

Rewriting the Nation in
Modern Kazakh Literature

Elites and Narratives

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In the living memory of Gerold Karlovich Belger and my grandma
Ibragimova Ruqiya Khasanovna

I dedicate this book to the two greatest teachers I was blessed to have in my life, to the living memory of literary genius Gerold Belger, and to my beloved grandmother Ruqiya. They both inspired me in many ways to search, learn and write about literature and culture. This book was inspired by Gera-aga and his great Knowledge about Kazakh Culture. To my grandma I owe my curiosity, numerous languages, longest talks on “identity” and my true “Central Eurasianism” from Kashgar to Fergana Valley to Jetysu.

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Introduction

Our [Kazakh] culture today is going through a renaissance, but in many respects also a birth. In culture we are today living through both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the same time. Precisely for this reason, the mission of the Kazakh writer differs significantly, in scope and in direction, from tasks that face the Russian writer. We have to be enlighteners, illuminators, and even something of luminaries.

To take an example, our historiography was poor. But we, Kazakh men of letters wrote historical novels and verses, rummaged around in archives, trying at least in this way to prod our historians, to give them some direction where to look, show them the areas they should study. Essentially, the immense period prior to the twentieth century in the life of my republic remained without supervision or systematization. I spent twenty years on historiography, which I considered absolutely essential for the normal functioning of the body that is contemporary culture.

Some scholars tried to persuade me that our past was the pitch darkness of barbarism. But I wanted to find such men of encyclopedic stature as Al-Farabi in my past. I know that the relations of my people with other peoples were formed not only on the level of crude actions, but also on a cultural and humanistic plane. This knowledge is extremely necessary to us today, when our life is unthinkable without such fruitful cooperation and interaction with all peoples inhabiting this earth.

—Olzhas Suleimenov (1981)

If we want to understand the cultural transformation and the development of modern nation and national narratives in Kazakhstan, the main focus of our studies should be directed toward the processes of literary canons creation. There the narrative on the nation was written and rewritten both sporadically and systematically throughout its development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Such argument develops from the experiences and tremendous transformations of the *men of letters* in modern Kazakhstan. Olzhas

Suleimenov, a famous contemporary Kazakh writer, pointed out that the search for truth about the past, the pressing need to rediscover the Kazakh past occupied minds of indigenous intellectuals for decades. They tirelessly explored archives and cultural texts hidden away by the official propaganda and wrote hundreds of books in Russian and Kazakh languages for “this knowledge” was “extremely necessary” for them to both form the ideas of who they are as a nation and as writers. This pressing issue remains crucial in contemporary Kazakhstan until present day.

The search for the authentic history and the truth about the nation developed in the Kazakh literature and reflected on the transformation of the cultural production and modern society in Kazakhstan throughout the twentieth century and its most turbulent period of Soviet experience. It is not surprising then that literature in modern Kazakhstan was interwoven with dilemmas of nation-building and finding and establishing the national identity of the country. It is also not surprising that extended elitist networks and inner intellectual disputes and competition largely contributed to the development of these nationalist narratives, which were then appropriated by the state and its ideological projects after the 1991 independence. Intellectuals were the first tireless “writers of the nation” whose imaginative and extensive intellectual labor changed the perception of national categories and Soviet and post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

This book traces and analyzes these developments in the thematic rather than chronological order. The focus is on narratives and discourses of the nation in literature as well as on the ways these were produced over time and incorporated into the socio-political and cultural spheres of modern Kazakhstan. This approach will allow us to see how the concept of nation emerged in Kazakhstan and what consequences this development brought to the society and culture at the time and nowadays, in its most recent independent development. The explanation of multifaceted modernity—“the institutional characteristics of modern society and the life conditions created by them” (Thompson 1995:2), the idea of the progress and order in pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet periods lays in our understanding of cultural processes, which led to its unraveling.

