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THE TRANSFORMATION OF MODERNIST POETICS IN KAZAKH POETRY OF THE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Abstract. This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the renewal of Kazakh poetry during the independence period through the lens of modernist aesthetics. The study aims to identify the transformation of the poetic system and the formation of new artistic models oriented toward profound psychological and internal self-expression. Furthermore, it traces the interaction between tradition and innovation in contemporary lyrics. The authors examine the key features of modernist poetics, including enhanced rhythmic-syntactic freedom, the diversification of poetic forms, and the increasing emotive-semantic role of punctuation and graphic techniques. Particular attention is paid to the updated interpretation of symbolic, archetypal, and mythopoetic structures in the works of contemporary poets. Using the works of G.Salykbay, E.Duisen, B.Bedelkhan, U.Zarykkan, F.Toltay, and others as analytical case studies, the article demonstrates how modernist strategies are vividly manifested in their creative inquiries. The intensification of the poet's subjective voice, the emphasis on the internal stream of consciousness, existential reflections, and the subjective perception of time and space are identified as defining characteristics of modern Kazakh poetry. Additionally, the study traces a tendency toward the symbolization of mundane details, the reimagining of national imagery, and the expansion of the semantic possibilities of traditional poetic motifs. The article highlights the role of modernist aesthetic trends in strengthening the expressive potential of Kazakh literary language and developing the national poetic paradigm. The findings suggest that the poetry of the independence period represents a complex, multi-layered artistic space that aligns with global modernist processes while simultaneously revitalizing the national literary tradition.

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Keywords: Kazakh literature, modernism, poetry, poem structure, free verse.

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ТӘУЕЛСІЗДІК КЕЗЕҢІНДЕГІ ҚАЗАҚ ПОЭЗИЯСЫНДАҒЫ МОДЕРНИСТІК ПОЭТИКАНЫҢ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯСЫ

Аңдатпа. Мақалада қазіргі қазақ поэзиясындағы модернистік айшықтар ғылыми тұрғыдан сараланады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – тәуелсіздік тұсындағы қазақ поэзиясындағы модернистік поэтиканың

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трансформациясын дәстүр мен жаңашылдық категорияларының шеңберінде зерделеу. Автор модернистік поэзияға тән белгілерді өлеңнің ырғақ жүйесі мен мазмұндық ерекшеліктерінің негізінде талдап көрсетеді. Осылайша, қазіргі модернистік поэзияға тән ең басты белгілерді қарастырады: ырғақтық-синтаксистік еркіндіктің күшеюі, өлең формалары вариативтілігінің кеңеюі, верлибр мен прозалық поэзияның қолданылуы, пунктуация мен графикалық шешімдердің эмоционалды-семантикалық рөлінің артуы т.б. Қазіргі ақындар шығармашылығындағы символдық, архетиптік және мифопоэтикалық құрылымдардың жаңаша интерпретациялануына ерекше назар аударылады. Мақалада шығармашылық ізденістерінде модернистік айшықтар айқын көрініс тапқан Г. Салықбай, Е. Дүйсен, Б. Беделхан, Ұ. Зарыққан, Ф.Толтай және т.б. ақындардың өлеңдері талдау нысанына алынады. Автордың ішкі әлемінің терең қатпарларының көрініс табуы, уақыт пен кеңістіктің субъективті сипатта қабылдануы қазіргі қазақ поэзиясына тән сипаттар ретінде зерделенеді. Мақала қазіргі қазақ поэзиясын әрі әлемдік модернистік үрдістермен, әрі ұлттық дәстүрмен үндес күрделі көркемдік кеңістік ретінде қарастыруға мүмкіндік береді.

Алғыс: Зерттеу Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің Ғылым комитетінің «Қазақстан әдебиеттануы, фольклортануы және өнертануы экокүйесінің цифрлық трансформациясы: пәнаралық зерттеулер» (BR27101897) жобасының қаржыландыруымен жүргізілді.

Кілт сөздер: қазақ әдебиеті, модернизм, поэзия, өлең құрылысы, ерікті өлең, верлибр.

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ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ МОДЕРНИСТСКОЙ ПОЭТИКИ В КАЗАХСКОЙ ПОЭЗИИ ПЕРИОДА НЕЗАВИСИМОСТИ

Аннотация. В статье комплексно анализируется обновление казахской поэзии периода независимости в русле модернистской эстетики. Цель исследования — выявить трансформацию поэтической системы, формирование новых художественных моделей, ориентированных на глубокое психологическое и внутреннее самовыражение личности, а также проследить взаимодействие традиции и новаторства в современной лирике. Авторы рассматривают ключевые признаки модернистской поэтики: усиление ритмико-синтаксической свободы, расширение вариативности стихотворных форм, широкое использование верлибра и прозаической поэзии, возрастание эмоционально-семантической роли пунктуации и графических решений. Особое внимание уделяется обновлённой интерпретации символических, архетипических и мифопоэтических структур в творчестве современных поэтов. В качестве примеров анализируются произведения Г.Салықбая, Е.Дүйсена, Б.Беделхана, Ұ.Зарыққана, Ф.Толтая и других авторов, в творческих поисках которых ярко проявляются модернистские стратегии. Усиление субъективного голоса поэта, акцент на внутреннем потоке сознания, экзистенциальные переживания, субъективное восприятие времени и пространства рассматриваются как характерные черты современной казахской поэзии. Также прослеживается тенденция к символизации бытовой детали, переосмыслению национальной образности и расширению семантических возможностей традиционных поэтических мотивов. В статье подчёркивается роль модернистских эстетических тенденций в усилении выразительного потенциала казахского художественного слова и развитии национальной поэтической парадигмы. Представленные результаты позволяют рассматривать поэзию периода независимости как сложное и многослойное художественное пространство, созвучное мировым модернистским процессам и одновременно обновляющее национальную литературную традицию.

