



ETYMOLOGY OF FAMILY CONFLICT IN RUSSIAN AND KAZAKH RUSSIAN-SPEAKING WOMEN'S PROSE: PROBLEMS, POETICS, CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the representation of family conflict in modern literature by Russian and Russian-speaking Kazakh women writers. This study employs content analysis, comparative, and structural methods to analyse novels by U. Tazhikenova, L. Kalas, K. Sarsenova, V. Tokareva, G. Yakhina, and L. Ulitskaya. The study reveals heterogeneity in themes of familial conflict, the context and artistry of portraying family dynamics, and unique authorial representations. A comparative investigation uncovers shared trends and distinguishing characteristics, resulting in the development of a family conflict framework specific to each author's interpretation. A model of family conflict and its variations in women's literary texts is constructed based on these findings. This research provides a basis for subsequent investigations into postmodern and feminist prose, as well as cross-cultural analyses of familial values and tensions in global literature.

KEYWORDS: gender, marital relations, marriage, family bonds, violence.

ETIMOLOGÍA DEL CONFLICTO FAMILIAR EN LA PROSA DE MUJERES RUSAS Y KAZAJAS DE HABLA RUSA: PROBLEMAS, POÉTICA, CONTEXTO

RESUMEN: Este estudio examina la representación del conflicto familiar en la literatura moderna por parte de escritoras rusas y kazajas de habla rusa. Este estudio emplea métodos de análisis de contenido, comparativos y estructurales para analizar novelas de U. Tazhikenova, L. Kalas, K. Sarsenova, V. Tokareva, G. Yakhina y L. Ulitskaya. El estudio revela la heterogeneidad de los temas relacionados con los conflictos familiares, el contexto y el arte de

retratar la dinámica familiar, así como las representaciones únicas de cada autora. Una investigación comparativa encuentra tendencias similares y características únicas, lo que lleva a crear un marco específico para entender el conflicto familiar de cada autora. A partir de estos hallazgos, se construye un modelo de conflicto familiar y sus variaciones en los textos literarios de las mujeres. Esta investigación proporciona una base para investigaciones posteriores sobre la prosa posmoderna y feminista, así como para análisis interculturales de los valores y tensiones familiares en la literatura mundial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: género, relaciones matrimoniales, matrimonio, lazos familiares, violencia.

ÉTYMOLOGIE DU CONFLIT FAMILIAL DANS LA PROSE RUSSE ET KAZAKHE DES FEMMES RUSSOPHONES : PROBLEMES, POETIQUE, CONTEXTE

RÉSUMÉ : Cette étude examine la représentation du conflit familial dans la littérature moderne par des femmes écrivains russes et kazakhes russophones. Cette étude utilise des méthodes d'analyse de contenu, comparatives et structurelles pour analyser les romans de U. Tazhikenova, L. Kalas, K. Sarsenova, V. Tokareva, G. Yakhina et L. Ulitskaya. L'étude révèle une hétérogénéité dans les thèmes des conflits familiaux, le contexte et l'art de dépeindre la dynamique familiale, ainsi que les représentations uniques des auteurs. Une étude comparative met en évidence des tendances communes et des caractéristiques distinctives, ce qui permet d'élaborer un cadre de référence spécifique à l'interprétation de chaque auteur en matière de conflits familiaux. Un modèle de conflit familial et de ses variations dans les textes littéraires féminins est construit sur la base de ces résultats. Cette recherche sert de base à des études ultérieures sur la prose postmoderne et féministe, ainsi qu'à des analyses interculturelles des valeurs et des tensions familiales dans la littérature mondiale.

MOTS-CLÉS : genre, relations conjugales, mariage, liens familiaux, violence.

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1. Introduction

In the modern world, the family is one of the components of a stable basis for human life. This is especially important for women, because despite all the progress in gender policy and feminist movements, women today are still more vulnerable and at risk of violence, and this problem is still relevant. That is why the literature pays so much attention to the theme of love, marriage, family bonds, and problems arising in family life, argue Nurgali and Ananyeva (2021). Despite the presence of elements of

fiction in the plots, literary works still remain a concentrate of collective and individual experience in one or another area of human relationships, the cultivation of spiritual and ethical values. In addition, the relevance of the study of this topic, especially in the context of women's prose, is determined by the need and opportunity to study, maintain, and promote traditional moral and spiritual values, gender culture, and adequate gender policy. Recently, the study of the main trends of Kazakh literature written in both Kazakh and Russian has intensified (Hoff and Barboza, 2025; Naghiyeva, 2025). In particular, the study by the abovementioned researchers is devoted to the investigation of themes, ideas, and images of Russian-language literature in Kazakhstan. The researchers focus on identifying the unique features and trends of Russian-language literature created in Kazakhstan. They investigate in detail the influence of cultural, historical, and social factors on the development of literary themes and images in this context.

