



# **Resignification of Borders: Eurasianism and the Russian World**

Nina Friess / Konstantin Kaminskij (eds.)

Nina Friess / Konstantin Kaminskij (eds.)  
Resignification of Borders: Eurasianism and the Russian World

Ost-West-Express. Kultur und Übersetzung,  
herausgegeben von Jekatherina Lebedewa  
und Gabriela Lehmann-Carli, Band 37

Nina Friess / Konstantin Kaminskij (eds.)

Resignification of Borders:  
Eurasianism and the Russian World

Umschlagabbildung © Exzellenzcluster „Kulturelle Grundlagen von Integration“  
der Universität Konstanz

This book was supported by funds made available by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the German “Cultural Foundations of Social Integration” Center of Excellence at the University of Konstanz, established in the framework of the German Federal and State Initiative for Excellence, and the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS).

ISBN 978-3-7329-0570-6

ISBN E-Book 978-3-7329-9427-4

ISSN 1865-5858

© Frank & Timme GmbH Verlag für wissenschaftliche Literatur  
Berlin 2019. Alle Rechte vorbehalten.

Das Werk einschließlich aller Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt.  
Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlags unzulässig und strafbar.  
Das gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen,  
Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

Herstellung durch Frank & Timme GmbH,

Wittelsbacherstraße 27a, 10707 Berlin.

Printed in Germany.

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.

[www.frank-timme.de](http://www.frank-timme.de)

## Contents

KONSTANTIN KAMINSKIJ & NINA FRIESS Inside Out Identities: Eurasianism and the Russian World .....	7
ERIK MARTIN In Between (Eastern) Empire and (Western) Universalism. Eurasian Space and Russian Identity in the Émigré Discourse of the 1920s: N. S. Trubetskoi and M. I. Rostovtsev .....	21
ANNA RAZUVALOVA “The World has not petrified forever”. Ideology of Expansion in Eduard Limonov’s Publicism .....	35
CLEMENS GÜNTHER & SVETLANA SIROTININA Beyond the Imperial Matrix. Literary Eurasianisms in Contemporary Russian Literature .....	67
GULNAZ SIBGATULLINA & MICHAEL KEMPER The Imperial Paradox. Islamic Eurasianism in Contemporary Russia .....	97
VICTORIA ABAKUMOVSKIKH The Development of Islamic Economic Politics in the Republic of Tatarstan. Combining Religious Ethics with Geopolitical Strategy .....	125
NINA FRIESS Young Russophone Literature in Kazakhstan and the ‘Russian World’ .....	149
KONSTANTIN KAMINSKIJ Climate Change and Cultures of Environmental Migration in Eastern Eurasia. From Gumilev to Nazarbaev.....	175
Notes on Contributors .....	199

## Young Russophone Literature in Kazakhstan and the ‘Russian World’\*

In 2007, Vitalii Puchanov, a Russian poet and literary activist,<sup>1</sup> set up the website *A new literary map of Russia* (*Novaya karta literatury Rossii*, litkarta.ru). The project aims to offer a comprehensive overview of the modern-day Russian literary landscape. Alongside writers living in Russia, the site also features authors who write from outside the country. In total, the site lists literary figures from 33 nations, including not only former Soviet republics but also countries such as Australia, Germany, and Japan. The only criterion for inclusion in the database seems to be that the author must compose his or her texts in Russian.

Thanks to the spread of the Russian language with the expansion of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, as well as large waves of migration from Russian-speaking areas during the twentieth century, Russian or Russian-language literature no longer originates only from the territory of the Russian Federation. The literary mapmakers reflected this fact when they decided in early 2017 to change the site’s name from *A new literary map of Russia* to *A new map of Russian literature* (*Novaya karta russkoi literatury*). The rationale for the change was outlined in an announcement on 30 January, 2017, which reads: “В новой геополитической обстановке важно яснее понимать, что Россия не обладает монополией на русскую литературу, поэтому мы посчитали необходимым убрать из название проекта название одной

.....