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Ключевые слова: казахская литература, модернизм, поэзия, структура стиха, свободный стих, верлибр.

1. Introduction

Research concerning the theory and history of modernism in literature has only begun to emerge within domestic literary studies over the past quarter-century. Specifically, scholars such as B. Maitanov (Maitanov, 2011), T. Yesembekov (Yesembekov, 2013), B. Kanarbayeva (Kanarbayeva, 2010), Zh. Zharylgapov (Zharylgapov, 2015), and A. Ismakova (Ismakova, 1998) have evaluated this issue from various perspectives and formulated significant scientific conclusions. However, with the exception of B. Maitanov, these scholars focused their research primarily on 20th-century Kazakh literature, analyzing modernist motifs within the works of major writers. For instance, Zh. Zharylgapov notes that the crisis of socialist realism principles during the 1970s and 1980s generated a demand for the re-evaluation of spiritual values, which in turn fostered a distinct aesthetic environment that he conventionally terms the “aesthetics of post-socialist realism” (Zharylgapov, 2009: 363). He states: “Previously, tendencies such as the depiction of social ideals, socio-political backgrounds, and behaviors deemed characteristic of the Soviet individual were dominant. Now, however, new concepts have been developed that view the individual as a spiritual phenomenon and explore their relationship with existence. Modernism, which introduced a distinct system of representation and a new artistic perception, established itself as a result of these efforts to understand the human personality in a new light” (Zharylgapov, 2009: 363).

These endeavors have intensified even further over the last thirty years. Since Kazakhstan gained its independence, unique paradigms have emerged in Kazakh literature that diverge from previous artistic trends. Kazakh literature of the 21st century, in particular, is distinguished by its pluralistic nature and multifaceted character.

In this context, the insights and conclusions of the scholar B. Maitanov, who conducted specialized research focusing on modernist features in 21st-century Kazakh literature, are of significant importance. In his well-known study titled “Modernist and Postmodernist Development Trends in 21st-Century Poetry,” Maitanov identifies modernist elements in the works of such poets as A. Kairan, Z. Yelgondina, Ye. Raushanov, G. Salykbay, A. Smayilov, T. Yeshenuly, M. Raiymbekuly, and others, providing a scholarly analysis of their content and formal nature (Maitanov, 2011). This work by B. Maitanov paves the way for a deeper understanding of the direction and trends of Kazakh literature during the period of independence. This is because the author analyzes the characteristics of modernist and postmodernist movements based on the prevailing motifs in contemporary Kazakh poetry (Maitanov, 2011).

Kazakh poetry of the independence period is a multifaceted, multi-layered phenomenon that is highly receptive to diverse creative explorations. During this era, socio-aesthetic paradigms shifted, and the content of literature underwent a renewal, leading to a corresponding transformation in form. Although contemporary literature is developing within a pluralistic framework, one fact remains clear: the predominance of modernist literature, which focuses on the inner world of the individual, over realistic literature, which historically emphasized the external environment. Verse critics confirm that “modern poetry exhibits a deeper immersion into the human soul, prioritizing subtle details over grand ones, and bestowing profound significance upon mundane aspects of daily life that

ordinary people often overlook” (Modification in Contemporary Poetry: Style, Rhythm, Form, 2024: 60). This suggests that traditional poetry, intended for a general audience and based on oral-aural reception, is being superseded by poems written for a singular reader and designed for visual-textual consumption.

Indeed, modernist poetry demands significant preparation from the reader. Modernist poets typically expose the lyrical hero’s inner world, utilizing unconventional linguistic structures, symbols, and archetypes to convey their ambiguous reality, loneliness, and existential outcry; they frequently abandon strict chronological order, transforming the human psyche into the primary spatial dimension. These shifts are evident not only in the thematic and ideological nature of contemporary verse but also in its rhythmic-intonational system. Essentially, the artistic explorations in modern Kazakh literature are led by poets striving to master the possibilities of modernist poetics. For instance, poets such as Ye. Raushanov, U. Yesdaulet, S. Rakhmetuly, T. Abdikakimuly, S. Aksunkaruly, B. Koshym-Nogay, N. Maukenuly, S. Nurzhan, G. Salykbay, M. Raiymbekuly, A. Balkybek, B. Bedelkhan, T. Yeshen, D. Berikqazyuly, T. Tolkyntyzy, A. Nurgazy, A. Temirbay, Y. Dabey, A. Elgezek, Ye. Zhunis, B. Karagyzyuly, T. Tanzharyk, and others have enriched Kazakh poetry in terms of both content and form, introducing a fresh breath and unique structures through their modernist motifs. These authors have engaged in various compositional, linguistic, and stylistic experiments, thereby seeking to reveal the nature of socio-political contradictions and historical turning points, focusing on their impact on human existence.