The study by Yskakuly and Zhakenbayeva (2022) is devoted to the appearance of women in Kazakh national literature. According to them, during the history of Kazakhstan, social and cultural transformations took place, as a result of which women received more opportunities for self-expression and education. They also address the issue of changes in the literary environment that have led to the emergence of women writers. The issues of gender equality and the representation of women on an equal basis with male writers in Kazakh literature in the historical context are raised. The authors investigated social, economic, political, and cultural processes reflected in the literature and led to a change in the conceptual foundations of the family in the postmodern era. This refers to changes in the structure of the family, the role of its members, and the relationship between them. The researchers analyse which novels reflect these changes, and how various writers perceive and interpret family relationships in the context of postmodernism.

The interpretation of postmodern aesthetics through the prism of the literature of the Korean diaspora was by Safronova and Bekmuratova (2020). The study was based on an analysis of the stages of literature development from anti-Stalinist prose, thaw period literature with a characteristic romanticization of events and to postmodern literature, in particular, feminist literature. The researchers also identified the features of the poetics and worldview of the writers: the intertwining of Christian and Confucian motifs, shamanism and Taoism, the emphasis on the search for national identity, experiencing the pain of loss and maintaining ties with the Motherland.

The paper by Umarova and Dauletbayeva (2021) also considered the display of the dynamics of family relations in the prose of Kazakhstan of the 20th century. According to them, during the Soviet regime, there were tremendous changes in social values, family structure, and the role of women. The transition to independence in

1991 and subsequent economic difficulties also had an impact on the development of family relations. In this context, the researchers examined women's loss and search for their identity in the new reality of independent Kazakhstan, and the reflection of this process in women's prose. The analysis of the reception of the phenomenon of female emancipation in this paper is carried out in the context of comparing Russian and Kazakh prose.

The problem of understanding family values and family conflicts was considered by Mączka (2021) and Javid (2023). In particular, in the study by Mączka, the central place is occupied by the analysis of the position of marriage and family within the framework of modern postmodern discourse. The researcher points to the hedonistic perception of life characteristic of modern youth, the rejection of traditional values, and the development of a culture of individualism. Javid identified the key differences between the understanding of family values in postmodernism. The researcher pointed out that family relations have transformed towards the idea of temporary marriage, and the erasure of the concept of fidelity in monogamous relationships.

The history of gender conflicts was considered by Lawson et al. (2023), in particular, the distribution of gender roles was interpreted as culturally determined and conflict-provoking behaviour. Based on this, the study noted the need to investigate cultural practices and regulatory sanctions. According to Akhter (2020), putting forward the problem of gender inequality in postmodern text is related to the existence of illusions and lack of reflection on family relations in society. Due to the updating of the problematic and approaches to its coverage in postmodern prose, new poetic means are also required. Filippaki (2021) pointed out that, unlike canonical novels, postmodern prose reveals the connection between individual and collective traumatisation.

Thus, despite the available papers by modern scholars in the field of studying the representation in modern literature of the dynamics, establishment, and development of family relations, there is no comprehensive study in the context of the etymology of family conflict and its representation in contemporary women's prose, which determines the relevance of the topic of this paper. The purpose of the study was to analyse a number of artistic works of modern women's Russian and Russian-speaking Kazakh prose from the standpoint of studying the disclosure of the etymology of family conflict in modern literature.

2. Materials and Methods

The most characteristic artistic works of representatives of Kazakh women's prose were selected as the material for this study: "Axis of existence" by U. Tazhikenova (2009), "Hieroglyph of life" by L. Kalas (2019), "Guardians of the path" by K. Sarsenova (2015). For comparative analysis, the novels by representatives of Russian women's prose were used, which reflect the specifics of family relations. In particular, the novels "Flying swing" by V. Tokareva (2015), "Zuleikha opens her eyes" by G. Yakhina (2020), and "Medea and her children" by L. Ulitskaya (2002) were considered, acutely revealing family conflicts.

Comparative, structural, contextual, and analytical-synthetic methods were chosen as the main methods of analysing the typology of family conflicts. To ensure the objectivity of the research, a multidimensional analysis technique was used, based on various research methods, including axiological and cultural approaches to the analysis of artistic narrative samples. Contextual analysis in this study was used to investigate the socio-historical prerequisites of intergenerational conflict, gender conflict, and intrapersonal conflict. Based on the analysed contexts, a genealogy of family conflicts realised in prose postmodernist works representing women's prose was deduced.

The comparative method in this study identified common features and differences in describing the development and dynamics of family conflict in the works of various authors, and identify similarities and differences in the reproduction of the etymology of family conflict in Russian and Russian-speaking Kazakh women's prose. The structural method in this study helped to identify the constituent elements of the poetics of family conflict on the example of Russian and Russian-speaking Kazakh women's prose and to develop a general model of the conflict of family relations in the context of studying the poetics, issues, and context of each work. Based on the structural method, the typology of families represented in Russian and Russian-language Kazakh prose was revealed, among which the following were identified: "ideal family", "in search of a family", "transformed family".