\* For this paper, I held several interviews with Russophone writers from Almaty and Astana (now Nur-Sultan) during my research trip there from May 24 to June 12, 2017. I would like to thank them for sharing their time and thoughts with me. All authors gave me their permission to quote them by name. Nevertheless, in some cases I decided to anonymize their quotes.

1 I use this term to describe a person who engages in the literary scene and for literature in a society. He or she does not have to write literature him-/herself.

страны [т. з. России; N.F].”<sup>2</sup> With this change, the creators of the site obviously tried to distance themselves from the ideologically charged debate around the concept of the ‘Russian World’ (*Russkii Mir*). This concept, which was first officially mentioned by Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2001, “celebrates and seeks to propagate a broadly cultural and socio-historic value system founded ostensibly on a common civilization heritage – essentially Russian in the cultural sense of the word but with a veneer of inclusivity with respects to the non-Russian post-Soviet world.”<sup>3</sup> What was originally understood as a vague but potentially unifying cultural concept for the post-Soviet space was soon used by the Kremlin to justify its interventionist policies in such places as Ukraine, where Russia claimed to protect the rights of its compatriots.<sup>4</sup> Compatriot has been defined in wide terms. It was Vladimir Putin who stated that “[t]he compatriot is not only a legal category. More importantly, it is not an issue of status or favoritism. It is primarily a matter of personal choice. Of self-identification. I would even say, of spiritual self-identification.”<sup>5</sup> Naturally, the concept of the Russian World is seen skeptically by countries with significant Russian and/or Russian-speaking minorities.

A country with such a significant Russian as well as Russian-speaking minority is Kazakhstan: The last official census, which dates from 2009, says that 23.7 percent of the multi-ethnic Kazakhstani population are Russian.<sup>6</sup> The percentage of Russian speakers is even higher: 94.4 percent of the Kazakhstani respondents state that they are able to understand spoken Russian, in contrast

2 This announcement is no longer available on the current version of the site. “In the current geopolitical circumstances, it is important to understand more clearly that Russia does not have a monopoly on Russian literature. That is why we deemed it essential to remove the name of the one country [i.e. Russia; N.F.] from the title of the project.” All translations are mine; N.F.

3 Tomila Lankina and Kinga Niemczyk, “Russia’s Foreign Policy and Soft Power,” in *Russia’s Foreign Policy. Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations*, eds. David Cadier and Margot Light (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 102–103. For a brief history of the concept, see Marlene Laruelle, *The “Russian World”: Russia’s Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination* (Washington, D.C.: Center on Global Interests, 2015), accessed January 8, 2019, [http://globalinterests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FINAL-CGI\\_Russian-World\\_Marlene-Laruelle.pdf](http://globalinterests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FINAL-CGI_Russian-World_Marlene-Laruelle.pdf).

4 Ibid., 14.

5 Quoted from *ibid.*, 8.

6 Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike, *Itogi Natsionalnoi perepisi naseleniya Respubliki Kazakhstan 2009 goda*, accessed January 8, 2019, <http://stat.gov.kz/getImg?id=WC16200032648>. More recent figures will be available only after the national population census planned for 2019. While the term Kazakhstani includes all citizens of Kazakhstan regardless of their ethnicity, the term Kazakh refers to ethnic Kazakhs only.

to the 74 percent that state they are able to understand spoken Kazakh.<sup>7</sup> Although Kazakh is the official state language of Kazakhstan, the Kazakhstani constitution says that “in state institutions and local self-administrative bodies the Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazak(h) language.”<sup>8</sup> Even if the number of Kazakh speakers has significantly grown since Kazakhstan’s independence in 1991, Russian maintains its status as *lingua franca*, especially in the North and in the urban areas. It is omnipresent in Kazakhstan’s media, in academia, and in the economic sector.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the dominance of the Russian language in Kazakhstan, it is not surprising that—in comparison with the other sections of the site—there is a relatively large Kazakhstani section on the *New map of Russian literature*: The map lists 36 Russophone authors in Kazakhstan, among them also deceased people. In this article, I will take a closer look at this section. This particular section does not map Kazakhstan’s entire literary landscape. Naturally, it focusses on authors writing in Russian, who are—it is important to note—not necessarily Russian by ethnicity. Therefore, I prefer to speak about Russophone literature, using the term in the way Naomi Caffee suggested for “literature written in Russian by self-professed non-Russians” and for literature written in Russian outside Russia.<sup>10</sup> The Kazakhstani section of the *New map of Russian literature* focusses on literature that occurs beyond Kazakhstani governmental programs and funding, so in this article I do the same.<sup>11</sup> In Kazakhstan, this literature is often called “young” literature. Although authors of Kazakhstan’s young literature are not necessarily young in age, most of them made their literary debut after the end of the Soviet period.<sup>12</sup> They are well connected to

