

TOTALITARIAN AND KAZAKH LITERARY CRITICISM

Sarzhan Takirov^{1*}, Zhansaya Zharylgapov², Zhanar Rustemova³, Bibi Syzdykova⁴, Zhanaidar Zhumageldin⁵
^{1,3}Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Karaganda State University Named After Academician E. A. Buketov, Russia, ²PhD, Associate Professor, Karaganda State University Named After Academician E. A. Buketov, Russia, ^{4,5}Senior Teacher, Master of Philology, Karaganda State University Named After Academician E. A. Buketov, Russia.

Email: ^{1*}sarzhan68@mail.ru, ²Zharylgapov_zhan@mail.ru, ³rustemova.66@mail.ru, ⁴syzdykovabibi@mail.ru, ⁵zhanaidar.zhumageldi@mail.ru

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Abstract

Purpose: The article deals with the urgent problems of Kazakh literary criticism of the forties of the twentieth century. Tracked artistic processes of a specified period and impact on artistic nature of the writers of the totalitarian system

Methodology: Investigations which only started in Kazakh literary studies, under the ground of contradicting with Marxism-Leninism outlook, were considered wrong, and remarkable poets and writers, scientists and literary scholars were subjected to repression, besides national criticism and literary studies turned into a familiar ideological bludgeon. Due to this reason, criticism, and literary studies, even being guided by Marxism-Leninism methodology, was forced to deal with serious issues which time presented with them; denying the way they had paved, they had to work with investigations in a new direction. It is important to note that national literary studies, particularly literary criticism, overcoming hardships of ideological grip, which brought huge grief of burden in 1937-38, in 1940 stepped ahead on the way of formation and improvement.

Result: The authors of the article examine genre originality of literary criticism. However, we consider in detail such types as a challenging article, a polemic article, literary review and others.

Applications: This research can be used for the universities, teachers, and students.

Novelty/Originality: In this research, the model of Totalitarian and Kazakh literary criticism is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: *Kazakh literature, Kazakh literary criticism, totalitarianism, Marxism-Leninism methodology, censorship, socialist-realism.*

INTRODUCTION

While mastering and investigating the spiritual-cultural heritage of the Kazakh nation on a scientific base, there were entire periods when serious errors occurred, distortions prevailed and implemented through party resolutions. As a result of Stalin's letter "About some problems in history of Bolshevism", subsequent ideological pressure appeared and played a dangerous role. For example, according to this letter, an instruction document in the form of an explanatory letter was published which is called "About aims of struggling on the theoretical front in Kazakhstan in relation to Stalin's letter" and prepared in 1932 by Culture and propaganda department of Kazakh regional committee CPSU (B) and Marxism-Leninism institute in Kazakhstan.

In the guidance document, which ideological workers had to follow, it is clearly written, in what direction work on literary criticism should be conducted: "Pay special attention to the tasks of the epoch of building socialism in Kazakhstan and problems of literary criticism" ([Kazakh literature of 20-30-s, 1997](#)). Therefore, a new campaign was established, struggling against poets and writers called "nationalists" and "Alash protagonists", which consequently brought to exposure of "public enemy" outgrowing into repression and execution. First of all, it was a strict policy aimed at magnetization of the entire nation by eradicating national intelligentsia; secondly, it clearly showed intentions and direction of ideological grip. It is obvious that adopted on February 7, 1939 regulation by Council of People's Commissars of Kazakh SSR and Central Committee of Kazakhstan Communist party "About further development of art and literature in Kazakhstan" is a political masterstroke undertaken by command-administrative system; and it was believed to demonstrate concern about literature and art after political campaign of repression against "public enemies". Russian scientists write the following about huge grief and detriment to spiritual life and public changes around USSR which were caused by persecutions and Stalinism: "It is impossible to understand tragedy of Soviet art in 30-50-s without comprehending Stalin and Stalinism, what valuables and benefits left if there are any, how gifted people used to live at that painful epoch?" ([Gromov, 1992](#)).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Understanding to what extent Kazakh literature and culture, entire literary criticism faced the crisis, what difficulties faced while resurrecting after destructive years and getting back into routine is not hard. One opinion expressed by a historian of Kazakh literary criticism, T. Kakishev, according to this problem about destructions in 30-s is: "Fortunately, rapidly growing youth was able to rise, to be on all four cylinders, despite hardships, despite that unbearable burden which was meant to be carried by older generation. Otherwise, little time remained behind when instead of notion "Kazakh literature"