Using the analytical and synthetic method, the key problems existing in literary studies in the aspect of depicting family values and approaches to the analysis of family conflicts were considered. The problems related to the interpretation of women's prose, the poetics of postmodern text, and transformations in the perception of gender roles were also investigated.

3. Results

At this stage of the development of Kazakh society, profound social and cultural changes can be observed. The issues of national identity, origin, and destiny of a person in the context of history occupy an increasingly prominent place in the minds of modern authors of Kazakh women's prose. Attempts are being made to re-evaluate and reconstruct historical facts, deal with the recent Soviet past, and even build alternative versions of reality. The typology of family relations in Kazakh and Russian literature reflects the diversity of worldviews on this topic. Based on the comparative typological analysis of Russian and Russian-speaking women's prose, three different types of family can be distinguished, which reflect the problems of family conflicts.

The type of ideal family is demonstrated in the novels "Axis of existence" by Tazhikenova (2009) and "Medea and her children" by Ulitskaya (2002). The authors claim that true peace and happiness can be achieved only within the family. This family relationship is represented both horizontally and vertically. Authors endeavour to convey bigger cultural or historical realities through personal family narratives. Ulitskaya portrays Medea as the emblematic core of a vast family network, maintaining unity and memory over generations despite geographical separation. The metaphor of Medea as a central axis around which broken family ties rotate establishes familial continuity as a foundation for ontological stability. For example, Ulitskaya uses the centralising image of Medea to build all the storylines related to the brothers and sisters of the main character, whom she had to raise after her mother's death: "Many years later, the childless Medea gathered numerous nephews and great-nephews in her house in the Crimea, conducted her quiet unscientific observation of them". Despite the fact that the relatives were far from their land (Anelia married a Georgian, Natasha married a Korean, and Nika married an Italian), the connection with the family was preserved thanks to Medea. The novel also focuses on the common genetic characteristics of Kharlampiy's offspring: Medea "... more than once in her life, she amused herself by lining up her brothers and sisters in a row according to the degree of redness of their hair, of course, in imagination...".

The novel by Tazhikenova (2009) is about the main character Azhar, who, in the role of a writer, tries to explore her genealogical connections, in particular, through the prism of preserving national culture: "One might wonder, what thoughts can visit you at the old cemetery? Only the sad ones, about the frailty of life. But no! This land gave her strength, energy... Everything touched her here. Her ancestors roamed these places". It similarly presents a Kazakh-specific conceptualisation of the ideal family, anchoring individual identity in ancestral and national heritage. The title of the work serves as a metaphorical representation of the family's pivotal role in individual and cultural orientation. Azhar's exploration of the past, traversing graves and

genealogical memories, signifies a deliberate endeavour to re-establish a spiritual and ethical framework grounded in familial connections. The ideal family may experience difficulties (Kieliszek, 2024a). Nevertheless, it serves as a rehabilitative and moral foundation (Lashkul and Timofeev, 2021). The focus on vertical connections, among generations and with the land, establishes the family as a source of existential coherence and historical continuity amid Soviet and post-Soviet disruptions. Unlike Ulitskaya's focus on emotional support across different cultures, Tazhikenova's approach to family combines memories from colonial times and the passing down of culture, showing the family as a centre for resisting change and keeping identity alive.

The second type can be designated "in search of a family" based on the study of the works of Sarsenova (2015) and Yakhina (2019). These works depict the path of the establishment of family, when various problems are described, the solution of which leads to family happiness or indicates the direction to it. The family, while maintaining its central role in the life of the characters, is undergoing significant changes due to shifts in the spiritual and moral foundations of the family in the surrounding reality.

For example, in the novel "Zuleikha opens her eyes" by Yakhina (2019), the conflict between Zuleikha herself and her mother-in-law Ubyrly karchyk, whom the main character nicknamed the Ghoul, is illustrative. Thus, from the first pages of the novel, the author makes it clear to the reader that relations in this family are tense, which can be confirmed by the following quotes: "Thank God, the mother-in-law does not live with them in the same hut", "Zuleikha was supposed to knock her feet on the floor in front of the door for a long time and loudly so that the old woman was ready for her arrival", "Come on, Zuleikha, you wet chicken, hurry up", "One can die like that, waiting for you to heat up the bathhouse" (addressing the daughter-in-law). In "Guardians of the path" by Sarsenova (2015), the salvation of the main character Meruert after an accident is the revival of memories of her family, the necessity of which the mystical Shalkar informs her: "When a person loses memory, it takes time to restore it. It's like you've lost the movie of your life among other movies... Sometimes, when we return to memory, we remember the details of the fate of other people...".

The type of transformed family is characteristic of the considered works: "Hieroglyph of life" by Kalaus (2019) and "Flying swing" by Tokareva (2015). It shows a modified world of a family in which children perform the functions of adults, where a seemingly prosperous family life is the cause of intrapersonal conflict, where expectations run counter to the existing reality. And in these conditions, family conflicts often become insoluble, frozen, or fatal. For example, the story by Tokareva describes the complex relationship between husband and wife, who have long since lost love and mutual understanding, only everyday life remains, but no one dares to

break these family ties. This is evidenced by the following quotes: “Our relationship with my wife, oddly enough, was strong not by common gains, but by common losses”, “Because of my wife, I did not leave six years ago to the call of love and still regret it”, “When I am in the same room with my wife It seems to me that I am slowly going down the stairs to the basement with sprouted potatoes”.