7 Ibid.

8 Art. 7 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, quoted from the English version on <http://www.parlam.kz/en/constitution>, accessed January 8, 2019.

9 See Alexander Morrison, “Russian Beyond Russia,” *eurasianet*, April 20, 2017, accessed January 2019, <https://eurasianet.org/russian-beyond-russia>.

10 Naomi Caffee, “Russophonia: Towards a Transnational Conception of Russian-Language Literature” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2013), 28. As we will see in the following, authors from Kazakhstan discuss the term controversially.

11 In most cases, state-funded literature means literature in Kazakh. The relationship between authors writing in Kazakh and writing in Russian in Kazakhstan is rather a non-relationship, which often (but not only) results from the lack of Kazakh skills of the Russophone writers.

12 See Pavel Bannikov, “Literatura ad marginem,” *Novyi Mir* 12 (2015), accessed January 8, 2019, [http://magazines.russ.ru/novy\\_i\\_mi/2015/12/literatura-ad-marginem.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novy_i_mi/2015/12/literatura-ad-marginem.html). In this article, I will not focus on

one another and to Russian and Russophone colleagues from other countries, as is also shown by their inclusion on the *New map of Russian literature*.

This paper aims to introduce this part of Kazakhstan's Russophone literary landscape. Therefore I take a look at the 'inhabitants' of the analyzed literary field, i.e. key actors and institutions, and at the 'places' where we can find them. In a next step, I will present some specific aspects of Kazakhstan's literary landscape, which obviously concern not only its Russophone authors. The next section highlights some important topics of Kazakhstan's young Russophone literature. In this part, I also discuss how the authors integrate Kazakhstan as a place and topic in their texts. In a last step, I will take a closer look at the authors' relationship with Russia. In particular, I am interested in whether and how they position themselves in relation to the idea of the Russian World.

## Inhabitants and places

The independent literary scene in Kazakhstan is first and foremost linked with the name Ol'ga Markova: "Ольга Борисовна создала то, что оказалось не под силу могущественному министерству культуры Казахстана—новую литературную волну. Марат Исенов, Ербол Жумагулов, Михаил Земсков, Ксения Рогожникова, Анна Рогожникова, Айгерим Тажи, Илья Одегов, [...]. Эти и сотни других авторов—казахстанских писателей, поэтов, журналистов, критиков, редакторов, драматургов—своими достижениями во многом обязаны той вере в себя, которая была заложена в них стараниями Ольги Борисовны."<sup>13</sup>

---

the 'old' Russophone literature in Kazakhstan, which still seems to be rooted in Soviet tradition. This is, on the one hand, a consequence of the decision to concentrate on the most visible part of today's Kazakhstani Russophone literary scene. On the other hand, representatives of the 'old' Russophone literature did not respond to my requests for interviews. For an overview that includes both 'camps' of Kazakhstan's Russophone literature, see Institut literatury i iskusstva M. O. Auezova MON RK, *Sovremennaya literatura naroda Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Evo Press, 2014), 70–157.

