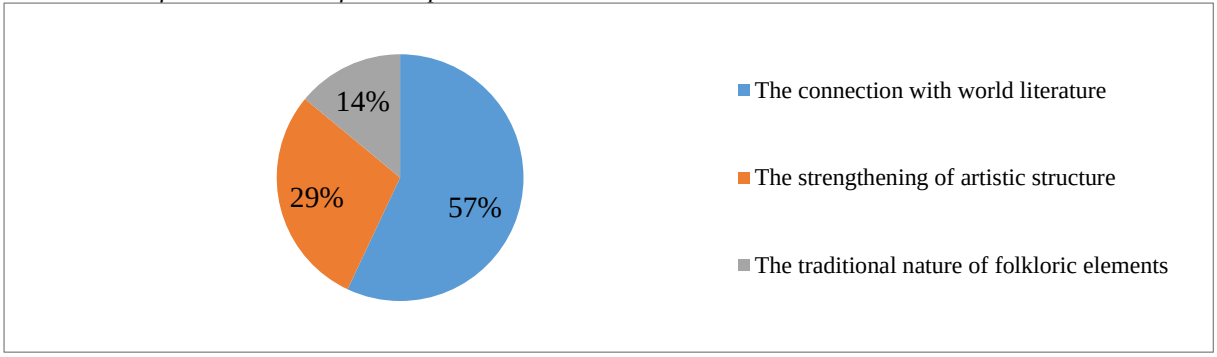
The Role of Folklore in Contemporary Literary Processes



Regarding the connection between Musirepov's (2012) works and world literature, fifty-seven percent of students stated that folkloric motifs establish meaningful links with world literary traditions. This interpretation was reflected in participants' responses. One respondent noted that *"the connection between literature and folklore has reached a new level"*, emphasizing the integrative role of folkloric motifs in positioning Kazakh literature within global literary processes. Another participant stated that *"folklore and literature are closely interconnected through quotation and allusion"*, suggesting that these motifs function as mediating elements between national narrative traditions and broader world literary frameworks. An additional twenty-nine percent emphasized the role of these motifs in

strengthening the artistic structure of the works. This view was reflected in participants' responses. One respondent stated that *"the textual structure becomes more complex through the incorporation of folkloric motifs"*, indicating that folklore contributes to compositional organization and narrative cohesion. Another participant noted that *"the artistic quality of the works is closely intertwined with folkloric motifs"*, highlighting their structural and aesthetic function within the literary text. The remaining fourteen percent of students offered responses that could not be reliably categorized into either of these two themes (see Figure 3). This heterogeneity was also reflected in individual comments, where one respondent provided a general observation that *"folklore and literature are closely interconnected through various forms of expression"*, without specifying a particular analytical focus. Another participant offered a more ambiguous remark, stating that *"the interpretation of folkloric motifs depends on the reader's perspective"*, indicating variability in interpretative approaches that could not be systematically grouped within the established thematic categories.

Figure 3
Folkloric Motifs in the Works of Musirepov and World Literature



4.2. Stage Two: Offline Group Discussions

This stage addressed all three research objectives. The group discussion enabled a more detailed examination of the first objective of the study through participants' interpretations of postmodern literary devices, the second objective through discussions of rhizomatic narrative structures, textual complexity, and non-linear plot organization, and the third objective through reflections on cultural memory, national values, intertextuality, and the role of folkloric traditions within broader Turkic literary contexts. Following the first stage, offline group discussions were conducted with students in five sessions, each with approximately seventy-five participants. These sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subjected to thematic analysis. The analysis focused on three dimensions of student discourse: the features of how folkloric motifs are used, the features of how these motifs are perceived, and the interpretive meanings students assigned to them.

Regarding the features of use, students most frequently mentioned innovation in images, which appeared fifty-six times across the discussion transcripts. This tendency was reflected in participants' responses, with one stating that *"images originating from folklore appear in the form of simulacra, reminiscence, and quotations"*, emphasizing the transformation of traditional imagery within postmodern literary practice. Another participant noted that *"folkloric motifs determine the place of Kazakh literature within world literature"*, highlighting how imagery functions as a marker of both aesthetic renewal and broader literary positioning. Satire as an artistic device was mentioned fifty-seven times. This tendency was reflected in participants' responses, with one noting that *"parody and satire are constructed on folkloric motifs"*, emphasizing their role as a structural basis for satirical expression in the text. Another participant stated that *"the manifestation of parody in postmodernism is closely related to text theory"*, highlighting satire as an essential postmodern strategy for reinterpretation and critical representation within literary discourse. Complex plot construction was noted forty-six times. This tendency was also evident in the participants' comments. One respondent observed that *"the rhizomatic structure is constructed through an intricate and multilayered plot"*,