Furthermore, features characteristic of modernist poetics are also found in the works of younger poets such as U. Zarykkan, F. Toltay, Ye. Duysen, B. Maitay, B. Sarsenhan, M. Asan, A. Kuanyshuly, Kh. Esaman, Sh. Talap, Zh. Baibulanova, R. Aspankyzy, and others. Since the works of the older generation among these poets have already been discussed and evaluated at various levels, we have focused more on the verses of the younger poets, whose work has yet to receive proper critical appraisal.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research methods

In accordance with the study’s goals and objectives, a comprehensive set of research methods was employed. Specifically, the work utilizes poetic analysis, conceptual analysis, and systemic-structural analysis. Poetic analysis was directed toward identifying the transformation of verse forms, the intonational structure of texts written in non-traditional rhythmic systems, and the semantic weight of punctuation marks. Conceptual analysis enabled the examination of the subjective nature of time and space categories in independence-era poetry, as well as the modern interpretation of symbolic, archetypal, and mythopoetic structures. Finally, systemic-structural analysis served as the basis for considering modernist motifs as a cohesive artistic system based on the interrelation of poetic elements.

2.2 Research materials

In this article, modernist features in contemporary Kazakh poetry are the primary object of analysis, and their specific characteristics are scientifically examined. The study identifies the thematic, formal, and stylistic nature of modernist poetry, which is developing

through the transformation of traditional verse meters and on the basis of non-traditional rhythmic measures. Specifically, the poems of such authors as G. Salykbay, B. Bedelkhan, Ye. Zhunis, B. Karagyzyuly, T. Tanzharyk, U. Zarykkan, F. Toltay, and Ye. Duysen served as the basis for the analysis of poetic texts. Based on the creative works of these poets, the trajectory of contemporary Kazakh modernist poetry is assessed.

It is well known that the poetics of modernism have been studied to some extent by domestic literary scholars. The works of researchers such as T. Yesembekov, B. Maitanov, A. Ismakova, B. Kanarbayeva, Zh. Zharylgapov, A. Ishanova, and G. Saulembek provide the necessary scientific and theoretical foundation for conducting research in this direction. Although the works of these scholars may not be directly focused on the scientific differentiation of modernist features in contemporary Kazakh poetry, they constitute the theoretical and methodological base of our research article, providing a framework for recognizing and analyzing the nature of modernist motifs in today's poetry.

3. Discussion

Modernist features in contemporary Kazakh poetry are developing along two distinct trajectories. The first involves the transformation of traditional poetic meters and patterns, while the second is associated with the development of non-traditional rhythmic structures. Both trajectories minimize the role of the external dimensions of the poem, relying more heavily on internal patterns such as rhythm, intonation, emphasis, pauses, repetition, melody, and wordplay.

We observe that, structurally, Kazakh modernist poetry has not entirely abandoned traditional meters but has instead evolved by diversifying them. When discussing the first trajectory, we focus on the creative work of poets who have generated a fresh style and innovative technique by exhaustively utilizing and extensively transforming traditional metrical patterns. Poets in this direction have created novel measures ranging from single-syllable structures to 26-syllable verse meters; by subdividing 7-8 syllable, 11-syllable, and other traditional meters into multiple lines, they have placed logical and emotional emphasis on each word, thereby creating a new intonational voice, melodic tone, and rhythmic system. By interconnecting various poetic meters, they have introduced a unique aesthetic pattern to the verse. Thus, the distinctive patterns initiated by poets such as Saken and Magzhan, and further refined by Kasym, Syrbay, and Zhumeken, have become the artistic mold of Kazakh modernist poetry.

Of course, it would be reductive to seek modernist hallmarks solely within the poem's structure. However, one must keep in mind that experiments in poetic form are an inseparable part of modernist poetry and, most importantly, they play an exceptionally vital role in revealing the inner world of the lyrical hero. For instance, let us examine the following stanza:

Kesh.
Duniye – bos...
Zhy-p-zhyly zhuregimdi muzga tastadyn
Zhane qashpadyn.
Osh.
Qosh! (Salykbay, 2012: 58).

(Translation: Evening. The world is empty... You threw my warm heart onto the ice and did not flee. Extinguish. Farewell!)

The rhyme scheme and rhythmic-intonational system of this stanza by G.Salykbay do not conform to traditional poetic meters: the *a-b-b-a* pattern is not characteristic of authentic Kazakh rhyme types. Furthermore, the phenomenon of presenting a single line as an independent rhythmic structure is rarely encountered in our traditional poetry. The author does not limit herself to the technique of constructing a line with a single word; she also effectively utilizes punctuation marks to enhance the emotional and expressive weight of the lines. The pause following each line differs fundamentally from the pauses found in traditional meters, representing a significantly longer duration.