13 Maks Velichko, "Umerla Ol'ga Markova," *Karavan*, December 5, 2008, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://www.caravan.kz/news/umerla-olga-markova-157164/>. See also Evgenii Abdullaev, "Almatinskaya anomalija. O novoi russkoi literature Kazakhstana," *Novyi Mir* 12 (2015), accessed January 8, 2019, [http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi\\_mi/2015/12/almatinskaya-anomalija-pr.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2015/12/almatinskaya-anomalija-pr.html). "Ol'ga Borisovna established what seemed to be beyond the capacity of the mighty Kazakhstani Ministry of Culture—a new literary wave. Marat Isenov, Erbol Zhumagulov, Mikhail Zemskov, Kseniya Rogozhnikova, Anna Rogozhnikova, Aigerim Tazhi, Il'ya Odegov, [...]. These, and hundreds of other writers, poets, journalists, critics, editors,

In 1993, shortly after Kazakhstan gained independence, the literary scientist, critic, and writer Ol'ga Markova (pen name: Ol'ga Mark) founded the literary journal *Apollinariii*. Around this journal, a vivid literary life developed. Markova—together with like-minded people—organized meetings with authors, literature seminars, and literary contests. In 1998, this initiative became more official when the Public Fund for the development of culture and humanities “Musaget” was registered. The “Musaget” fund aimed to promote literary development in Kazakhstan. It was also understood as a kind of interest group for those writers who made their literary debut after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> In the opinion of many representatives of Kazakhstan's young Russophone literature, the Writers' Union of Kazakhstan, which in Soviet times was the writers' traditional interest group, did not and does not fulfill this task any longer: it seems to be a Soviet artefact, fallen out of time. At the same time, it is said to be an exclusive club to which it is hard to get access.<sup>15</sup>

When Ol'ga Markova died in 2008, the “Musaget” fund ceased. But its alumni have continued the work of its founder and president. In 2009, some alumni around Mikhail Zemskov founded the Open Literary School Almaty (OLShA for short, *Otkrytaya Literaturnaya Shkola Almaty*), which is now a unique institution in Kazakhstan. The OLShA offers literature seminars in different genres (prose, poetry, drama, and children's literature) for young authors, who are not necessarily young in age. The courses run for a period of eight months. Beyond theoretical introductions to the history of literature and literary criticism, they include practical exercises where students write their own texts, discuss them in class, and work them over. Every year, 35–40 students graduate from the school.<sup>16</sup> The lecturers well know that not all of their

.....  
 and dramaturges owe their success to the faith in themselves that was implemented in them by Ol'ga Borisovna's efforts.”

14 See Ol'ga Markova, “Nasha kul'tura za rubezhom: nuzhna podderzhka,” *Znaniya* 8 (2008), accessed January 8, 2019, <http://magazines.russ.ru/znaniya/2008/8/so7.html>.

15 Pavel Bannikov in Svetlana Romashkina, “Pavel Bannikov, poet: ‘Kazakhstanskii poet kak vechnyi marginal’” *Vlast'*, September 18, 2015, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://vlast.kz/writers/13106-pavel-bannikov-poet-kazahstanskij-poet-kak-vecnyj-marginal.html>. See also Mikhail Zemskov in Irina Gumyrkina, “Mikhail Zemskov: ‘Kazakhstanskoi literature ne khvataet kritiki i ekspertnogo soobshchestva’” *Vlast'*, October 16, 2018, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://vlast.kz/writers/29972-mikhail-zemskov-kazahstanskoj-literature-ne-hvataet-kritiki-i-ekspertnogo-soobshchestva.html>.

16 See *ibid.*

alumni will continue writing after they have left the OLShA. Their goal is not only to teach their students how to write, but to build a professional literary space in Kazakhstan.<sup>17</sup> Therefore you need writers as well as readers, as Pavel Bannikov, poet, critic, and literary activist, points out: “За год через школу проходят человек 50, из них в литературе останутся, может быть, 1–2, но это уже очень хорошо. Зато остальные станут очень хорошими читателями и будут способны прочесть новую литературу, которая не похожа на то, к чему мы привыкли. [...] Это, наверное, самая главная задача школы—создать читательское сообщество. Если из него еще вдруг появятся и писатели, это кайф!”<sup>18</sup>

Lecturers and alumni of the OLShA dominate the young Russophone literary life in Kazakhstan, which first and foremost happens in Almaty, the Kazakhstani capital until 1997. The critic Evgenii Abdullaev puts it in a nutshell when he states: “Пока русская литература в Казахстане—Алма-Ата.”<sup>19</sup> Most of Kazakhstan’s active writers live in Almaty. In Almaty, we find the few relevant literary institutions of Kazakhstan. Even the Writers’ Union and the editorial department of its monthly literary journal *Prostor* are based in Almaty. Abdullaev highlights another important point: Almaty has a rather liberal social milieu;<sup>20</sup> the public there wants to participate in cultural life.