there would have been a blank page” (Kakishev, 1994). Another historian D. Iskakuly, considering literary criticism of 30-s as one of the formed aspects of literary studies, gives the following statement: “Probably, the main reason of our today’s situation, when we can’t get rid of restraints of managers, nihilistic point of view, should be looked for in that policy Stalin implemented in 30-s” (Iskakov, 1994).

Investigations which only started in Kazakh literary studies, under the ground of contradicting with Marxism-Leninism outlook, were considered wrong, and remarkable poets and writers, scientists and literary scholars were subjected to repression, besides national criticism and literary studies turned into a familiar ideological bludgeon. Due to this reason, criticism, and literary studies, even being guided by Marxism-Leninism methodology, was forced to deal with serious issues which time presented with them; denying the way they had paved, they had to work with investigations in a new direction. It is important to note that national literary studies, particularly literary criticism, overcoming hardships of ideological grip, which brought huge grief of burden in 1937-38, in 1940 stepped ahead on the way of formation and improvement.

It is impossible not to pay attention to the fact that while literary studies were forming; criticism and science about literature were developing closely to each other. First of all, it is known that when blossom of literature used to interrupt, then development of criticism also retorted. Nowadays it is not uncommon in literary studies to say that execution of Sh. Kudaiberdiev, A. Baitursynov, M. Dulatov, M. Zhumabayev, I. Djansugurov, S. Seifullin, Zh. Aimaityov, B. Mailin, whose names are particularly called in history of Kazakh literature, persecutions which M. Auezov experienced, brought enormous loss on its artistic development.

Crucial point is that a wide cleavage was formed among historical succession of literary development, traditions, and new directions, a negative impact was made on genuine ways of development of national oral culture, on improvement of genres features, however investigations in various spheres of such masters of a feather as M. Auezov, S. Mukanov, G. Musrepov, G. Mustaphin, saved our literature from that crisis caused by ups and downs of time. According to this problem, in modern literary studies there are profound opinions, for example: “It would be exaggeration to claim that art of artistic word, particularly prose, before deprival of 1937-38, also after this bumped into deadlock. Although having deprived of such remarkable people as I. Djansugurov, S. Seifullin, B. Mailin, literature was plunged into painful stagnation, it did not stop at all. Profound, deep thoughts which representatives of previous generations were not able to express, fundamental issues they could not accomplish, were continued by famous writers as M. Auezov, S. Mukanov, G. Musrepov, G. Mustaphin. Massive works were written in genre of stories, novelettes, and novels” (Kazakh literature of 20-30-s, 1997).

DISCUSSION

In poetry appeared new poems and verses of T. Zharokov, A. Sarsenbayev, A. Tazhibayev, K. Bekhozhin, Zh. Sain, K. Amanzholov, D. Abilov, A. Tokmagambetov, K. Abdikadyrov, Zh. Syzdykov, I. Baizakov, also in 1939 a number of novels were published: G. Mustaphin’s “Life or death”, S. Yerubayev’s “My peers”, S. Mukanov’s “Botagoz”. To be honest, since 40-s authors of works written in any genre of Kazakh literature were forced to adhere to the concepts of socialistic realism as class character, folk character, and party membership. Needs of soviet ideology made literary criticism follow these concepts and approach any literary work analysis and assessment with political and socialistic attitudes. This phenomenon was typical not only Kazakh literature but also entire soviet literature. Modern Russian literary studies explain ideological superiority of that period in the following way: “Fall of the Soviet empire led to falling of soviet literary empire too”. Besides, Kazakh soviet literature also suffered from a political bludgeon.

