

Family as a Lost Chronotope: Themes of Disintegration and Memory in Contemporary Prose from the Magazine "Daktil"

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the depiction of family as a lost chronotope in contemporary Kazakhstani prose, primarily represented by the literary magazine "Daktil." The aim of the study is to identify the key themes of disintegration, memory, and loneliness that shape the specific model of the family world in the 21st century. Particular attention is paid to comparing the classical notion of family in the Kazakh literary tradition with the contemporary understanding of kinship ties, which are undergoing significant changes under the influence of social and cultural transformations. The paper examines the evolution of the family image: from the sacred system of clan relations and moral norms in 19th-20th-century literature to the fragmented, vulnerable, and psychologically charged structure of contemporary prose. An analysis of the works of Nastya Kukushkina, Lena Kuznetsova, and Zhanat Zhumataeva reveals how family memory, loss, and disunity become dominant artistic motifs. It is shown that the short fiction of the magazine "Daktil" captures family relationships as a space of conflict, internal isolation, and disrupted communication, where loneliness arises within the family rather than outside it. Particular attention is paid to the interpretation of women's writing, which offers new ways of articulating traumatic experiences associated with motherhood, divorce, the breakdown of family ties, and the search for emotional support. The analysis demonstrates that contemporary Kazakh literature addresses the theme of family not only as a social institution but also as a symbol of cultural memory. In the context of post-Soviet transformation, family is becoming a crucial space for identity formation, where individual experience, collective memory, and societal expectations intersect. The results suggest the emergence of a new family paradigm in 21st-century Kazakh prose. Keywords: family, cultural memory, lost chronotope, contemporary Kazakhstani prose, identity

Keywords: Chronotope, "Daktil", Disintegration

INTRODUCTION

The theme of family occupies a special place in classical literature, as it was through family relationships that the artistic consciousness of the past understood the structure of the world, moral norms, and human destiny. In traditional societies, which included Kazakh culture of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the family was never an exclusively private space. It represented the foundation of social order, a form of preserving memory, and the primary mechanism for transmitting values from generation to generation. Therefore, in classical literature, the family is not the backdrop of the narrative, but its semantic center.

Classical literature views the family primarily as a miniature model of the world. Relationships between parents and children, elders and younger generations, men and women reflect the hierarchy accepted in society, as well as the system of moral coordinates. The family shapes a person long before they enter social life, and therefore it is

within the family that the foundations of character, a sense of duty, and an understanding of honor and responsibility are laid. A literary hero of the classical era is rarely thought of outside the family: even if he leaves his home, his actions are invariably related to the family memory and the expectations of his elders [1].

In the Kazakh classical tradition, family is closely linked to the concept of clan. Family ties determine not only a person's origins but also their place in the world. Here, family is the continuation of the clan, and clan is the extended family, including the living, the departed, and the unborn. This understanding imbues family relationships with a sacred character. Violating family and clan norms is perceived not as a personal offense, but as a threat to the stability of the entire community. This is why classical literature so strongly emphasizes duty to the clan and responsibility for the family's honor.

DISCUSSION

The philosophical understanding of family in Kazakh literature is associated with the name of Abai Kunanbayev. In his poetry and "Words of Edification," family is not described in everyday detail, but rather as a moral category. Abai views family as a space for the development of the individual, where the capacity for thought, conscience, and work is formed. At the same time, he criticizes the blind adherence to tradition, where the authority of elders replaces moral responsibility. In his reflections, family can become both a source of spiritual growth and a cause of degradation if it loses the true meaning of education. Thus, an important motif emerges in classic literature: family is valuable not in itself, but through the moral principles it conveys [2].

The theme of family is presented most extensively and artistically in the prose of Mukhtar Auezov, particularly in the epic "The Path of Abai." Here, family and clan are depicted as a complex system of power, tradition, and conflict. Family relations are subject to customary law and a patriarchal hierarchy, where elders possess unconditional authority. However, it is within the family that conflict arises between personal choice and ancestral duty. Young heroes increasingly sense a discrepancy between the demands of tradition and their inner moral convictions. In Auezov's prose, the family ceases to be an exclusively harmonious space: it becomes an arena for the struggle for influence, status, and moral superiority [3].