Even though literary scenes are developing in other cities, they do not yet get the attention the authors from Almaty get. This is also true for Astana (now Nur-Sultan), the capital of Kazakhstan. Talking about the capital’s literary scene, usually only two names appear: those of the Russophone poets Kanat Omar and Anuar Duisenbinov.<sup>21</sup> In an interview, the literary scholar Dmitrii Melnikov mentions that Duisenbinov is the only poet who makes Astana a

17 See “O shkole,” *Otkrytaya Literaturnaya Shkola Almaty*, accessed January 8, 2019, [http://litshkola.kz/?page\\_id=9](http://litshkola.kz/?page_id=9).

18 Bannikov in Romashkina, “Pavel Bannikov.” “In a year, around 50 people go through the school. Maybe 1–2 of them will continue to write, and this is already really good. But the rest will become very good readers and will be able to read new literature that is unlike the literature we are used to. [...] This is maybe the most important task for the school—to build a community of readers. If there suddenly appear writers as well, that’s fantastic!” The different figures occur because Zemskov counts the OLShA’s graduates only, while Bannikov includes all persons who start their studies but do not necessarily complete them.

19 Abdullaev, “Almatinskaya anomalija.” “For the time being, Russian literature in Kazakhstan (means) Alma-Ata.” See also Bannikov, “Literatura ad marginem.”

20 See Abdullaev, “Almatinskaya anomalija.”

21 See *ibid.*; Bannikov, “Literatura ad marginem.”

subject of his poetry.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Almaty is an important setting, especially for the young Russophone prose of Kazakhstan, as I will show. Kanat Omar says that up to the present, Astana has not developed its “own myth”. He draws an analogy to Saint Petersburg, which, like Astana, was designed on the drawing board: just as Saint Petersburg has developed its own text—the Petersburg text—over the centuries, Astana will one day create its own text.<sup>23</sup>

### Peculiarities of Kazakhstan's literary landscape

The end of the Soviet Union also meant the end of state funding of literature, with its numerous benefits for writers loyal to the regime, and the collapse of the state-controlled book market. Unlike Russia, Kazakhstan did not develop a vivid publishing scene after its independence. The vast majority of the books sold in Kazakhstan are imported from Russia (85 percent).<sup>24</sup> These are not only books from Russian authors, but also contemporary bestsellers from other countries in Russian translation. Even though the responsible Chamber of Commerce states that there are more than 1,300 publishing houses in Kazakhstan, most of them publish only a few books per year.<sup>25</sup>

Most books produced in Kazakhstan are schoolbooks and textbooks. They account for 80 percent of the book production in Kazakhstan.<sup>26</sup> With 300 copies per book, the average general circulation is low. Keeping in mind that schoolbooks are published in large numbers, other books may only have a circulation of 50–100 copies.<sup>27</sup> In summer 2017, when a Kazakhstani publishing house published Bayan Maksatkyzy's autobiography *Bayan. Obe mne i ne*

.....  
22 See Dmitrii Melnikov in Dina Oraz, “Ot tkani teksta k tkani prostranstva,” *Literaturnyi portal*, October 12, 2018, accessed January 8, 2019, [http://adebiportal.kz/ru/news/view/ot\\_tkani\\_teksta\\_k\\_tkani\\_prostranstva\\_\\_20713](http://adebiportal.kz/ru/news/view/ot_tkani_teksta_k_tkani_prostranstva__20713). Melnikov does not take into account texts of pure panegyric character, which can be easily found online.