The short story “The fallen coffin” in the collection “Hieroglyph of life” by Kalaus (2019) is about “soulless parents” who forgot their child at the airport, which is why the main character has to perform the functions of an adult. At the same time, she feels incomprehension on the part of her family and emptiness: “It seemed to me that I was buried alive in a cursed coat, and I will continue to roll through life like in a coffin on wheels, and no matter how much you scream, no one will hear you anyway...”. The world of Kalaus is imbued with the feeling of a lost childhood, when the main symbol of a “prosperous Soviet family” becomes “the missing element of the puzzle ... – a set of colourful wine glasses with enamel roses on the sides”. The main problem in the works of representatives of Russian and Kazakh prose is the conflict of generations, and not only in the context of “fathers and children” (although this aspect is certainly present). The conflict of generations is also expressed in the gap in the perception of the reality of family foundations, even among representatives of the same generation, moreover, even in the behaviour of the same hero. This conflict is best depicted in the work “Axis of existence” by Tazhikenova (2009), in which family vertical ties (the connection of generations) significantly prevail over horizontal ones (the connection between the family of husband and wife). In particular, Azhar, the main character, is engaged in writing a book about her family and her descendants, including Bijan, Beken, Altynai, Nursula with children, Aiziba. The novel indicates the main historical events that her relatives experienced: “the fear of confiscation and arrests, the label of bai’s wife and children, the famine of the 1930s, the post-war devastation with cards for 200 grams of black bread per person, long years of need, oblivion, and prohibition of everything...”.

The novel “Zuleikha opens her eyes” by Yakhina (2019), generational conflict, in addition to reflection in the interaction of mother-in-law / daughter-in-law (“Your family is ending, thin-boned, degenerating. It is right: a rotten root should rot, and a healthy one should live” – the mother-in-law’s remark about the daughter-in-law), is demonstrated in the different attitudes of mothers to sons. If the Ghoul tries to bind her son to herself by spatial proximity (they live next to each other in a house “in two huts, connected by a common hallway”), sweet words (“You are the strongest, Murtaza. No one can defeat you, break you” – the mother-in-law’s remark about her beloved son Murtaza), then Zuleikha gives her son the right to free choice. And although it is hard and scary for a woman to let go of her only child, she understands

that this is his only chance for a happy life, so she pushes her son away from her (“Yusuf stretches out his arms, wants to hug goodbye – she puts her palms forward: don’t come near!”), when it hurts so much (“Clenches teeth – holds the pain so that it doesn’t spill out”).

An interesting interpretation is the conflict of generations in “Hieroglyph of life” by Kalaus (2019), in which it is bluntly declared as a conflict between fathers and children. The specificity is that the role of parents is often performed by children, and children are often more intelligent and understanding than adults. Moreover, the conflict of generations is shown in a grotesque, sarcastic, hyperbolised form: “It was impossible for me alone to retrieve the necessary book from the Mariana Trench of the mezzanine, and the rest of the family didn’t care about my literary problems”, “...a rather ridiculous flat rented by our rather ridiculous family”, “Once again the family is quiet and graceful, and I didn’t even bother to take off my headphones”, “The vigilant family surrounds me and starts exhorting me”.

Gender conflict also occupies an important place in the problems of family conflicts in women’s prose (Balalaieva, 2020; Kieliszek, 2022). In fact, this is the eternal struggle of the sexes, which is superimposed on family and social roles, the influence of external factors, time and place of events. The following can be noted here: representatives of Kazakh literature are inclined to the traditional interpretation of the role of women in the family. The wife is the keeper of the hearth, both literally and figuratively. She must fulfil her traditional social tasks, first of all, to be a mother. For example, in the interpretation of Tazhikenova (2009), an absence of children in a woman is the greatest tragedy, moreover, it leads to death, which can be seen in the example of Kaldygul: “She did not have her own children, she had an adopted nephew. Maybe this misfortune has made its mark, did not allow her to reveal herself”.

The gender conflict is also quite clearly visible in the work of Kalaus (2019), but for the most part, it is displayed in an unconventional perception for the Kazakh culture. In the interpretation of the writer, the bride price and the payment of the kalym are considered as a manifestation of gender inequality. The author’s attitude to these traditions is extremely negative: “I am convinced: no mother in her right mind would wish her child the fate of being stolen by a stranger, forcibly brought to someone else’s house and given as a wife to someone unknown”. Kalaus (2019) draws attention to semantic (“Agree, there is a difference between the expressions “stole the bride” and “stole the man”) and cultural aspects (“The wildness of tradition cannot be justified by its antiquity and the authority of the ancestors”). It is important that the collection of Kalaus also highlights the problem of domestic violence: “Women are stolen, raped, sold and bought, their eyes are gouged out, they are strangled and cut”. The dominance of men in Kazakh society is shown in an ironic way: “We have a rigidly

patriarchal family life. My husband is formidable, and we come in front of him in the twinkling of an eye. I hand over my salary to the common pot, bow down and dutifully cook lunches and dinners... He also manages the family budget and keeps a sharp eye on the antics of the household”.