This is achieved, firstly, through the poet's technique of fragmenting the lines, and secondly, by extending the silence through the use of dashes, periods, ellipses, and exclamation marks. These punctuation tools precisely convey the emotional state of the lyrical hero, her outlook on life, her hopes and regrets-essentially, the helpless condition of the individual. This, in itself, serves as an indicator that contemporary poetry, unlike traditional literature, focuses not on collective issues, but on the concerns of the individual.

With the advancement of modernist poetry, the role of punctuation in Kazakh verse has significantly intensified. Poets have introduced the phenomenon of "silence" into the art of poetry. By presenting the flow of thoughts in a fragmented manner, they have expanded the logical, emotional, and expressive field of the poem. With the advent of modernist poetry, the functional burden of punctuation marks-such as commas, periods, ellipses, semicolons, en-dashes, parentheses, hyphens, and em-dashes-has become far weightier than before.

While in traditional poetry these marks primarily served to organize the logical structure of poetic lines, in modernist poetry, the artistic function of punctuation is no less significant than that of ornate or figurative language. In fact, the role of punctuation often proves to be much more potent than that of morphological and syntactic structures. This is because a single punctuation mark can perform the function of conveying a person's emotional state, aspirations, longings, wanderings, anxieties, and grief-the countless intricacies of the human soul-that several sentences might fail to express. This signifies that contemporary poetry relies not on objective reality, but on subjective reality, aiming to reveal the subtle nuances of the human spirit. The technique of enhancing the impact of thoughts and feelings through punctuation has been frequently employed in independence-era Kazakh poetry by such poets as Ye.Raushanov, T.Abdikakimuly, S.Aksunkaruly, G.Salykbay, and others.

In such a state, a positive outlook is unlikely. It is true that in the poetry of the independence era, melancholy has come to the fore, leading to occasional questions as to why poets have become so immersed in sadness during times of peace. When the seemingly eternal Soviet system vanished, ideals collapsed, and nothing remained stable-leaving chaos as the only dominant force-it became a natural phenomenon for the motif of "twilight" (*beiuak*) to emerge. The multiplication of characters who have lost their "North Star", who lack self-confidence, and who feel alienated from both themselves and society is an inevitable consequence. Such poetic models are also frequently found in the work of B. Bedelkhanuly. For instance, in his poem titled "Tusimde" (*In My Dream*), the poet skillfully employs modernist hallmarks:

Tusimde,
Kulli kursinisterdin ishinde,
Qusnikhat zhazyp qulazyp otyr ekenmin.
Qusaga kupti pishinde.

Tusimde,
Meyli, sen tusin, tusinbe,
Tas-qudaylarga tabynyp myna pendeler
Aynalyp zhatyr musinge.

Tusimde,
Tas-qalalardyn ishinde,
Bir uyys topyraq taba almay zhurmin sandalyp,
Aua da su da u da zhoq urttap ishuge.

Tusimde,
Sanamnyn amiri zhurmeytin alem ishinde,
Zar-munymdy aytyp, zau kokke samgap ketippin
Tanirim, zherge tusirme! (Bedelkhan, 2012: 150).

(Translation: In my dream, Amidst all the sighs, I was sitting desolately, writing a fine manuscript, In a form swollen with grief. In my dream, Whether you understand or not, These mortals, worshiping stone-gods, Are turning into statues. In my dream, Inside the stone-cities, I am wandering, unable to find even a handful of earth; There is no air, no water, not even poison to sip. In my dream, In a world where the command of my consciousness does not rule, I have soared into the high heavens, voicing my sorrow; My Lord, do not let me fall back to earth!)

The poem, written in a 13-syllable meter with a 3-10-13-8 rhythmic system, contains numerous features characteristic of modernist poetics. For instance, the phrase "in my dream" (*tusimde*) is repeated at the beginning of each stanza. In this context, the phrase does not merely perform a nominative function; it serves as the ideological pillar of the poem, carrying profound semantic, emotional, and expressive weight. Through the technique of anaphora, the poet strengthens the role of the artistic space and creates multi-layered semantic emphasis, investing this word with a rhythm-generating quality. By starting the first line of each stanza with "in my dream," the poet deliberately directs the reader's attention to phenomena residing within the subconscious realm. The lyrical hero, who exists "amidst all the sighs in a form swollen with grief," wanders through a stone city unable to find air or water – the fundamental requirements for survival. This image is a quintessential hallmark of modernist literature.

Typically, in modernist poetry, thoughts and ideas are concealed beneath linguistic structures laden with symbolic meaning. In such contexts, language serves as the key to the treasures of the subconscious realm. Several symbolic words and phrases appear in the aforementioned poem: stone-gods, stone-city, statue, a handful of earth, the sky, and others. For instance, "stone-gods" is a symbol reflecting the spiritual crisis permeating society.

Society has forgotten its true God and followed false idols. Just as Friedrich Nietzsche's famous proclamation "God is dead!" in the West signified the erosion of moral foundations and the total collapse of traditional value systems, Bedelkhan's "stone-gods" is a corollary concept, illustrating the wavering moral foundations of Kazakh society. The poem suggests that people have idolized things alien to national spirituality, thereby losing their own human essence.