The shortfall in current Western and Kazakhstani scholarship on Kazakh nation-building that lacks a coherent research agenda on local Kazakh and Kazakh Soviet literature, and its influence on nation-building in Soviet and post-Soviet Kazakhstan is thus staggering. This does not mean that discussion on literature and literary production importance are not mentioned in the studies of Soviet and post-Soviet transformations in Kazakhstan. However, such discussions lack an important historical and cultural analysis and interpretation of texts, processes of cultural production and contexts in which these were produced. Many of such studies are useful for our understanding of the overall historical processes and most of these studies mention both the

importance of the rapid “print capitalism” development in Soviet Kazakhstan and the Literary Revolution brought about by these changes. Shirin Akiner’s seminal analysis of the history of Kazakhs (1995), for example, is particularly useful in focusing on the issue of tremendous shift in publishing local texts in the 1950s. The study mentions the works of the main founding fathers of post-war Kazakh literature such as Mukhtar Auezov. Svanberg (1990) also mentions the demand of noted Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov for a history of Kazakhs. The importance of Olzhas Suleimenov’s oeuvre probably received the most attention in the study of Kazakh literature (Abazov 2011; Caffee 2013; Ram 2001). Sabol (2003) acknowledges the importance of the intelligentsia on the formation of ideas “in shaping the national identity” (2003, 152). However, these conclusions require deeper consideration of how modern Kazakh literature developed and how it influenced social and cultural life in Kazakhstan.¹

Seminal studies by Thomas Winner (1958) and Edward Allworth (1965, 1989, 1994) provide more of the critical analysis of Central Asian literature as a whole of the early twentieth-century period by focusing on literary analysis. We also learn about such noted Kazakh writers and poets as Ilyas Yessenberlin, Anuar Alimzhanov, Olzhas Suleimenov, and others from Martha Brill Olcott’s historical overview *Kazakhs* (1995). Kazakh literary texts provide rich material and expose numerous talents, affluent bilingual literature, and ever-changing artistic canons. Furthermore, the outburst of “print capitalism” and indigenous cultural production in modern Kazakhstan elevated national sentiments. However, even though this important aspect of Kazakh literature became the focus of numerous academic discussions (Abdiga-liev 2003, 2007; Dadabayeva and Sharipova 2015; Gali 2004; Karin and Chebortarev 2006; Kendirbayeva 1999; Kshibekov 2007; Kudaibergenova 2013; Rottier 2004; Sarsenbayev 1999) there is still a significant gap² in understanding these complex processes.

What lacks in this overall discussion on identity, nation, and cultural production in modern Kazakhstan is the comprehensive and critical overview of the processes that led to the transformation of modernity and literature in Kazakhstan in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. There is still a gap in our understanding of the complex links and developments of the nexus between national idea formation, cultural and social development of the Kazakh society past Russian colonization, under the Soviet rule and finally during the Soviet Union collapse in the late 1980s and early 1990s. All these processes contributed to the development of a unique literary tradition and cultural transformation that continue influencing country’s national development until present. There is a need to re-evaluate this influence, trace the inception of literary canons and intertwine this analysis with the historical conceptualization of modernity in Kazakhstan. Three analytical frameworks

are crucial in this analysis—the conceptual study of modernity, sociology of literature, and methodological approach of depth-hermeneutics.

ON MODERNITY, SOVIET MODERNIZATION, AND CULTURE

The landscapes and inscapes of modernity in Kazakhstan are multifaceted and important for the consideration of the national and social developments it brought. Colonial modernization demanded ordering and authoritative control over the territories that nomads imagined as fluid and borderless (discussed in chapters 4 and 5). The Soviet cultural transformation swept away the presumably backward nomadic lifestyle and brought Soviet-styled modernization to the local imagination building cities and factories, new lifestyles of mass educated and literate population. The consequences of these rapid developments brought together a system of order and organization of mass print publishing and mass readership in Kazakhstan. The Soviet Kazakh publishing industry was developing in geometric progression with 5.7 million books published in 1940, 15.8 in 1960, and more than 27 million in the 1980s. The Soviet publishing industry was mainly bilingual (Russian and Kazakh) with a great amount of translation from English, French, German, Russian to Kazakh language and Kazakh literature to Russian language as well as translations of works written in minority languages, for example, Uygur.

The rapid development of mass publishing and translation of books multiplied by the growing literacy levels made Soviet Kazakhstan not only into the nation of mass readership but also into the nation that was able to “imagine” itself in a mass scale of literary disseminations. After all, as Benedict Anderson reminds us, “from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be ‘invited into’ the imagined community” (1991:145). Modern Kazakh literature quickly became the popular source for writing and adopting the national identity in the minds of those “engineers of souls” and their attentive readers who were eager to learn their about their history from “historical novels” given that there were almost no other channels for such learning.