The image of women in the family occupies a special place in classical literature. Women are traditionally portrayed as the keeper of the hearth, the bearer of memory, and the mediator between generations. Through them, customs, language, and moral values are transmitted. However, classical literature does not limit itself to idealizing this role. On the contrary, it reveals the dramatic nature of women's fates within the patriarchal system. Marriage at the behest of elders, the lack of freedom of choice, and subordination to family interests become sources of tragedy. The female character in classical literature often embodies silent suffering, which reveals the rigidity of the traditional order [4].

It is important to note that classical literature does not reject family as a value, but seeks to demonstrate its internal contradictions. Family can nurture a person of honor, but it can also destroy a person's destiny if tradition becomes a form of violence. This ambivalence makes the image of family particularly significant: it ceases to be static and acquires philosophical depth. Family becomes a space for moral choice, not just adherence to custom [5].

Thus, in classical literature, family is presented as the foundation of human and social existence. It unites the personal and the collective, the past and the future, morality and tradition. Through the family, classic literature interprets the fate of a people, the mechanisms for preserving culture, and the limits of traditional ways of life. This is precisely why the theme of family, developed in classical literature, remains relevant in subsequent eras, becoming a starting point for its reinterpretation in the literature of the 20th and 21st centuries [6].

The short fiction of modern Kazakh literature is particularly sensitive to the theme of family. Short stories and novellas capture family conflict in its purest form, without elaborate explanations or ideological frameworks. It is precisely in short fiction that family emerges as a space of tension, silence, and unresolved contradictions.

Contemporary prose is characterized by a shift in emphasis from external events to internal experiences. Family relationships are depicted through everyday details, gestures, omissions, and pauses. Often, conflict is not directly stated, but becomes apparent through the breakdown in communication between loved ones. In such texts, the home loses its function as a protected space and becomes a zone of emotional isolation.

A characteristic feature is the lack of idealization of family ties. Parents and children, spouses, and siblings exist side by side, but not together. Family becomes a form of coexistence devoid of genuine intimacy. This motif is particularly evident in stories narrated in the first person, which enhances the effect of confessionality and loneliness [7]. The methodological basis for studying the family in contemporary Kazakhstani prose is formed at the intersection of several approaches—literary, cultural, semiotic, and historical-anthropological. This is due to the fact that the family, as an object of artistic analysis, is a complex structure that combines personal biography, collective memory, cultural codes, and social transformations. To establish patterns in the depiction of the family

as a lost chronotope, it is necessary to apply methods that allow us to consider the text simultaneously as a cultural product, as an artistic form, and as a carrier of historical memory.

Research Material

First, the study draws on texts published in the journal "Daktil," one of the most significant venues for contemporary Kazakhstani prose. The analysis included: Nastya Kukushkina's story "Vinegar Tree," Lena Kuznetsova's story, Zhanat Zhumataeva's story, as well as additional short fiction devoted to family themes. Secondly, classical Kazakh literature was used as a contextual basis for defining historical notions of the family. This includes works by Abai, M. Auezov, I. Yesenberlin, and other authors in whose texts the family is a fundamental element of their worldview.

This corpus allows us to examine the family dynamically—from the traditional model to the modern fragmented structure.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodological framework combines several approaches, allowing us to examine the family as a complex literary and cultural phenomenon. Primarily, comparative cultural analysis is used, revealing the differences between the traditional family model in classical Kazakh literature and its fragmented contemporary version. An intertextual method allows us to trace how contemporary authors engage in dialogue with literary heritage, reinterpreting the symbols of family, memory, and home. A hermeneutic approach helps identify hidden emotional structures—silence, rupture, loss—that are often expressed in subtext. Semiotic analysis helps interpret persistent images (tree, house, empty space) as elements of a cultural code. Together, these methods allow us to examine contemporary Kazakhstani prose as a space in which a new family identity is being modeled.

RESULTS

The literary journal "Daktil" occupies a special place in contemporary Kazakhstani literary development, capturing the most pressing and sensitive topics of private life. In the texts published in the magazine, family is presented as a problematic, and sometimes even traumatic, space.

In Nastya Kukushkina's story "Vinegar Tree," family relationships are built around the loss of emotional connection. The family here does not formally disintegrate, but rather crumbles from within. The characters exist in a state of forced coexistence, each locked in their own experience of pain and memory. In the text, the past symbolically "recedes" into the image of the vinegar tree—a metaphor for frozen, unresolved trauma. Family memory does not unite; on the contrary, it reinforces alienation, becoming a source of numbness.