23 Kanat Omar, interview with the author, June 2, 2017.

24 See Yuliya Maiskaya, “Kak reanimirovat' knizhnyi rynek v Kazakhstane,” *Total*, September 28, 2016, accessed January 8, 2019, [https://total.kz/ru/news/kultura/chto\\_mojet\\_reanimirovat\\_knijnyiy\\_ryinok\\_kazahstana](https://total.kz/ru/news/kultura/chto_mojet_reanimirovat_knijnyiy_ryinok_kazahstana).

25 See *ibid.*

26 See *ibid.*

27 See *ibid.*

*tol'ko*<sup>28</sup> (“About me and not only”) with a first edition of 20,000 copies, this was regarded to be a sensation. The business platform *capital.kz* even proclaimed a “renaissance” of the Kazakhstani book market.<sup>29</sup>

Other players also hope that such popular books may serve as a development booster for the entire domestic book market. The journalist Vyacheslav Polovinko argues that light fiction may introduce the reader to more intellectually ambitious literature. Thus, the Kazakhstani book market would first need a Dar'ya Dontsova—the most popular Russian representative of a genre called ‘female ironic crime novels’—to ‘produce’ a Boris Akunin, and then “its own Pelevin or Sorokin”.<sup>30</sup> Vadim Golenko, general director of the Kazakhstani book and media retailer Meloman thinks that people are definitely interested in domestic authors. But, he adds, there are not enough domestic products. In order to remedy this situation, Meloman began to act as a publishing house in 2016.<sup>31</sup> Overall, Golenko counts on the increase of state publishing activities to provide the Kazakhstanis with books.<sup>32</sup> In this view, which sees a major role for the state in the process of literary development in Kazakhstan, Golenko is not alone. In an interview with the platform *vlast.kz*, Bannikov demands the Kazakhstani government should spend more money on literary translation to increase the cooperation between Russophone and Kazakh poets.<sup>33</sup>

Many literary activists hold the view that Kazakhstani publishing houses' lists only rarely reflect demand by readers. Apart from schoolbooks (which promise steady sales) they publish mainly unedited books commissioned by private individuals: “Можно заплатить деньги и тебя напечатают. Поэтому на полках магазинов до сих пор много книг, выпущенных только потому,

28 Bayan Maksatkyzy, *Obo mne i ne tol'ko* (Almaty: Kursiv, 2017). Maksatkyzy is a popular Kazakhstani producer, TV presenter, and actress.

29 Georgii Kovalev, “Rynok kazakhstanskoi literatury perezhivaet renessans,” *Kapital*, December 26, 2017, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://kapital.kz/business/65513/rynok-kazakhstanskoy-literatury-perezhivaet-renessans.html>.

30 Vyacheslav Polovinko, “Fantasticheskaya Dar'ya i gde ona obitaet,” *Esquire*, December 6, 2016, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://esquire.kz/fantasticheskaya-daryya-i-gde-ona-obitaet/>.

31 See Venera Gayfutdinova, “Zachem ‘Meloman’ nachal finansirovat' izdanie knig,” *Forbes Kazakhstan*, December 19, 2016, accessed January 8, 2019, [https://forbes.kz/process/zachem\\_meloman\\_nachal\\_finansirovat\\_izdanie\\_knig/](https://forbes.kz/process/zachem_meloman_nachal_finansirovat_izdanie_knig/).

32 See Ekaterina Zhuravleva, “Kto zarabatyvaet na knizhnom rynke Kazakhstana,” *LS*, August 25, 2018, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://lsm.kz/knizhnyj-biznes>.

33 See Bannikov in Romashkina, “Pavel Bannikov.”

что какой-нибудь бизнесмен решил издать стихи своей дочери, пусть она и абсолютно ничего не понимает в литературе.”<sup>34</sup> Whether these commissioned books sell to a broader audience is of no importance to the publishing houses, since they have already generated their revenues by printing them. In many cases, writers are themselves in charge of distributing their work, not to mention any marketing activities.