drawing attention to the fragmented and non-linear development of the narrative. Similarly, another participant remarked that *"the most noticeable feature of the work is the transformation of the compositional plot into rhizomatic structure"*, indicating that conventional narrative patterns are reconfigured through postmodern techniques, resulting in greater structural complexity. Implicit meaning or allusion was discussed thirty-five times. This tendency was reflected in participants' responses. One respondent stated that *"folkloric motifs often convey meaning indirectly, requiring readers to interpret hidden cultural and historical references embedded in the text"*. Another participant observed that *"allusions rooted in folklore create additional layers of meaning, allowing contemporary issues to be communicated through symbolic and implicit forms"*. Ideological innovation appeared thirty-one times. This pattern was reflected in participants' responses. One respondent noted that *"traditional folkloric concepts are reinterpreted through contemporary perspectives, resulting in new ideological meanings within the text"*. Another observed that *"the combination of folkloric motifs and postmodern techniques enables the author to challenge conventional ways of understanding history, culture, and identity"*. These frequencies reflect the number of discrete discussion turns or coded segments rather than the number of individual students, since the participants frequently referred to several interconnected themes within a single response.

Regarding the features of perception, students highlighted several themes. The emergence of new interpretations of folkloric images was mentioned seventy-nine times. One respondent stated that *"traditional folkloric images are reimagined through modern perspectives while preserving their cultural significance"*. Another participant remarked that *"familiar folkloric symbols are assigned new meanings that connect historical cultural memory with contemporary literary discourse"*. The formation of literary trends through folkloric motifs was the most frequently discussed theme, appearing one hundred and one times. Some respondents stated that *"many postmodern devices in Musirepov's works are based on folkloric motifs"*, emphasizing the formative role of folklore in contemporary literary aesthetics. The transformation of national concepts into new meanings was noted sixty-seven times. This tendency was reflected in participants' responses. Some respondents stated that *"images traditionally associated with folklore acquire new meanings in the literary texts"*, indicating the reinterpretation of established cultural concepts within a contemporary framework. The connection between Kazakh literature and world literature appeared sixty-one times. Respondents stated that "elements of postmodernism in Musirepov's writings are manifested through folklore-based structures", suggesting that folkloric motifs enable Kazakh literature to engage with broader global literary paradigms through shared postmodern techniques. The enhancement of the relationship between folklore and literature was discussed sixty-seven times. Some respondents noted that *"the relationship between folklore and literature is realized through quotations and allusions, thereby enhancing the artistic value of the text"*, emphasizing the intertextual mechanisms underlying this interaction.

Regarding the interpretation of folkloric motifs, students most commonly stated that folkloric images function as reminiscence and simulacra, deepening artistic meaning. This theme appeared eighty-nine times. This interpretation was reflected in participants' responses, with one noting that *"traditional folkloric images acquire new meanings in the literary texts"*, highlighting the reinterpretation and semantic expansion of folkloric motifs in contemporary literary contexts. The text's increased ideological weight was mentioned ninety-seven times. One respondent observed that *"folkloric motifs serve as a clear expression of the author's position"*, underscoring their function in articulating ideological meanings within the narrative. Another participant remarked that *"this phenomenon indicates that Kazakh literature entered a new stage of development during the twentieth century"*, pointing to a broader ideological shift in literary discourse associated with the incorporation of folkloric elements. The reshaping of previous concepts and the formation of new perspectives were noted sixty-five times. One respondent stated that *"the reinterpretation of traditional concepts in contemporary contexts allows folkloric motifs to gain new semantic and cultural dimensions"*. Another participant noted that *"familiar folkloric images are reconfigured in postmodern texts, leading to the emergence of alternative ways of understanding cultural and historical realities"*. The representation of national values and the transformation of traditions in new contexts appeared seventy-seven times. This tendency was reflected in participants' responses. One respondent stated

that *"national traditions are preserved in the text but are reinterpreted through modern narrative techniques, giving them new cultural meanings"*. Another participant noted that *"folkloric motifs reflect national values while simultaneously adapting to contemporary literary and social contexts"*. Finally, the contribution of folkloric motifs to world literary trends was discussed forty-seven times. One respondent stated that *"folkloric motifs function as mechanisms of transcultural dialogue, enabling Kazakh literature to engage in hybrid narrative formations within global literary discourse"*. Another participant noted that *"the incorporation of folkloric elements facilitates literary hybridity and positions national texts within processes of literary globalization, where local traditions are reconfigured in dialogue with world literary paradigms"*. No negative or contradictory cases were identified in the discussion data (see Table 1).