It should also be noted that Tokareva (2015) gives an unconventional interpretation of the gender type of family conflict, in whom this conflict grows and sublimates into an intrapersonal conflict – a conflict of expectations. In the story “We need communication” in “Flying swing” by Tokareva, the main character and his wife Klava, living in a marriage that burdens both, try to understand their feelings and emotions. On the one hand, marriage is felt “like a victim to whom the executioner has come”, and on the other hand, divorce gives “complete freedom under the name: loneliness”, but does not give the desired happiness. In the novel “Medea and her children” by Ulitskaya (2002), the generational conflict (sister-mother-daughter) is degenerating into a gender conflict, namely, competition for one man. The main character learns of her husband Samuel's betrayal with Medea's younger sister only after his death. “Kindred and secret offence” is presented in the text through the medium of gradation: Medea Sinopli experiences insult and then feels forgiveness. The conflict of generations can also be traced in the novel “Zuleikha opens her eyes” by Yakhina (2019). The main characteristic of this conflict is the confrontation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, which is expressed in insults: “One word: chicken... and your life is chicken...” and even threats from mother-in-law: “You will die soon, you saw in a dream”. In this context, in addition to the conflict of generations, there is also a conflict of genera: male (Ghoul) and female (Zuleikha).

The conflict of childbirth is most typical for Tazhikenova (2009) and Yakhina (2019), albeit its essence and ramifications vary in culturally meaningful ways. The novel by U. Tazhikenova, this conflict acts more as a background to the action and is not particularly pointed, but in the novel by Yakhina, this type of conflict is almost the basis of all subsequent conflicts. It is transformed into a generational conflict (the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law), then into a gender conflict (the relationship between husband and wife, the negative attitude towards a woman in the family on the part of the mother-in-law and, in contrast, the positive attitude of the mother-in-law to her own son). The mother-in-law is constantly present in the novel and in one way or another gives an assessment of the thoughts and actions of the main character: “You are always silent, mute...”, “Neither height nor face turned out”. The novel also depicts episodes of domestic violence: “Murtaza throws a broom. The stick painfully hits Zuleikha in the shoulder, the sheepskin coat falls to the floor”, “And begins to hit her”, and gender inequality: “I was taught to wash floors on my knees from childhood”, “Don't talk, woman”.

Simultaneously, in the “Axis of existence”, the conflict over childbirth is embodied by the figure Kaldygul, whose biological infertility leads to her symbolic marginalisation within the familial framework. Despite adopting a nephew, this replacement does not restore her complete social and emotional validity in the perception of others, highlighting the cultural primacy of motherhood in traditional Kazakh society. Her emotional detachment and tragic fate are narratively connected to her unfulfilled maternal duty, which constrains her relational intimacy and reduces her involvement in significant family interactions. In contrast to Yakhina’s (2019) story, which manifests conflict through overt confrontation, Tazhikenova (2009) depicts a muted and internalised anguish that impacts Kaldygul’s self-worth and engenders a nuanced alienation from other characters. As a result, the issue of childbirth here isn't obvious or dramatic but is instead tied to the societal pressures and unspoken rules about women's roles in having children, affecting relationships through what is left unsaid, distance, and quiet sadness.

The problems of intrapersonal conflict within the framework of family themes are interestingly spelled out in the collection of short stories by Tokareva (2015). This type of conflict most often acts as a conflict of unjustified expectations: from family life, a partner, a love relationship, for example, about the unfulfilled relationship between Ignatij and Larisa. Larisa still does not find the strength to confess her love to her teacher, but she is pleased with the assumption that Ignatij will never marry: “Can you imagine? What a blessing! Now no one will get him, and I will love him even more!” The intrapersonal conflict in this case consists in the fact that the main character either declares a “war of the sexes” to her beloved, or is ready to abandon him. The strengths of V. Tokareva’s creativity lie not only in her ability to portray conflicts, but also in her in-depth exploration of the underlying psychology and her careful study of the origins and consequences of conflicts. The author convincingly and psychologically truthfully conveys that conflict is not the root cause, but a manifestation of internal and external anxiety. The resolution of these conflicts rarely leads to significant changes in the destinies of her characters: for example, the hero of the story “We need communication” after the divorce does not feel relief, although this was his main desire.

The novel by Tazhikenova (2009) also contains intrapersonal conflict. It can be traced by the example of the image of Kalbibibi, who, working away from children and family, has to put up with the fact that her traditional role of a wife-keeper of the hearth has been replaced by the role of a breadwinner husband: “Kalbibibi also worked alone in the family, went home to Taraz once every two months, took money. My mother-in-law, my husband and five school children lived on that money for a whole month, they say the prices there are not as high as in Almaty”. In addition, this

storyline demonstrates the modification of the problems of family conflict: from gender (Kalbibibi is the only breadwinner in the family) to intrapersonal (dissatisfaction with her life, a sense of injustice).