The symbol of the "stone-city" reveals the poet's internal outcry and dissatisfaction with the current lifestyle of a nation beginning to drift away from its native culture. Humanity has distanced itself from nature and embarked on a technocratic path. Stone is traditionally a symbol of cruelty, hardness, ruthlessness, and coldness. The city where the poet resides is a habitat of heartlessness, a space of doubt and suspicion. This symbol manifests motifs of alienation, despair, and the search for the meaning of life. Furthermore, the symbols of stone-gods and stone-cities can be perceived as reflections of an era where science and technology have advanced rapidly, yet the individual has become a stranger to the very society they created, living in a state of unhappiness.

"A handful of earth" is a symbol carrying immense philosophical weight. In literature, it usually serves as a detail representing the value of one's homeland. The tradition of wearing a handful of earth from one's native land as an amulet is common to Turkic peoples. It is an undeniable truth that man is created from dust and shall eventually return to it. Thus, a handful of earth is a sacred code connecting a person's past and future, revealing their profound mysteries. An individual severed from the earth is severed from their roots, rendering their future bleak. The poem portrays a wretched soul who, despite being in his homeland, cannot find even a handful of earth and lives in misery. Despite this, the poet pleads with the Almighty not to let him fall back to Earth. For him, the Earth is an embrace of unhappiness—an environment of stone-gods and stone-statues. Even in this state of ambivalence, the poet does not hesitate to establish a dialogue with the Divine.

Men keshe,

Noserdin astynda qaludyn en uzdik ulgisin korsettim koktemge!

Men keshe,

Zhymiya qaradym otkenge, ketkenge.

Men keshe,

Noserdin astynda qaludyn en uzdik ulgisin korsettim zharyma!

Men keshe,

Suyem dep ayttym goy tagy da.

Noserdin astynda qaludyn en uzdik ulgisin korsettim barine,

Men keshe,

Bir zhasar ulymdy zhumsadym darige (Zhunis, 2022: 353).

(Translation: Yesterday, I showed the spring the best example of staying under a downpour! Yesterday, I looked smilingly at the past, at what had gone. Yesterday, I showed my beloved the best example of staying under a downpour! Yesterday, I said "I love you" once again. I showed everyone the best example of staying under a downpour, Yesterday, I sent my one-year-old son for medicine.)

This is E. Zhunis's poem titled "Men keshe" ("Yesterday"). By fragmenting a single semantic unit into two rhythmic structures and three lines, this verse serves as

an outstanding example of diversifying the classical-traditional poetic system to create modernist hallmarks. This poem can be regarded as a unique contemporary evolution of the free verse (*vers libre*) often employed by such poets as Zh. Nazhimedenov, T. Aibergenov, F. Ongarsynova, and M. Shakhanov. The rhyme scheme, following a 3-21-3-12-3-21-3-9-21-3-12 pattern, also diverges from traditional Kazakh rhyming systems.

In this poem, the repetition of phrases is not limited to carrying an ideological and thematic burden; it simultaneously functions as a rhythm-generating poetic element. The repetitions of “Men keshe” and “I showed the best example of staying under a downpour” internally prepare the reader for the poem’s final conclusion. There is no lofty tone or heroic pathos in the poem. Instead, the poet transforms mundane household details into moments of great joy and notable achievement: looking back at the past with a smile, expressing feelings to his beloved, and describing the milestone of his young son being old enough to be sent on an errand with emotional depth. From this, one can observe how modernist poetry has replaced the ornate figurative phrases and “beautiful imagery” of traditional poetry with domestic, everyday details.

The technique of enhancing emotional coloring by fragmenting poetic meters into two or more lines, and creating a rhythmic-intonational style by interconnecting long and short measures, has become a firmly established tradition in contemporary Kazakh poetry. Such poems, characterized by their broad resonance and complex rhythms, have also imposed a significant responsibility on the reader. This is because each structural unit of the poem carries logical, emotional, and expressive significance, concealing historical-cultural codes within. These verses, aimed at deep perception and diverse interpretation, demonstrate the potential of modernist poetics.

Furthermore, there is a growing number of poets within the modernist movement who are moving away from the traditional poetic paradigm that relies on rhyme and rhythmic systems, consciously rejecting rhyme and metrical patterns in favor of the supremacy of thought and feeling. Today, free verse – which abandons traditional meters and remains unrhymed, unmeasured, and as close as possible to the manner of colloquial speech – has already evolved into a distinct branch of Kazakh poetry. Verses written in non-traditional rhythmic systems, such as blank verse (*aq olen*), free verse (*verlibir*), and prose poetry, stand at the forefront of experimental poetry.