Time and temporality were the two key factors of modernization and its effects on Kazakh literature. The Soviet ideology propagated the development and progress of societies (Giddens 1990), characteristics and peculiarities of modern societies and “the life conditions created by them” (Thompson 1995:2). This was the context in which modern print Kazakh literature was developing since the mid-twentieth century.

Many of the Soviet Kazakh writers were willingly engaged in Soviet modernization narrative without viewing it as an imposition from above.

The Stalinist repressive apparatus went even further in imposing cultural and social modernization at the expense of the Kazakh nomadic population (see Cameron 2010; Pianciola 2004) leading to the context in which Soviet modernization and compliance with the Soviet canons of Socialist Realism in cultural production became the only forms of cultural survival for the indigenous writers loyal to the state. These loyal writers formed the backbone of the state-sponsored intelligentsia class who had their own institution, the Writers' Union, its own form of production, the Socialist Realist novel, its own networks of intellectual circles and financial support from the state.

Two central arguments of this book evolve around the idea of modernity and Soviet modernization, and culture in Kazakhstan—that modernity became a form of imagining the nation, and Soviet modernization—the means of specific indigenous cultural production of nation and progress on which contemporary nationalism dwells on; and that modern literary production changed the way social life and national imagination were organized. Print capitalism and mass readership created the “Imagined Community” (Anderson 1991) and drew feasible boundaries associated with the national history, geography and heritage in Soviet Kazakhstan in ways Soviet ideology could not possibly foresee. The development of modern Kazakh literature re-imagined and re-created the nation Kazakhstan represents nowadays. In order to study how these processes evolved I conceptualize my findings through the study of sociology of literature and depth-hermeneutics methodology discussed in the following sections.

SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE

The sociology of literature is an important field in itself as it serves a dual function of representing both ideas about the world and people's response to it through literature. Literature, as part of art, becomes “the collective expression of society” (Laurenson and Swingewood 1972:33). Thus, in sociological terms, literature serves at least two important functions within the selected framework of nationalistic movements' development—as it transmits both history and cultural identity in the society.

According to Rigney, literature may serve as a field “focusing on the history of excluded social groups, the victims and the subalterns” (2008:89). I contend that literature not only serves the purposes of excluded social groups but also nations and ethnic groups under censorship. For example, the Kyrgyz historical epic *Manas*, which “many regard as an irreplaceable source of Kyrgyz history, philosophy, ethnography, and spirituality” (Smith 2003:1), served the Kyrgyz nation and people during the restricted Soviet and post-Soviet time as a mediator of their national history and cultural identity (see also Asankanov 1995; Wasilewska 1997). Literary work is not

only a historical heritage but also “an historical act” where the writer may be perceived as an interpreter and “chronicle of events” (Trilling 1950:174). The question arises of whether such a source of historical knowledge is reliable or should be limited to the frame of historiographical memory.

However realistic events may be depicted in the novel, it still has a fictional background. There are boundaries between traditional history, fictional portrayal, and historical literature where the plot may depend on the factual historical data but the writer invests substantially in making the literary text out of it. Eagleton, for example, has argued that history may be “fictionalized—construed in terms of an ideological production of its agents’ modes of ideological insertion into it, and so rendered as ideology to the second power” (1979:70). Such historiographical discourse based on fictional nature of any literary work may not serve as an authentic version of history in general terms. However, in some cases it may serve as a base for the creation of such official history and later, even ideology which, as we will see, is the case in Kazakhstan.

The literary text transcends historical fact in an artistic way, depicts “the national heroic past” (Bakhtin 1981:13), “furnish[es] principles of cultural demarcation” (Berger 2007:226), and represents the observation of “peculiarly complex, coherent, intensive and immediate fashion” of “ideology in the textures of lived experience of ... societies” (Laurenson and Swingewood 1972:100). The literary text is purely modern and “the novelist is drawn toward everything that is not yet completed” (Bakhtin 1981:20). Novels are also not constrained by the choice of the time frame and most of the nationalistic narratives produced by historical novels go as far back in history as writer’s imagination allows to resemble the pieces of the nationhood she or he decides to unravel. Therefore, novels may or may not aim to modernize the past where such aims are defined by the context in which each cultural text is produced but this also opens a possibility to argue that “only in the novel have we the possibility of an authentically objective portrayal of the past” (Bakhtin 1981:20).