In the literature under study, a wide variety of means are used to convey family conflicts. The titles of novels and collections of short stories themselves use artistic means that are important for revealing the idea of a work. For example, the name “Axis of existence” by Tazhikenova (2009) laid down a metaphor that points to the importance of family ties, the central role of family and kin in the life of any person. The novel “Zuleikha opens her eyes” by Yakhina (2019) uses a phraseological phrase with metaphorical content, indicating the transformation of a woman and her role in society. Metaphorisation and mythologisation can be traced in the title of the novel “Medea and her children” by Ulitskaya (2002). The image of Medea, who unites the family and protects all its members, is presented in this novel in contrast to the ancient Medea, who betrayed her family and killed her children for the sake of a man.

The reception of carnivalisation by Kalaus (2019), as noted by Safronova and Zhanysbekova (2022), is used to deconstruct family stereotypes deeply rooted in Kazakh society, challenging ideas about unquestioning duty to parents, unshakeable respect for elders, automatic rejection of critical consideration of established cultural traditions and family myths, which can be traced, among other things, by the example of the collection of short stories “Hieroglyph of life”. Playful and ironic elements allow the writer to boldly and comprehensively explore the demythologisation of the relationship between parents and children.

In the novel “Guardians of the path” by Sarsenova (2015) in the transmission of family conflict, in particular, the conflict of generations, mystical, fantasy images are used (the character Shalkar, thanks to whom the main character Meruert survives and who is her guide between the world of the living and the dead). According to Zholshaeva and Mambetov (2022), the narrative is characterised by dynamic plot and genre diversity, incorporating elements of fiction, fragments of philosophical prose, mystical motifs. The writer skilfully relies on the literary traditions of Russian and Kazakh prose, resulting in a unique fusion of these two cultural influences. Tokareva (2015) tends to use life-like, realistic poetics with clear portrait characteristics and psychological details. Notably, with the advent of the period of independence, the literature of Kazakhstan has also changed. The development of paradigmatic and conceptual transformations in Kazakh fiction over the past twenty to thirty years is primarily associated with a fundamental change in socio-historical reality, the acquisition of genuine creative freedom by artists of the word, and the involvement of national literature in the world literary process (Doszhan, 2023; Panchenko, 2016).

This process could not but affect the representation of family relationships, in particular family conflicts, in literature.

At the family level, deep transformations are taking place in modern society, especially in the postmodern era (Gonçalves, 2024; Shershova and Chaika, 2024). When discussing the concept of family in the postmodern era, the term “nuclear family” is used. A nuclear family is characterised by a family or partnership consisting of parents and children or only spouses. In this structure, the focus shifts to the relationship between spouses, who usually belong to the same generation, rather than the relationship between people of different generations, for example, parents and children. Understanding the prevalence of nuclear families is crucial for understanding the depth of changes not only in Kazakh society, but also around the world. The concept of the nuclear family contrasts with traditional and patriarchal family models, noting the evolutionary (or involutional) trajectory of the evolution of the family unit (Kieliszek, 2024b; Shynkaruk, 2024). Examples of nuclear families can be found in the prose “Hieroglyph of life” by Kalas (2019) and “Flying swing” by Tokareva (2015).

The depiction of familial discord in Kazakh women's literature is significantly shaped by the nuanced and widespread impact of traditional Kazakh cultural codes, which frequently diverge from Russian or Western narrative conventions (Efremov, 2025; Jiao, 2024). The cultural specificities, such as the valorisation of ancestral memory, the symbolic significance of land and kin, the persistence of patriarchal rituals (e.g., bride kidnapping, *kalym*), and the function of extended multigenerational households, impact both the structure and thematic content of the texts. In “Axis of existence”, Tazhikenova's (2009) depiction of genealogical memory is intrinsically linked to Kazakh concepts of *zhety ata* (seven ancestral generations), which delineate moral and social bounds within family frameworks. Kalas's (2019) critical portrayal of oppressive traditions in “Hieroglyph of life” highlights a conflict between contemporary values and entrenched customs, revealing inconsistencies between national heritage and gender equity. The incorporation of these cultural nuances into the analysis facilitates a more accurate comprehension of the particularities of Kazakh family conflict, viewing it not solely as a byproduct of post-Soviet transformation or global feminist discourse, but as a phenomenon intertwined with the negotiation of modernity and tradition. Thus, Kazakh women's prose should be examined not only from a gender perspective but also through the multifaceted lenses of cultural continuity, historical trauma, and the development of national identity.