Table 1
Meanings Identified through Students' Interpretation of Folkloric Motifs

Features of the use of folkloric motifs	Frequency	Features of the perception of folkloric motifs	Frequency	Interpretation of folkloric motifs	Frequency
Implicit meaning	35	Enhancement of the artistic level of the relationship between folklore and literature	67	Folkloric images appear in postmodernism as reminiscence and simulacra, deepening artistic meaning	89
Allusion and hint	41	Emergence of new interpretations or reinterpretations of folkloric images	79	Folkloric motifs increase the ideological weight of the text	97
Innovation in images	56	Formation of literary trends through folkloric motifs	101	Folkloric motifs reshape previous concepts and form new perspectives	65
New perspectives and trends	28	Transformation of national concepts into new meanings	67	Representation of national values and transformation of traditions in new contexts	77
Ideological innovation	31	Connection of Kazakh literature with world literature	61	Contribution of folkloric motifs to world literary trends	47
Complex plot construction	46				
Satire as an artistic device	57				
Use of exempla and didactic narratives	43				
Hidden symbolic meaning	38				

4.3. Stage Three: Rereading of Literary Texts

This stage primarily addressed the second objective of the study, which focused on the manifestation of folkloric motifs within rhizomatic narrative structures, and the third objective, which examined the interaction between intertextuality, cultural memory, and Turkic folklore traditions. In this stage, the research team reread the thirteen short stories by Musirepov (2012) to identify explicit and implicit uses of folkloric motifs. This rereading focused specifically on the presence of postmodern devices, including intertextuality, allusion, simulation, parody, and rhizomatic structures.

With respect to intertextuality and allusion, direct references to folkloric texts appeared in eleven of the thirteen stories examined. These references included citations of proverbs, quotations from epic poetry, and embedded folkloric narratives. Allusions to historical events, including the Alash Orda movement, collectivization, and the establishment of Soviet authority in the Kazakh steppe, were identified in nine stories. Reminiscences of other literary works, most notably Auezov's (2002) *Korgansyzdyng kuni*, were found in four stories. The parallel between the character Kalisha in *Tulagan Tolkynda* and the grieving mother figure in Auezov's (2002) work exemplifies this reminiscence. In this regard, Taizhanov (2017) offers a renewed interpretation of the works of Musirepov (2012), emphasizing that the writer consistently addresses the most pressing issues of his time, revealing the complexities of the era, the individual, and the nation, while constructing a vivid gallery of characters. The scholar also highlights the importance of the national plot structures in the author's works, in which quotations reflecting the national worldview are frequently embedded. For example, in *Tulagan Tolkynda,* references such as *"Do you have Nasybai?", "Provisional government", "zhesir katyn (widowed woman)", "kaiky bas kara baibishe (elder wife with slightly bent head)"* convey culturally specific meanings. In contemporary literature, references to precedent texts operate at the level of plot through citation, reminiscence, and allusion, making it essential to analyze quotations in Musirepov's (2012) stories through the lens of postmodern theory. In *Tulagan Tolkynda,* the characters of the widowed Kalisha, her daughter Shaiza, and her son Kabysan are portrayed, with Kalisha depicted as a figure profoundly shaped by hardship: *Harsh living conditions had deeply scarred her face. Constant weeping had reddened her eyes. Her character bore the marks of widowhood and poverty. Among her relatives, Imemgen in particular had oppressed Kalisha and broken her spirit. Once strong-willed, Kalisha had been worn down by the hardships of life"* (translated by the authors).

Concerning simulation and parody, the image of Aziret Ali in the story *Er Kaptagai* was identified as a simulacrum. In this case, a traditionally sacred figure from folkloric and religious narratives is reinterpreted to challenge established folkloric perceptions. Rather than presenting Aziret Ali as an idealized saintly figure, Musirepov (2012) portrays the difficulties faced by the common people in immediately accepting Islam, thereby transforming the traditional image through simulation. Through this strategy, the author not only revisits a well-known religious image but also exposes underlying social realities and articulates the tension between Islamic narratives and the Turkic worldview of the Kazakh people. Additionally, parodic similes were identified in the story *Tarlandar*. Expressions such as *kari kulzhadai*, meaning like an old mountain ram, carry ironic and satirical undertones, contrasting with the hyperbolic similes found in folkloric epics such as Alpamys Batyr, where exaggerated physical descriptions primarily intensify characterization rather than critique.