For example, June 3, 1939, literary analysis was done upon S. Mukanov’s novel “Mysterious flag”, critic Y. Ismailov made a report about conceptually-thematical and artistic features of the work. On the press papers critical articles were published by B. Kenzhebayev “Mysterious flag”, Y. Ismailov “About mysterious flag”, Zh. Zhumahanov “Mysterious flag”, which discussed achievements and drawbacks of the novel. Definitely, greater attention was paid to class character of above-mentioned novel; however artistic problems were also particularly acute. Everything should be assessed as a step towards comprehensive understanding of main idea of the work, which literary criticism made after repression in order to demonstrate its genuine nature, main purpose, in other words, to critically process the work on theoretical and scientific base.

A role of challenging critical articles, one of the criticism genres, taken while getting rid of drawbacks and wrong actions which occurred in literary criticism, giving a boost on a certain level is important and powerful. Certain proofs are G. Musrepov’s article “Growing literature needs growing criticism”, S. Mukanov’s “About prose and criticism”, M. Auezov’s “Give up the spirit for good criticism”, Y. Ismailov’s “Critical three problems”, aiming at reviving criticism, allocating aesthetic features.

When analyzing criticism of mid-30-s, i.e. period of repressions, we talk about nature of polemic articles connected to exposure of “public enemies”, clarifying signs of “nationalism”, “bourgeoisness”, then at the end of 30-s there was obvious aspiration to dispose such main downsides. For example, G. Musrepov in his article “Growing literature needs growing criticism” says: “I am not a critic, I am a writer, not the one who criticizes, but who is criticized. However, I would like to know who a critic is”. Further, he notes kinds of criticism – scientific criticism, folk criticism. Discussing that there was

“cheap criticism, hopeless shout”, amount of damage that was done to its literary development, he started a dispute of aespolemitic character on a scientific base with S. Mukanov, Y. Ismailov in relation to some of their thoughts expressed in their reports about literary problems.

Another phenomenon referring to polemic criticism turning into aesthetic direction is M. Auezov’s article “Give up the spirit for good criticism”. He shares his opinion concerning some controversial problems brought up by S. Mukanov in his critical article “About prose and criticism”, expresses his deep thoughts. The writer demonstrates an excellent sample of polemic criticism and shows his disagreement supported with evidence about some points expressed by S. Mukanov concerning his play “Aiman-Sholpan”. The writer pays special attention to main idea in the plot of the play comparing it with “Aiman-Sholpan” poem in oral folk arts, to the characteristics of the conflict and peculiarities of creating images. Particularly he gives a scientific point of view in relation to the image of Kotibar. A scientific contradiction, which was made by S. Mukanov, in revealing genuine nature of Kotibar in lyric epos, in libretto, in play and exact life, he considers with the common-sense point of view and transmits into a scientific base.

“Nobody seizes your feather and says “do not criticize”. However, is it not possible to prove your statement by analyzing and make objective conclusions?” – that point of view shows his call to scientific specifics. M. Auezov, not only called for eloquent doubtfulness but also common sense, he also reminds about necessity to correct incoherence by implementing scientific selection of lyric epos, libretto, and plays. “If criticism did not show curves, instead of proofs there would not be replica”, despite his sharp thoughts, transmission to critical understanding of superficialities expressed by S. Mukanov, proves one more time sobriety and common sense of M. Auezov ([Auezov, 1985](#)).

G. Musrepov considered that M. Auezov in his polemic articles, first of all, pursuing interests of critical literature, further raises a question about necessity to follow scientific-investigative, literary-theoretical objectiveness as support, secondly, objectiveness of criticism differs with its peculiarity to aspire to aesthetic and scientific bases, to aspire to give them a certain direction. In fact, definitions of G. Musrepov’s “severe criticism”, “good criticism” of M. Auezov, expressed concerning nature of criticism differ by serious tasks put in agenda about scientific and aesthetic criticism.

It is necessary to note that literary criticism was not able to overcome a shallow view existing in Kazakh literature, on the way of a realistic image of truth of life during a war. According to this, B. Momyshuly’s opinion about M. Auezov’s “Guards of honor” is valuable because it reflects an objective point of view on the issue which literary criticism could not embrace deeply. “Where has an ordinary warrior gone, a nimble soldier who implicitly obeyed, very honest, valiant, brave? Your Tolegen is not likely to be a soldier on the field of battle, he turned into a mocker on the stage”, - his opinion is notable for targeting directly a purpose, i.e. serious drawbacks which occurred in Kazakh playwriting during the Great Patriotic War, when they wrote about a front line without seeing and knowing about it ([Momyshuly, 1991](#)). There are certain explanations concerning deviations from the truth of life and insulation while writing high-level artistic ideological plays by Kazakh playwrights. Time did not give an opportunity to master front space, battlefield and soldier’s psychology deeply.