Academician Z. Akhmetov, commenting on the free verse that brought a fresh breath to Kazakh poetry starting in the 1960s and 70s, noted its immense potential and predicted its wide expansion in the future of Kazakh literature (Akhmetov, 1973: 193). The academician’s prediction has proven true; particularly in the last quarter-century, diverse models of free verse have emerged from the pens of contemporary poets. Armed with the advanced traditions of both the East and the West, young poets have entered literature with a new vitality and engaged in bold experiments. In such poems, both rhyme and meter lose their dominant roles, and the freedom of thought and emotion prevails. Noting the nature of the heavy melancholy and profound mystery in the creative work of modern young poets, G. Orda stated: “While most poets typically focus on love lyrics in their youth, the poets of the Independence era stand out for their depth of thought and vigilance” (Orda, 2024: 123). In our view, the characteristics mentioned by the scholar indicate that the artistic paradigm

of contemporary Kazakh poetry has shifted, and modernist hallmarks have multiplied. For instance, let us cite an excerpt from a poem by U.Zaryqkan:

Manayym menireu,
Quz zhartas,
Tuksigen, tunergen qabagy,
Zhutyp bir alarday tungiyuq zhanary.
Kutedi meni eski surleuler...
Sungiymin tumanga,
Sungiymin zholdarga zharaly.
Bir biyik ademi alemdi ansaymyn,
Zhanymnyn shynyna dauysy zhetetin.
Olimdi konildi qarsy alyp,
Omirden oksimey otetin.
Zhylatyp songen kun shapagyn,
Balkim, bul oralmas saparym... (Zaryqqan, 2013: 108).

(Translation: My surroundings are mute, A steep cliff, its brows knitted and gloomy, Its abyssal gaze as if to swallow me whole. Old trails await me... I dive into the fog, I dive into the wounded roads. I long for a high, beautiful world, whose voice reaches the peak of my soul. To welcome death cheerfully, To pass through life without sobbing. Making the rays of the setting sun weep, Perhaps, this is my journey of no return...)

The structure of the poem is complex: it can be described as a form of blank verse (aq olen) arising from the interconnection of 6, 9, 10, and 12-syllable meters, where consistency in the rhyme system is not maintained, yet an internal rhythmic-intonational system exists. The lyrical hero is ensnared in solitude; symbolic images such as steep cliffs, mute surroundings, old trails, and fog serve to represent human isolation. The poet employs a technique of revealing a person's inner essence and psychological state through images of external existence. That is, natural phenomena function as a mirror of the individual's internal condition. From this, one can perceive the disconnect between the lyrical hero and the surrounding reality.

Characters who contemplate life and death are typically found in existential poetry. In this poem, the lyrical hero also reflects on life and death. This reflection is not limited to thought; for the poet, the only way to pass through life without sobbing and to welcome death cheerfully is to strive toward an unknown height – to reach for an absolute ideal. Nevertheless, the final line of the stanza suggests that all of this remains in a realm of uncertainty. Thus, the author delves into the depths of life's issues, striving to reveal the profound nature of the human personality. F.Toltay asserts that the development of existential motifs in Kazakh literature stems from the post-colonial society's quest for self-identification, the endeavor to heal from historical traumas, and the profound exploration of both freedom and helplessness (Toltay, 2025: 212).

Perhaps due to this focus on content, the poem's external form does not resemble the balanced, traditional verses. Modernist poets often argue that the possibilities of traditional structural meters are limited and resort to free verse to delve into the depths of thought and feeling. They oppose confining a poem to a specific mold, considering it a phenomenon

contrary to the very nature of poetry. In this poem by U. Zaryqkan, the rhyme system and metrical patterns are pushed to the background, while the depth of thought and feeling comes to the fore. Through this, the author seeks answers to life's profound philosophical questions, revealing the alienated nature of man, the lonely individual, and the multi-layered psychological nuances in parallel with nature.

Academician Z. Kabdолоv stated that "the issue of syllables is the primary concern in evaluating the structure of Kazakh verse" (Kabdолоv, 2013: 263). However, the scholar was referring to the fact that Kazakh poetry belongs to the syllabic verse system rather than the tonic one. We believe that in evaluating the structure of contemporary free verse, the primary concern is not the syllable, but the internal rhythmic system. That is, although the syllable has traditionally been the backbone of Kazakh verse, in modernist poetry, syllabic meters have been superseded by the poem's internal rhythmic-intonational system. This becomes even more relevant when discussing *vers libre*, which fundamentally rejects metrical patterns and remains as close as possible to the manner of colloquial speech.

This is because "it is difficult to precisely identify the rhythm of free verse. The rhythm-generating elements here are the fragmentation of sentences into poetic lines and the inter-linear pauses that separate them. In essence, at its core lies a unified syntactic unit where each poetic line is articulated as a free-verse phrase. Therefore, it is only through intonation that we can discern the poem's unique rhythm and feel it with our very souls" (Ozhaiuly, 2024). For example, Ye.Duisen's poem titled "Uyqysyrau" (Sleep-talking) is considered a model of the *vers libre* genre in contemporary Kazakh poetry:

Ali esimde...

Zhel uyirgen qoqys ishinen ushgan targyl shuberek
Auyl ustın aynalyp zhurip ketui ketken eski baganaga ilindi.
Sodan bastap targyl tus – uranga aynaldy,
Targyl shuberek – zhalauga aynaldy.
Eskilik – beriktik manine auysty,
Bagana qasietti agashqa aynaldy.

Men de bari sekildi bugan qulay sendim.

Biyiktikti – batpyrauygym zhetken zhermen,
Terendikti qudyq tubine laqtyrylgan taspen olshedim.
Qudiret turaly ashyq aytudan qoryqtym,
Keyin, ashyq aytpaudyn qudiret ekenin tusindim.
Zhylap aqqan qannyn ozinen
Ogan tan urendi izdedim.
Keyin, Qudaydy qargagan sheshem dauysynan selk etip oyandym...