It is worth noting that both Russian and Kazakh women's prose at the present stage have similar trends and quite often overlap with each other. This indicates that family values, family experiences, family conflicts, by and large, have no nationality,

since the family is an international concept, and accordingly its problems, its conflicts are also international in nature. However, family values, family relations, and, accordingly, family conflicts described in modern Kazakh prose are inextricably linked with myths and mythological motifs, both characteristic of the traditional culture of Kazakhstan and borrowed from the global cultural heritage, which in one capacity or another, in one form or another, they convey the essence and the reason for the family vicissitudes of the characters.

This study employs a multi-faceted interpretive framework to elucidate the poetics of familial discord in the chosen works, focusing on narrative structure, symbolic motifs, language expressiveness, and genre-specific norms. Ulitskaya's "Medea and her children" uses a metaphorical centre, represented by the titular heroine, as a literary device to articulate familial resilience by interlacing memory, geography, and emotional inheritance into a unified axis of meaning. Yakhina's employment of grotesque maternal characters and spatial symbolism (e.g., "two huts connected by a hallway") in "Zuleikha opens her eyes" highlights oppression and resilience, situating family conflict within both actual and metaphorical structures.

Kazakh literature, exemplified by Tazhikenova's "Axis of existence", exhibits profound intertextuality, intertwining genealogical recovery, memory landscapes, and postcolonial fears to create a culturally contextualised depiction of familial fractures. The socio-cultural context, post-Soviet change, persistent patriarchal norms, and national memory politics function not just as a backdrop but as a fundamental force influencing the artistic structure and thematic richness of conflict. The authors' use of irony, intergenerational discourse, fragmented chronology, and mythopoetic references illustrates significant societal changes, such as the destabilisation of traditional authority, the feminist reclamation of voice, and the reassessment of maternal ancestry. The poetics of conflict serve as both literary approaches and culturally significant instruments that facilitate the portrayal of changing family relations within historically charged contexts.

4. Discussion

Based on the findings, most of the studied works of Russian and Russian-language Kazakh prose demonstrated the prevalence of the following family conflicts: generational conflict and gender conflict, followed by the conflict of childbirth, intrapersonal conflict is less common. The conflict of generations, described in the novel "Axis of existence" by Tazhikenova (2009), is revealed in the dominance of generational ties. In "Zuleikha opens her eyes" by Yakhina (2019), it is interpreted through the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. And in

“Hieroglyph of life” by Kalaus (2019) – through the ironic and grotesque perception of the relationship between parents and their children.

Gender conflict manifests itself through the rejection of traditional values on the example of the novel by Kalaus (2019), and through focusing on domestic violence on the example of the novel by Yakhina (2019). The conflict of childbirth (the relationship between the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law) is clearly expressed in the novel by Yakhina. Intrapersonal conflict is characteristic of the collection of short stories “Flying swing” by Tokareva (2015) and realised through unjustified expectations in love, finding a partner or family life. Based on the analysed texts, it can be concluded that most family conflicts are feminocentric, that is, their interpretation is voiced from the women’s perspective. This can be seen by the example of the structure of the texts and the main characters: in the novel by Yakhina, the situation of family conflict is presented through the prism of Zuleikha’s experiences; in the novel by Tazhikenova (2009), Azhar is a key character studying the history of his family; Medea in the novel “Medea and her children” by Ulitskaya (2002) becomes a centralising character, through which family ties are maintained. Female characters are active: they are trying to change the course of history or their lives, defending their own rights.

Women’s literature and feminist criticism are an important part of the literary process of recent decades and, accordingly, the object of active research by scientists. Minati (2018) notes that the gender feminist worldview formed in the wake of the struggle for the emancipation of women at the end of the 20th century manifests itself as a social, philosophical, human rights, as an aesthetic revision of logocentrism, that is, male worldview and thinking. With the beginning of the postmodern era, women writers began to develop their own writing style, to revise cultural stereotypes. Women have created their own type of mass novel (feminine, glamorous), which has expressive genre and style features, and have chosen their themes and problems in prose. However, women’s creativity has its own characteristics, which are not always positively reflected in criticism. There are also statements about the “abuse” of gender issues and the question arises whether new opportunities are needed not only for theorists. An example is the gender aspect: is it just a trendy hobby of scientists filling voids to express their voice, or is it an inherent need stemming from current trends in society (Yakhina, 2019).

An important example of the classification of women’s prose is given by King (1981). The main characteristic of this classification is the consideration of some differences at the ideological and thematic level and the artistic and aesthetic originality of the texts, which allows distinguishing three types of women’s prose: feminocentric, androgynous, and quasi. The author of the classification notes that the

division into groups is conditional and depends on many factors such as chronotope, modality, and idea. Of the texts considered, the works of Kalaus (2019) can be placed in the paradigm of feminocentric prose, as the author constantly refers to gender issues, defending women's rights and explicitly demonstrating her position regarding the protection of women from domestic violence. The feminocentric type of prose is also demonstrated in the novel by Tazhikenova (2009), which shows the reconstruction of historical memory through the prism of a woman's reading of the history of her kind, and in the novel by Ulitskaya (2002), in which the image of Medea is pivotal and compositionally organises the space around family values. It should be added that in women's prose, the defining thing is that it illuminates women's experiences, worries, and views through the prism of female identity. She creates a special literary space where attention is focused on the realities of life, problems and joys of women. Therefore, the purpose of women's prose is to highlight women's experiences, views, and problems in literary works, which is an important ideological layer in the diversity of prose topics. It should be agreed with the researchers that women's prose plays an important role in literature and society, contributing to the expression of women's experiences and problems, contributing to the development of gender equality.