In addition, genre characteristics of literary criticism were enriched. To be precise, a number of problems and review articles, articles about artistic portrait and essays appeared. For instance, Y. Ismailov’s problem critical articles “Reaching excellence in the art of poetry is the right way to genuinely reflect the truth of life”, “Poetic talent should be used properly” analyzes widely theoretical problems of Kazakh lyrics, enriching Kazakh poetry with high-level romantics. The critic pays special attention to artistic development of Kazakh poetry, which is a profound and key issue, further, he notes that “we need, in true meaning of these words, artistic, deeply ideological, high cultural lyrical works. There is a shortage of a number of minor forms of poetry, for example, romance, ballade, sonnet, they must present in our literature”. Thus, the critic sets highly artistic aims, calls akyns for investigations in new genres.

The critic also did not disregard drawbacks typical to Kazakh poetry of that time and reminds that it is necessary to assess the nature of artistic word from aesthetic point of view. He pays special attention to the problem of high-level quality Kazakh poetry, to develop by using different methods of artistic image, take serious steps towards perfection of poetic culture and skills.

If we talk about outstanding achievements, peaks of Kazakh poetry during the Great Patriotic War, it is not surprising to name K. Amanzholov’s poem “Legend about death of the akyn”. “It is important to note that K. Amanzholov’s works in poetry during the Great Patriotic War play a big role”. Due to this reason, Kasym’s mentioned poem was highly evaluated by literary criticism. It is obvious that high-level new word creates aesthetically important criticism. In relation to this, a master G. Musrepov’s article “Fresh whiff coming from front line” is not only a sample of aesthetic criticism of 40-s but also an article with brand new comprehensive and analyzing features.

“In a poem about a poet who died a hero’s death for his motherland in a front line, akyn Kasym was able to render all his inner turmoil, power of revenge, depth of feelings. With fiery words he sends against enemies, with warm-hearted words he makes you weep, akyn’s words come from the bottom of his heart burning your throat”, with these words, expressing his point of view, poetic strength of Kasym and the incredible power of poem are highly appreciated. Also, he was able to analyze A. Sarsenbayev’s poem “Whitey clouds” with wide knowledge, emphasizing his genuineness and poetic culture. “These two works of Kasym and Abu prove the depth of thoughts of poets in the war, height of penetration... because both

of these poems are not “former and beaten”. These works can be compared to the best samples of contemporary soviet poetry”, - such a high point of view is given by the writer ([Musrepov, 1970](#)).

In poetry criticism the following articles have become popular: K. Bekhozhin “Let us sing of courage”, A. Lekerov “Inspiration of the poet” (about N. Baiganin’s book of poems), S. Seitov “It is necessary to talk about what exists and what does not” (about a poem “Naryn”), A. Tokmagambetov “Caucasus” (about this poem of Isa Baizakov), Zh. Zhumakanov “Poem about Manshuk”, P. Kuznetsov “Poem about immortal life”, K. Turganbayev “Akbope” (Isa Baizakov’s poem). Obviously, it would be a mistake to consider that all of those are correlative to the nature of literary criticism, its scientific-theoretic and aesthetic features of high level. Nevertheless, it is apparent that they should not be compared to political criticism from yesterday, emerged during breakdown of 30-s, whose slogan was “hit and run”. These articles aimed at, first of all, paying attention to ideological features of artistic work, introduce to readers, secondly, they have distinction of considering and analyzing problems of Kazakh poetry; mainly they were review articles aiming at improving scientific content.