Zhoq, bul menin tusim eken deymen.

Tereze tubinde azan dauysy uyip tur,
Iya, albette!

Estimek ushin tereze ashuga umtylamyn,
Saytan algyr!
Ylgyi da Qudaysyz kitaptarga surinip ketemin!

Zhoq, bul menin tusim emes deymin... (Duisen, 2021: 31).

(Translation: I still remember... A striped rag flying from the trash swirled by the wind, hovered over the village and got caught on a worn-out old pole. From then on, the striped color became a slogan, the striped rag became a flag. Antiquity shifted into the meaning of strength, the pole turned into a sacred tree. I, like everyone else, believed in this completely. I measured height by where my kite reached, and depth by a stone thrown to the bottom of a well. I was afraid to speak openly about the Divine; later, I realized that not speaking openly is a power in itself. I looked for His hue even in the blood that flowed like tears. Then, I woke up with a start from my mother's voice cursing God... No, I say, this is my dream. Near the window, the sound of the Adhan hangs heavy, Yes, of course! I strive to open the window to hear it, Damn it! I always trip over godless books! No, I say, this is not my dream...)

The structure of the poem is highly complex. Typically, structural complexity in verse stems from the complexity of its content. From modernist poems, we clearly perceive that there is no phenomenon more profound or complex than the human soul. In this particular poem, external structural units such as stanzas, lines, and rhymes appear to be employed almost conventionally. That is, their function is not as dominant as in traditional poetry. The rhythm-generating quality of the lines is nearly non-existent; instead, they serve merely to direct the flow of thought and intonation within the poem. Nevertheless, significant weight is placed on the isolated, independent lines. Lines such as "I believed in this completely," "No, I say, this is my dream," and "No, I say, this is not my dream..." provide the semantic finale to the preceding stanzas and encapsulate the internal intonational system.

The rhythmic-intonational system of the poem is very close to the manner of colloquial speech. If we were to write the syntactic patterns of the first stanza as prose, the poem would lose its essential poetic quality: "A striped rag flying from the trash swirled by the wind, hovered over the village and got caught on a worn-out old pole." However, the lineation and the pauses here add a specific poetic significance. The author begins the initial lines with a calm intonation and gradually intensifies the poem's intonational palette. Thus, compared to the first stanza, the second is more emphatic, and the third is even more exclamatory, stressed, and powerful.

Following the aforementioned syntactic structures, the poem's intonation shifts abruptly. Antiquity shifts into the meaning of strength, the striped color becomes a slogan, the striped rag becomes a flag, and the pole turns into a sacred tree. The word "turned" (*aynaldy*) is repeated several times, enhancing the rhythmic-intonational richness of the poem and strengthening its semantic nuances. The intonational system of the final stanza is particularly distinct. Exclamatory sentences such as "Yes, of course!" and "Damn it!" accelerate the rhythm, bringing the poem to an emotional and expressive climax. We consider this to be the author's poetic tactic. In this way, the author aims to increase the weight of the poem's core idea and draw the reader's focused attention to it.

In the poem, there is an impression that the past and the present have intertwined. In the category of space, it is equally difficult to maintain a sense of concrete reality. The poet aims to convey the work's core idea within the realm of phenomena existing between wakefulness and dreams. In this regard, the opinion of verse scholar A. Usenova concerning *vers libre* is apt: "You cannot confine these poems within a specific space or time: their movement is a thousandfold labyrinth, their content lacks a defined field, and in some places, they even resemble an incomprehensible scribble. Although the poems are written in Kazakh, language proficiency alone is insufficient to understand them – it is crucial to find the system behind the interconnected, unexpected thoughts and grasp the significance of the imagery" (Usenova, 2021). In the aforementioned poem, the system of time and space is woven together with the lyrical hero's internal monologue. Through this, the poet conveys his perspectives and stances toward the past within the framework of internal rhythm and the stream of consciousness.

Writer D. Amantai, speaking of Ye. Duisen's creative work, states: "His texts are not open; they are closed. What he has to say lies in the subtext. He conveys it through allusion," and notes that the poem titled "Uyqysyrau" refers to Soviet ideology (Amantai, 2021: 6). If we provide a politico-ideological interpretation of the poem, we can draw conclusions not only about an individual but also about significant periods in the history of an entire nation. One can understand how the Soviet system led the people away from their spiritual direction (qibla), making them believe fervently in its false values; thus, even if today's generation wishes to return to its roots, it suffers, unable to escape the entanglements of a slave mentality. Of course, while every work of art is understood by the reader-recipient at their own level, one must keep in mind that modernist works have thick semantic layers, and each reader unravels these knots in their own way. Typically, the final point of such works is placed within the reader's own mind.