In that sense, I argue, the novel provides a creative space for discussing and imagining a pool of ideas and symbols that may influence ideology. Terry Eagleton, for example, proposed a model of literature-ideology relations in the following scheme (1979:69):

history/ideology — dramatic text — dramatic production history — ideology — literary text.

He argued that “literary text produces ideology” and that “the literary text’s relation to ideology so constitutes that ideology as to reveal something of its relations to history” (1979:69). Literature helps in creation of nationalistic myths and demarcations of cultural identity (Berger 2007) because

“nations appear simultaneously as always already there: cultural commonalities, as new projects occasioned by colonialism and independence struggles, and as impositions of certain constructions of the national culture over other identities and cultural projects within the ostensible nation” (Calhoun 2007:19). The Soviet Union is the perfect example for such research of intertwined literary imagination and its transformation into the political ideas and discourses about the nation. The Soviet modernization project and development of local cultures in autonomies created the space for local historical literary imagination where the nation “was already there.” Late Soviet generations of local writers were then able to re-construct and re-discover this historical imagination in an act of a constant “rewriting of the nation” based on the previous canon, political context (from Stalinism to the Thaw, for example), and on the inter-elite competition for the symbolic capital within the local Writers Union context and indigenous writers’ milieu.

The creation, production, and reproduction of either literary text or an ideology are ruled by a specific moment and its framework following either established or establishing symbols and traditions of such a community. So, “if the problematic ‘closure’ of textuality questions the ‘totalization’ of national culture, then its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life” (Bhabha 1990:297). Literary texts also contribute to the development of ideas and symbols of nationhood. For example, literary works can glorify monuments like the tomb of the Unknown Soldier that constitutes the essence of patriotism (Anderson 1991) or the protagonists of historical novels may transform into the heroes of new post-independent monuments who also glorify the nation.

Moreover, Homi Bhabha conceptualized the “writing of the nation” and “rewriting the nation” that many writers, including Kazakh ones followed during and after the Soviet era where:

We then have a contested cultural territory where the people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical “objects” of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the “subjects” of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process. The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*. (1990:297)

Hence, it is important to identify types of national myths and to trace the “symbolic genealogy” of the Kazakh nation narrative in Soviet-Kazakh literary production to analyze the processes of national identity currently under construction in contemporary Kazakhstan. The discourse and interpretative tools of analysis will be the most useful instruments in such processes of writing and rewriting the nation.

DEPTH-HERMENEUTICS METHODOLOGY

Paul Ricoeur called hermeneutics “the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts” (1981:43). In the discussion of modern Kazakh literature and national discourse I use the depth-hermeneutics methodology further developed by John Thompson where, “in social inquiry as in other domains, the process of interpretation can be, and indeed demands to be, mediated by a range of explanatory or ‘objectifying’ methods” (1990:278).

The objectifying methods introduced by Thompson include the analysis of a social-historical pattern, formal or discursive patterns and interpretation/re-interpretation (1990:281) in the study of cultural texts and their production. In this section I briefly discuss how this methodology is used throughout the analysis presented in this study.

The Socio-Historical Pattern

Thompson states that “cultural analysis can be constructed as the study of symbolic forms in relation to the historically specific and socially structured contexts and processes within which, and by means of which, these symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received” (1990:281). Therefore, an analysis of specific social historical events such as the Cultural Revolution, post-Stalinist period, perestroika, and December 1986 events in Kazakhstan is important in conceptualizing the context of cultural production.

The political-historical paradigm of the Soviet Union as well as nationalities policies with its ideological framework and strict censorship certainly shaped the development of literary texts. Thus, in-depth archival analysis of such historical events intertwined with the discussion of the narrative and where available writers’ own reflections in memoirs, texts would help to unravel the process of “writing and rewriting the nation” in Kazakhstan.

The Formal or Discursive Pattern (Semiotic Analysis)

In order to extract symbols of nationhood and national myths from selected texts semiotic analysis is used. Here I am attempting to analyze the symbols used in the selected literal texts, for example historical personages (*khans*—

rulers, *batyrs*—warriors) or selected ethnic groups or tribes within a group (Kazakhs are traditionally divided into three hordes), traditions, special names and cultural products, such as traditional cuisine dishes and the construction of the mobile nomadic house (*yurt*).