With respect to rhizomatic structure, evidence of non-linear and multi-perspectival narration was found most clearly in the story *Kos Shalkar*. In this work, the narrator visits the same geographical location on three separate occasions. The first visit occurs during childhood as a berry-picking excursion. The second visit unfolds against the backdrop of historical and political upheavals in the Kazakh steppe. In Musirepov's (2012) short story *Kos Shalkar*, the rhizomatic structure is manifested through the recursive return to and reinterpretation of the allusion *tubinde kazynaga barin alady (in the end, the treasury takes everything)* (translated by the author). This structural principle unfolds through repetition and analytical re-engagement, allowing the narrative to expand non-linearly across temporal and thematic layers. The story reflects the emergence of a collective illusion shaped by Soviet ideology that all property would ultimately become communal. This belief, internalized by the populace, functions as an underlying discursive thread that connects individual experiences with broader socio-political transformations. The narrative is organized around the author's recollections of *Kos Shalkar*, a land he visits three times. The first visit is depicted as part of a childhood episode in which he goes berry-picking with other children. The second visit is set against the backdrop of historical and political upheavals in the Kazakh steppe. The emotional atmosphere of this period is conveyed through the following description: *"Their faces were tense, like those of people in pain; their spirits were clouded. A hopeless regret was evident in their expressions. The joy of the summer pasture they had just reached already seemed to have faded, weighing heavily on the young men"* (translated by the author). The third journey to Kos Shalkar is undertaken by the narrator together

with Kusen and Bolzhyk. Within this narrative layer, the influence of the wealthy figure Kosym bai's sons becomes apparent, particularly in their role in discouraging many impoverished individuals from joining the ranks of the communists during the collectivization. Thus, the relationship between the rich and the poor in the story develops according to a rhizomatic structure, characterized by multiplicity, non-linearity, and interconnections. The progression of the narrative is not centered solely on the physical journey of the three characters to Kos Shaklar; rather. It is shaped by the establishment of Soviet power in the Kazakh lands and its profound impact on the socio-economic conditions of the poor. The third visit is undertaken together with two companions (Kusen and Bolzhyk) during the period of collectivization. Rather than progressing in a linear chronological fashion, the narrative layers these temporal episodes to generate overlapping and interconnected meanings. Recurring allusions, particularly the phrase (*tubinde kazynaga barin alady (in the end, the treasury takes everything)* (translated by the author)), meaning in the end the treasury takes everything, function as rhizomatic nodes that connect individual experiences of poverty and uncertainty to broader socio-political transformations. A complete inventory of identified folkloric motifs with corresponding textual examples is provided in the supplementary materials.

In postmodernism, depth of meaning emerges through the convergence of multiple semantic layers and the retrospective and prospective dimensions of narrative development. Within the framework, the concept of the rhizome challenges conventional notions of space and time in literary works. More specifically, events are narrated in multiple versions, allowing the same situation to be interpreted from different perspectives.

Folkloric works, in turn, evolve over time: they are continuously transformed, renewed, and reinterpreted within new cultural contexts, thereby leaving a lasting imprint on collective memory. In this regard, folklore can be viewed as a primary source that generates new texts and narratives, intertwining traditional motifs with contemporary themes and forms. Thus, the relationship between the rhizomatic structure of postmodernism and folklore highlights the complexity and multidimensionality of cultural and literary phenomena, while simultaneously opening new horizons for analysis and interpretation.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify how folkloric motifs in the prose of Musirepov (2012) are transformed through postmodern devices such as intertextuality, allusion, simulation, and parody, to analyze their manifestation within a rhizomatic structure, and to examine the relationship between intertextuality, cultural memory, and folkloric traditions in Turkic narrative traditions as reflected in Musirepov's prose.

The analysis of Musirepov's (2012) prose demonstrates that all three research objectives are closely interconnected through the persistent reconfiguration of Kazakh cultural memory within postmodern narrative structure. In relation to the first objective, which aimed to identify how folkloric motifs are transformed through postmodern devices, the findings show that intertextuality, allusion, simulation, and parody function as culturally embedded mechanisms through which folkloric heritage is actively reworked rather than simply reproduced. Direct citations from proverbs, epic narratives, and historical references, such as the Alash Orda movement, indicate that folklore operates as both a structural and a semantic resource for meaning production. Within this process, Kazakh cultural memory is not preserved as a static archive but reactivated through textual dialogue, confirming Binney's (2018) view of postmodernism as a continuation of folkloric logic. The identification of polyphonic intertextual space (Bakhtin, 1975), exemplified by the reminiscence between Kalisha in *Tulagan Tolkynda* and grieving mother figures in Auezov's prose, further demonstrates that folkloric motifs circulate across texts as memory-bearing units. This aligns with Kristeva's (2004) theory of textual mosaic and highlights how Turkic narrative traditions sustain cultural continuity through citation, transformation, and reinterpretation.