Researchers note another important fact, which is that the depiction of female characters in literature, not only in Kazakh, but throughout the world, historically depicted women as dependent personalities, while men played a dominant role both in the family and in society. This was confirmed by Wałęcka-Matyja and Banach (2023). This view reinforces the idea that men occupy a higher and more significant place in society, while women are constantly portrayed as having lower and more dependent roles. The concept of "a woman's place at the family hearth" has played a significant role in literary studies and has significantly influenced public consciousness. Despite the feminist movements that originated in the early 20th century and the desire to create an image of an independent "new woman", social norms have long limited women to gender roles focused on housework and maintaining cleanliness and comfort. In addition, Wałęcka-Matyja and Banach argues that in the context of these gender stereotypes, the term "Cinderella complex" has appeared in literature. This concept was rooted in the idea of tenderness or femininity. It was assumed that a woman should be beautiful, polite, well-mannered, hardworking, and elegant, but dependent on a man, since she is not able to solve her problems on her own. The idea that women's emotions depend on men became widespread in literature and cinema in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. According to the researchers, the fact that most of the writers of the last century were men contributed to the one-sided and distorted portrayal of women in literature. It is this reality, according to the author of this study, that influenced the preservation of

the stereotypes mentioned earlier. In continuation of the study by King (1981), this study focuses on the fact that throughout history, the creation of the image of a woman in literature has often been based on the author's personal experience or reflected well-established misconceptions and social stereotypes.

In addition, Arslan and Özyürek (2023) note that in the works of male writers, the image of a woman was often mixed with the image of a mother, sister or housewife. The depiction of female characters and their fates often follows a logical pattern, with a woman being defined as the mother of a family responsible for the birth of children, whereas in the view of male writers, the fullness of her character is often realised when she marries and devotes her life to serving a man. Meanwhile, the man continues to engage in his personal development. This model highlights the need for a more diverse and inclusive approach to literature and storytelling that reflects the multifaceted roles and potential of women in society. Modern women's prose also often traditionally interprets the role of a woman in the family, moreover, depending on her role, it provides an opportunity to identify varieties of family relationships. Thus, in modern Kazakh women's prose, the topic of family conflicts is given great attention. However, when researchers investigated this issue, the main focus was mainly on traditional values and gender roles. However, it is impossible not to agree with Karolak (2013) that in modern conditions the family as an institution has undergone significant changes both in social and economic terms, which cannot but be reflected in intra-family relations.

Elsinbawi and Wolosin (2023) noted that the main gender stereotypes at the present stage of social development relate to the following categories: "family and children", "marriage", "equality and employment of women". That is why, according to Priyashantha et al. (2023), in modern Kazakh women's prose, among the troubles in family relations, the generational conflict comes to the fore, reflecting the difference in worldviews and the clash of traditions with modern conditions, and which as a result generates a gender conflict caused by reassessment, rethinking the place, role, and importance of women in the family, the conflict of childbirth caused by the inability to accept the traditions of the foundations and worldview of another clan and the intrapersonal conflict caused by the dissonance of the outside world and inner self-perception.

Thus, family conflicts are constantly being transformed due to social changes: for example, gender conflicts have become much more often studied and covered not only in scientific literature, but also through literary texts. Changes in the interpretation of family conflicts in literature are also directly related to postmodern influence. In modern scientific practice, issues related to the study of feminist prose, the institution of the family, and the interpretation of gender aspects have been considered.

5. Conclusions

In the course of the study, it was found that in the literary works of Kazakh writers, the family is often depicted as a dynamic whole in constant search of harmony. These images reveal the problems that arise from the lack of mutual understanding between family members, the breakdown of intergenerational ties and shifts in moral boundaries, and all this can negatively affect the well-being of the family. Nevertheless, the writers emphasise that the resources of the family as a community bound by blood and shared values and common traditions have not been exhausted. These stories highlight the resilience of the family and its ability to overcome crises while maintaining foresight.

Despite the fact that at the present time the family as an institution has undergone significant changes due to historical, social, and economic reasons, in the narratives of Kazakh women writers the life deprived of family, which has become the usual way of existence for many modern people, is portrayed as gloomy, vicious and, ultimately, morally questionable. This opinion applies both to the individual and to society as a whole. This highlights the enduring importance of the family as a fundamental social unit and a source of support and self-realisation in a rapidly changing world.

As a prospect for further research, comparative analyses of the quantitative and qualitative distribution of family conflicts in works of Russian-language Kazakh and Russian women's prose can be identified according to the typology proposed in this paper.

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