According to modern Kazakh historians and ideologists, the history of Kazakhstan is divided into different important stages, e.g., the creation of the Kazakh Horde in the fifteenth century, violent conflicts with Dzhungars in the eighteenth century that brought Kazakh khans under tsarist protection and later Russian colonization, and finally the Soviet period. Each symbol is classified under groups of identification relating to the time period. Under semiotic analysis these symbols are also put through a system of interpretation. Here, I am applying a system of “myths of nation,” more broadly addressed by Anthony D. Smith (1988) as myths of ancestry, the Golden Age, and liberation. For example, *Nomads* depicts national myths of the Golden age, *Az i Ya*—myth of ancestry.

The Interpretation/Re-interpretation Pattern

Both social-historical and semiotic analyses provide a basis for interpretation/re-interpretation by reconstructing the social and historical conditions of the period in which the texts were created, and semiotic analysis extracts the meaning that each symbol carries. The process of interpretation, in Thompson’s words grasps the “transcending character” of selected symbols:

the symbolic forms which are the object of interpretation are part of a pre-interpreted domain: they are already interpreted by the subjects who make up the social-historical world. In developing an interpretation which is mediated by the methods of the depth-hermeneutical approach, we are re-interpreting a pre-interpreted domain; we are projecting a possible meaning which may diverge from the meaning construed by subjects who make up the social-historical world. (1990:290)

Analyzed symbolic structures would already be re-interpreted as we are interpreting pre-interpreted meanings and symbols. What is more important here for this particular work is how these symbolic forms and myths were re-interpreted during the independence era, with no control by the politburo or censorship of explicit nationalistic messages. How did the selected texts and producers of these texts, writers, cultural intelligentsia, turn from being prohibited, or disregarded by Soviet rule into the new national heroes and “fighters for independence”? Why did such a shift occur? Was it orchestrated by the sentiments of political post-colonialism (see Kudaibergenova 2016b) or was it a justification for a new program of building Kazakhstan, the land of Kazakhs based on explicitly Kazakh ethno-symbolism that the elite chose?

How did some of these re-interpretations bring visible and invisible conflicts to the society of the new country?

The process of re-interpretation is also particularly interesting in Kazakhstan's case as myths and symbols of Kazakh ethno-symbolism were implemented smoothly. It re-emerged as a conflict lately when the majority of the Soviet streets were renamed with names of the repressed leaders and writers of different epochs in Kazakh history; and when the history of Kazakhstan itself was rewritten. This new version of history was used by many political groups as another myth of Kazakh nationhood.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The book consists of ten chapters and each focuses on the historical context, narrative, and interpretation of the specific texts and writers. Chapter 1 focuses on the Alash leaders Myrzhaqyp Dulatov, Bokeikhanov, Magzhan Zhumabayev, and Akhmet Baitursynov in their attempts to modernize the past and the present in the Kazakh steppe. I focus on the first projects of social modernization and the way it was imagined and portrayed in first Kazakh novels (written in 1909). The second chapter focuses on the first rewriting and erasing of the pre-Soviet narratives, especially of the Alash modernization narratives. In this chapter I focus on the attempts of the early Soviet Kazakh writers to self-Orientalize the discourses of the “backward” past, nomadic lifestyle, and focus on the liberation of women as one of the main projects of the Soviet modernization.

In chapter 3 I continue to focus on the canonization of the Soviet-Kazakh texts and narratives. In the context of heightened Stalinist terror and mutual suspicion, nationalistic (*natsionalizm*) accusations became death sentence. This is the context in which Socialist Realism novel canon was established in Kazakhstan. Local writers had to produce texts focusing on backwardness and inequality in nomadic society and the liberating nature of the Soviet power. Class structures, backward traditionalism which was encouraged by colonialists, authoritarian and neopatrimonial networks in the nomadic hierarchy and discrimination of women were the main issues portrayed in these works up until the late period of Kazakh Soviet literature.

Chapter 4 is centered on the seminal work of the renowned Kazakh Soviet writer Mukhtar Auezov. *Abai Zholy* (The path of Abai) became Auezov's most important contribution and probably the most famous novel in Kazakh literature. Auezov spent decades researching traditional nomadic lifestyles, mapping tribal land appropriations in the late nineteenth century and even interviewing family members of the famous Kazakh writer and philosopher Abai (1845–1904). What novel developed into was not only the exploration of Abai's life and his talent but also an encyclopedia of Kazakh nomadic life

and an attempt to map the development of Kazakh nation since its inception in the late nineteenth century. The chapter thus explores what was the nature of the Kazakh nation Auezov was portraying—a truly historical and authentic nation or Soviet-typed discourse of the nation.