Lena Kuznetsova's story (No. 35 of "Daktil") focuses on the theme of divorce and its consequences. The family breakdown is presented here not as an event, but as a process of gradual emotional emasculation. Particular attention is paid to the state of the child, caught between two worlds, neither of which can provide a stable foundation. In this text, family loses its function as a transmitter of values, becoming a space of uncertainty and anxiety.

In Zhanat Zhumataeva's work, the emphasis shifts to the conflict between biological and adoptive families. The author explores the phenomenon of "severed belonging," when biological kinship does not coincide with emotional closeness. Here, family ceases to be a category of blood and becomes a category of choice, reflecting profound shifts in the modern understanding of kinship.

Thus, the texts in the "Daktil" magazine form a unique model of the family world—unstable, fragile, devoid of sacredness, but utterly honest in its psychological truth.

The motif of the broken family, closely linked to the theme of loneliness, deserves special consideration. In recent Kazakh literature, loneliness is often not opposed to family, but arises within it. The characters are lonely not because they lack family, but because family ties have lost their meaning.

Loneliness in the family manifests itself through a lack of dialogue, emotional coldness, and an inability to be heard. This experience is particularly poignant in texts where generational conflict does not manifest itself in open confrontation, but exists in the form of alienated silence. Elders and younger generations live in different time and value dimensions, unable to find common ground.

For many characters, family becomes a space of imposed identity, impossible to reject, but also impossible to accept. This state creates an internal rift, a feeling of being "superfluous" within the family circle.

One of the persistent motifs of modern fiction is the loss or symbolic weakness of the father figure. The father is often physically absent (death, departure, divorce) or present nominally, failing to serve as a moral compass. This leads to a disruption of the mechanism of continuity and the transmission of values.

The absence of a father in 21st-century Kazakh literature is often correlated with a broader cultural crisis. The loss of authority, the erosion of traditional hierarchies, and the uncertainty of the future are reflected precisely in the family model. The family becomes a mirror of a society that has lost its stable orientation.

In women's fiction, loneliness within the family takes on a special resonance. Female characters often find themselves bearing emotional and domestic responsibilities, yet remain deprived of support. Motherhood, marriage, and caring for older relatives are portrayed not as sources of self-realization, but as forms of forced self-denial.

However, it is important to emphasize that recent literature is not limited to the image of victimhood. Women's loneliness within the family also becomes a space for reflection and self-discovery. Through internal monologue, bodily memory, and everyday rituals, authors construct a complex picture of women's experience, previously marginalized in literature.

The theme of family in recent Kazakh literature is the focus of active scholarly debate. Researchers interpret the dominant image of a broken or crisis-ridden family in different ways. Some see it as a reflection of objective social processes, while others see it as an artistic strategy aimed at demythologizing traditional values. A significant question remains: does literature testify to the complete disintegration of the family model or document a transition to new forms of kinship and intimacy? Analysis of the texts reveals that this is not so much a question of the destruction of the family as such, but rather a transformation of its meanings. The family ceases to be a predetermined structure and becomes a space for choice, responsibility, and personal decision.

The relationship between the national and the universal in the depiction of the family world also remains debatable. On the one hand, Kazakhstani literature retains a cultural specificity associated with clan tradition and collective memory. On the other, family conflicts, loneliness, and the loss of intimacy are universal in nature, making these texts understandable beyond the national context.

CONCLUSION

The family world in recent Kazakh literature is a key space for understanding historical and cultural trauma. The family is depicted as an unstable structure, subject to internal ruptures, reflecting the crises of post-Soviet society. Literature records a shift from the sacralization of the family to its problematization and psychological analysis. Loneliness becomes a central existential experience arising within family relationships. Women's writing introduces fundamentally new intonations into the depiction of the family world, emphasizing physical and emotional memory.

The family world in recent Kazakh literature emerges as a complex and contradictory artistic space where personal fate, historical memory, and social transformation intersect. The family loses its status as an absolute value, but retains its role as a key symbol of identity and memory.

Twenty-first-century literature demonstrates that it is through the family narrative that the most accurate understanding of the post-Soviet experience is possible. The family becomes not a refuge, but a place of trial, where people confront loneliness, loss, and the need for independent choice. This is one of the most important artistic and philosophical functions of modern Kazakh literature.

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