In 40-s Y. Ismailov wrote an article “Artistic mastering in topic disclosure” in relation to G. Musrepov’s novel “Kazakh hero”. The critic noted that the above-mentioned writer’s work is a new peak in creative activity while mastering massive prosaic genres; main attention is paid to the images of main heroes, peculiarities of the genre and style. G. Musrepov’s skills concerning rendering ideological framework of the work are analyzed from different sides, i.e. patriotism, fellowship of nations, courage of soviet warriors, and also writer’s achievement in artistic mastering of military topic is assessed, and it was concluded that this was an enormous creative achievement of whole Kazakh literature, but not only of the writer. The critic mentions about superficiality, which occurred in some works, dedicated to the theme of the Great World War, in imaging heroism, in artistic solutions, about outreach motives; in the following stage the author notes that Kazakh literature achieves both artistic and high-quality improvement level.

Indeed, one of the stages while genre types of Kazakh literary criticism were forming is 1940-s, in this period such main types of criticism as creative portrait, literary review, articles about aitys, challenging articles, polemical articles, in accordance with nature of scientific features tried to cover a range of problems as wide as possible. As a result of destructions during 1937-38, which caused irreparable harm on literary criticism, a great number of “blank pages” in history of literature appeared, scientific-investigative, literary-theoretical, critical-aesthetic thoughts and points of view drifted away from thoughts and points of view of the world literary studies, but criticism gradually got rid of everything ([Yazdekhashti et al, 2015](#); [Shatilova et al, 2018](#); [Luo et al, 2018](#)).

It is a historical truth that party policy in 40-s which did not permit fine arts to go beyond guidelines of Marxism-Leninism methodology loosed a knot a bit. Taking into account this situation, new kinds of literary criticism revived such as challenging articles, literary reviews, polemic articles, supplementing genres image and scientific features. To raise a broaden discussion about works on certain themes and genres, to analyze and make conclusions about general trends – a duty of review genre in criticism. Challenging articles raise a talk around problems, bearing theoretical and practical meaning, which are incredibly necessary but lacking in our literature. During the period of time, considered by us, articles even though in small quantities started to appear on press pages, which considered a variety of problems of the literary process of that time from different sides. For example, critical articles by Y. Ismailov “Perfection in poetic art – a right way to genuinely describe truth of life”, “Let poetic talent be used properly”, K. Bekhozhin “Let us sing courage”, B. Shalabayev “Poems about labor, major”, Y. Diusenbayev “Kazakh poets about motherland”, G. Musrepov “Fresh whiff coming from front line” are, on the one hand, certain examples of challenging, review articles, on the other hand demonstrate a new level criticism reached ([Metsämuuronen, 2018](#); [Villalobos Antúnez, 2015](#); [Gavhale, 2016](#); [Irvani et al, 2015](#)).

Criticism and a critic himself play a great role in making a review for a process of literary development, but not only in a thorough analysis of creative peculiarities of every poet and writer, also in uniting them for literature needs, in calling writers for integrity and common sense in new findings. It is known that neither literature nor the writer is not able to develop and strengthen without criticism. Obviously, any writer whatever he is listens to another point of view full of problems, polemics, of an experienced and skilled critic whose main aim is to analyze reasonably according to nature of criticism. From this point of view knowledge of a critic, mastership of his analysis, implementing aesthetic features of criticism, are reflected in those tasks and requirements of high culture, which literature aims to reach.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, we note that the aspiration of literary criticism to clarify specific problems, which have a straightforward relation to development of Kazakh literature, is not an immediate task. Remarkable figures of poetry, playwrighting, prose, who took an active part in literary process of that period, over a short period of time we’re able to put a lot of effort to revive Kazakh literature and develop each genre, which after destructions of 30-s decreased its artistic level, narrowed ideological frame, exposed to crisis.

Apparently, it is known that socialistic realism, an artistic method, which was supported by soviet literature, did not give an opportunity to depict truth of life from different sides; writers lacked freedom of thoughts. Also, we should not dismiss the fact that writers and poets who theme political mistrust, they were prosecuted. During the Great World War Kazakh

literature was carrying a heavy burden on its shoulders. Literature deprived of many masters and talented people in literature that is why reflection in military topics was not so big. Thus criticism at the beginning of 1940-s led discussions at a certain level about development of our literature, about its artistic level, about problems of theoretical analysis of works.

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