Ilyas Yessenberlin's critically acclaimed *Koshpendiler* (Nomads) is the focus of the chapter 5 where I discuss further development of historical novels and nationalistic narratives. The main narratives of the novel included imagined and real geographies of nomadic territory and fluid statehood trespassing territorial boundaries and constant social and cultural mobility in the Eurasian steppe. *Koshpendiler* was important in the re-creation of the history and in the ways in which it facilitated further interest in the historical novels.

Chapter 6 focuses on the work of Kazakh-speaking writer Mukhtar Magauin who became a flagman of semi-literary and semi-scientific historical writing. Most of Magauin's novels and short stories were based on the extensive archival search. Chapter 7 focuses on three Russophone writers and publicists who rewrote the narration on postcolonial nature of their societies. Many of these narratives had to remain in symbolic and unofficial (diaries) form hidden away until the independence. Kazakh writers who found themselves at the forefront of Soviet international campaign in postcolonial states and they reflected these experiences on their own society and culture.

I continue this discussion of symbolism and post-coloniality in chapter 8, which focuses on two main dimensions of Suleimenov's work—the unbounded narrative of the past where temporal and spatial borders no longer exist or limit the national imagination; the post-colonization of the Sovietized Kazakh literature. Toward the mid-1980s this disjuncture in perception of Soviet and post-colonial experiences grew into a more extensive and explicit critique of the local cultural amnesia.

Chapter 9 discusses the tragic events of December 1986 and the ways they were depicted and remembered by the Kazakh nationalist writer Mukhtar Shakhanov. His critique is directed both toward the repressive powers of the Soviet state against the Kazakh nation and against the new time that brought ruptures and feelings of emptiness to those who awaited independence. Shakhanov remains a polemical writer, he is known as the famous leader of the Kazakh national-patriot front and the advocate for the de-classification of secrets about the December 1986 events. He writes only in Kazakh and his poetry remains popular among the young Kazakh-speaking groups. Shakhanov devoted years to research about December 1986 and its victims. In this chapter I also discuss the new form of national-patriotic cultural production.

I continue to explore this break and disjuncture in national continuity in chapter 10 with the discussion of post-Soviet literature. I use post-independent prose and philosophical texts written by Gerold Belger to conceptualize this context of contemporary Kazakhstan. Belger, a known Kazakh patriot,

used his own reflections of the German deportee and local intelligentsia in his discerning *Tuyuq su* novel. In this novel he depicted the life of the peripheral *aul* (village) and lives of its dwellers in a continuous narration from 1941 to the late post-independence period to demonstrate Time itself rather than to blame people or the state. *Zaman-ay!* (Oh, time), exclaims Belger in Kazakh, what have you done to the people and the nation? Belger's writing remains critical and essential for our understanding of contemporary Kazakhstan and its development.

NOTES

1. See similar works on Russian and Soviet literature by Evgeny Dobrenko (2001), for example.

2. One work worthy of attention in local Kazakhstani socio-literary research is Murat Auezov's early essay collection, *Ippokrena: The Wandering around the Wells of Time* (1997). The book provides a philosophical analysis of literature and its impact on society. In this book Murat Auezov, philosopher and the son of the famous Kazakh writer Mukhtar Auezov, writes about the historical narratives in Kazakh-Soviet literature. This invaluable study shifts the focus to the debates and concerns over the authentic rediscovery of history. Murat Auezov, Olzhas Suleimenov and many more other Kazakh public intellectuals were part of the 1960s intellectual generation, the *Zhas Tulpar* student movement formed from local Kazakhstani students in Soviet Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and Moscow. Thus, Murat Auezov's analysis is also partly time-biographical of the period of post-Khrushchev national-cultural enlightenment. *Ippokrena* provides a crucial literary analysis of books written by Olzhas Suleimenov and the Kyrgyz writer Chingis Aitmatov. An early critical intervention into the historical and political reconceptualization of identity, culture and the recent past, the book is a rare collection of deeply rooted historical essays on the epoch.