The poem contains symbols such as the adhan, the book, the pole, the rag, the wind, and blood, each carrying a heavy semantic burden. A legitimate question arises: why does a striped color turn into a slogan, a striped rag from the trash into a flag, and a worn-out old pole into a sacred tree? In our view, the poet is not only depicting the injustices of the Soviet system here but also providing a picture of the current era. The author uses such symbols to depict a period where the value system has collapsed, where the base has become the noble, and the discarded has become the coveted. False beliefs have been imposed on the people, and the public is still not fully aware of their falsehood. As the lyrical hero perceives the truth and strives toward his genuine heights, he repeatedly trips over "godless books." This implies that the surrounding reality is full of false and cheap values, all of which are hostile to the Divine. The meaning of the final stanza is profound. At this point, not only the rhythmic-intonational system but also the semantic-logical system reaches its zenith, and the conflict of values becomes clearly visible. The poem's idea unfolds within the framework of the clash between false values (the rag, the pole) and true values (the adhan, the Divine). This resonates with the propositions of Peter Nicholls, who argues that in modernist poetics, rhythm and form are no longer external 'containers' for thought; instead, they become the primary agents of meaning-making that reflect the fragmented and non-linear nature of modern consciousness (Nicholls, 1995)

4. Results

Poems in the genre of vers libre are found in the creative works of contemporary Kazakh poets such as T.Abdiakimuly, A.Nurgazy, T.Tanzharyq, B.Qaragyzyuly, U.Zaryqkan, F.Toltay, Ye.Duisen, and others. Nevertheless, the Kazakh reader still views poems in this genre with a degree of hesitation. In our opinion, this may be due to the fact that the vers libre genre does not align with traditional conceptions of poetry, owing to its philosophical depth and its proposal of a new paradigm for poetry in general. This, in itself, demonstrates that contemporary Kazakh poetry is developing primarily through the transformation of traditional rhythmic-intonational systems.

Modernist features in Kazakh poetry have manifested through several key traits: whereas traditional literature aimed to depict objective reality, modernist poems prioritize the representation of an individual's subjective reality. The internal world of the individual, psychological nuances, spiritual crises, and existential anxieties have become the primary objects of artistic focus. Symbols, archetypes, cultural codes, and intertextual motifs have replaced traditional plots and narrative systems. Time within these works departs from chronological and logical structures; categories of tense are intertwined and presented non-linearly. Instead of a person's external environment, their consciousness and inner world are typically utilized as the artistic space. Structurally, modernist elements in Kazakh poetry developed in two directions: through the transformation of traditional metrics and through non-traditional rhythmic systems. The role of internal rhythm and intonation has strengthened in verse construction. The semantic, emotional, and expressive functions of internal rhythm, pauses, intonation, and punctuation have replaced traditional syllabic meters and rhyme systems. Thus, complexity in form is nourished by complexity in content, creating a mutual interconnectedness. Such artistic techniques have deepened the semantic layers of literary texts, placing greater responsibility on the reader and bestowing a philosophical-intellectual depth upon poetry.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, modernist poetics have expanded significantly in contemporary Kazakh poetry, paving the way for the emergence of poems with new characteristics and distinctive patterns. During the period of Independence, Kazakh society underwent complex cultural, social, politico-economic changes, leading to a fundamental renewal of national consciousness and aesthetic perception. This, in turn, catalyzed a shift in artistic paradigms within literature. While contemporary Kazakh poetry is multifaceted, diverse, and predominantly pluralistic in nature, there is a strong basis to assert that modernist poetics lie at the forefront of various literary explorations. Modernism has enriched Kazakh verse both in content and form, continuously opening new artistic horizons.

Artistic innovation, originating from the creative mastery of poets like Saken, Magzhan, Qasym, Syrba, and Zhumeken, found its continuation in the Independence-era poetry of E. Raushanov, U. Yesdaulet, S. Rakhmetuly, T. Abdiakimuly, S. Aqsungqaruly, B. Qoshym-Nogai, N. Maukenuly, S. Nurzhan, G. Salyqbai, M. Rayymbekuly, A. Balqybek, B. Bedelkhan, T. Yeshen, D. Berikqazhyuly, T. Tolqynqyzy, A. Nurgazy, A. Temirbai, Y. Dabei, A. Yelgezek, Ye. Zhunis, B. Qaragyzyuly, T. Tanzharyq, and others. Furthermore, modernist features are frequently encountered in the poems of young poets such as

U. Zaryqkan, F. Toltay, Ye. Duisen, B. Sarsenkhan, M. Asan, A. Quanishuly, Kh. Yesaman, Sh. Talap, Zh. Baibulanova, R. Aspanyzy, and others. These mentioned poets have brought a unique pattern to Kazakh verse, revitalizing and transforming it in terms of both content and form.

Modernist features in Kazakh poetry possess their own unique contextual and worldview characteristics. While Western modernist literature typically depicts the loneliness and alienation of characters severed from their religious-metaphysical foundations, characters in Kazakh modernist works have generally not fully broken away from traditional religious-spiritual values. On the contrary, modernist elements in Kazakh poetry have become a tool for re-evaluating national spirituality and historical memory, and for revitalizing indigenous metaphysical understandings and cultural codes. Thus, modernism in Kazakh poetry has become a synthesis of national and global artistic traditions.

We do not claim to have covered all modernist features in contemporary Kazakh poetry in our brief analysis. We have conducted a concise discussion and analysis focusing on the most fundamental modernist characteristics.

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