Addressing the second objective, which focused on the manifestation of folkloric motifs within rhizomatic structure, the analysis of *Kos Shalkar* revealed a non-linear narrative configuration in which meaning is distributed across multiple temporal and ideological layers. The narrator's repeated

return to the same spatial locus across three historical periods illustrates a rhizomatic organization of narrative memory consistent with Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) model of decentralized meaning production. However, within the context of Kazakh oral tradition, this rhizomatic structure also reflects culturally grounded mechanisms of storytelling in which narratives evolve through repetition and variation across generations. Accordingly, folkloric motifs exhibit rhizomatic properties, continuously generating new meanings without hierarchical closure, as Karagulova et al. (2025) argue. Thus, rhizomaticity in Musirepov's prose can be interpreted as a formal manifestation of Turkic cultural memory systems, in which narrative continuity is maintained through dynamic, non-linear transmission.

The third objective examined the relationship between intertextuality, cultural memory, and folkloric traditions within Turkic narrative frameworks. The findings indicate that intertextuality in Musirepov's works serves as a primary mechanism for preserving, transforming, and reactivating cultural memory. Folkloric references do not merely connect texts; they constitute a shared memory system that links Kazakh literature to broader Turkic narrative traditions. The transformation of Aziret Ali in *Er Kaptagai* from a sacred figure into a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994) illustrates how Islamic and Turkic mythological memory is destabilized and reconfigured within postmodern discourse, exposing ideological tensions embedded in cultural narratives. Similarly, parodic construction in *Tarlandar* demonstrates how traditional figurative expressions are reshaped into forms of ironic social critique, indicating that parody operates as a culturally situated mode of reinterpretation rather than simple aesthetic deviation. In this sense, intertextuality becomes the mediating space where cultural memory and folkloric tradition intersect, enabling the continuous negotiation of meaning across Turkic literary systems.

These findings have several implications. The majority of student participants perceived folkloric motifs as establishing connections between Kazakh literature and world literature, a perception borne out by textual analysis showing that Musirepov (2012) employed postmodern devices emerging in global literary discourse. This suggests that national identity and global postmodern tendencies need not be understood as opposing forces. Rather, as the theoretical framework proposed, the relationship between folklore and postmodernism may be realized precisely through intertextuality, citation, and simulation, with folkloric motifs serving as cultural material upon which postmodern techniques operate. This aligns with Abidin et al. (2023), who showed that integration of folklore with contemporary frameworks enhances cultural literacy. Pedagogically, engaging students in analysis of folkloric motifs within postmodern frameworks may enhance their skills in interpreting implicit meanings and recognizing intertextual references (Mukhtarova et al., 2025).

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The discourse analysis was conducted exclusively with ethnic Kazakh students from a single university, which limits generalizability to broader or international audiences. All participants were philology students aged eighteen to twenty-two, so findings may not reflect the perspectives of older readers, non-specialists, or readers outside the Kazakh educational system. The study also lacked comparative analysis with other Kazakh or Turkic writers, making it difficult to determine whether the postmodern features identified are unique to Musirepov (2012) or characteristic of a broader literary movement. Finally, reliance on student self-report data is subject to response biases, though open-ended questions and group discussions mitigated some of these concerns. Future research should pursue comparative analysis across Turkic literatures, examine folkloric motifs within gender frameworks (particularly the recurring figure of the widowed woman), apply ecocritical perspectives to Musirepov's representation of landscapes, and employ quantitative or mixed methods to assess generalizability across different reader populations.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethics Declaration

The study complied with institutional ethical standards and the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University.

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Appendix A

The Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was administered to evaluate respondents' perceptions of the representation and transformation of folkloric motifs and postmodernist elements in Musirepov's works. The original questionnaire was developed in Kazakh and translated into English for publication purposes.

1. To what extent are folkloric motifs represented and developed in Musirepov's works?
2. Based on your analysis of Musirepov's works, what are the distinctive features of the use of folkloric motifs?
3. How would you assess the level of representation of postmodernist tendencies and folkloric motifs in the writer's works?
4. In your opinion, what influence do folkloric motifs exert on the characteristic features and techniques of postmodernism?

5. What transformations have folkloric motifs undergone within the framework of postmodernism?
6. In what ways are folkloric motifs represented within the postmodernist discourse of Musirepov's works?
7. In your view, what concepts and characteristics connect folkloric motifs with postmodernism?