As of today, Russophone writers in Kazakhstan have mainly two options to have their texts published: either publishing on internet platforms such as litnet.com and proza.ru (which are most often based in Russia) or publishing them directly in Russia itself. Some platforms even pay modest royalties to writers and all of them claim that mainstream publishing houses actually search for new literary talents on such platforms.<sup>35</sup> International social media platforms constitute another option for publishing literary texts, and Facebook is indeed the most popular internet platform for the literary field in question. This kind of publication naturally is more suitable for shorter texts such as poems. The authors' coverage is higher than one might think, considering the size of Kazakhstan's Russophone literary scene. Some of the authors have between 2,500–5,000 followers, though not all of them are necessarily from Kazakhstan.<sup>36</sup>

.....

34 Il'ya Odegov in Pavel Atoyants and Azat Shaykenov, “‘Sneg v pautine’. Pisatel' Il'ya Odegov o problemakh, meshajushchikh tvorčestvu i svobodnomu sushchestvovaniyu. I,” *Tengri News*, July 16, 2018, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://tengrinews.kz/conference/264/> “You can pay them money and they will print you. That is the reason why you now can find a lot of books on the bookshelves in shops that have been put out only because some businessman decided to publish the poems of his daughter, no matter that she doesn't understand anything about literature.”

35 The current most commercially successful Kazakhstani author, Daniyar Surgalinov, was discovered on such a platform. Surgalinov writes LitRPG, short for Literary Role Playing Game. This literary genre combines science fiction elements with elements of role playing games. The first three books of his *Level Up* series were translated into English. In summer 2018, *Level Up* was listed among the 1000 most popular books based on sales on Amazon. This unprecedented success for a Kazakhstani author aroused much interest in Kazakhstan; see Gulnara Bazhkenova, “Daniyar Sugralinov: ‘Osen'yu tochno budu v TOP-500 Amazona,’” *Esquire*, July 24, 2018, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://esquire.kz/daniyar-surgalinov-tochno-budu-v-top-amazon/>.

36 It would be worth an extra study to analyze the authors' Facebook strategies. I just want to point out here that all analyzed authors use their social media accounts to promote literature in Kazakhstan in general and their own literature in particular. They regularly publish information on new literary publications and events, on which their numerous followers like and comment. In most cases, there is nearly no separation between the public and the private individual. Facebook serves as a diary open for everybody that the author uses for self-representation and marketing.

For Kazakhstan's Russophone authors, the road to literary success leads through the Russian book market, despite the tough competition there.<sup>37</sup> Russia not only offers a professional publishing scene but also a huge book market with 144 million (potential) readers—for comparison: Kazakhstan has a population of 18 million. Furthermore, the Russian book market offers the possibility for export to other countries with Russophone populations, including but not limited to Kazakhstan.

Russia is also home to literary journals, which in Soviet times were the most important publication media for new literature. Though the circulation figures of highly traditional journals such as *Novyi Mir* and *Druzhba Narodov* are drastically declining, they are still considered prestigious.<sup>38</sup> Russophone authors from Kazakhstan publish quite regularly in these journals. Abdullaev highlights that authors from Kazakhstan formed the biggest cohort of writers in *Druzhba Narodov* in 2014.<sup>39</sup> *Novyi Mir* published a special edition with new prose and poetry from Kazakhstan in December 2015. In the same month, the journal *Neva* published a special edition about contemporary literature from Kazakhstan.

Russia also offers some literary competitions that are open to authors living abroad. The most important competition of this kind was the so-called Russian Prize (*Russkaya Premiya*), established 2005 by the Institute for Eurasian Research (*Institut Evraziiskikh Issledovaniï*), and supported by the Yeltsin Center as official partner. The competition addressed authors living outside Russia and writing in Russian, and was awarded in three categories: best novel, best short prose, and best poem. There was also a special prize awarded to people who promote Russian and Russophone literature and culture abroad. The winners of the prize were selected by a jury consisting of literary critics, editors in chief of notable literary journals, and writers, among them former laureates.<sup>40</sup> The Russian Prize was awarded for the last time in 2016. Since then, the

.....  
37 Zemskov in Gumyrkina, "Mikhail Zemskov." Literary success is rather understood in Pierre Bourdieu's meaning of symbolic capital than as economic profit.

38 In their best days, around the end of the 1980s, the journals were published in editions of 1.1 million (*Druzhba Narodov*) and 1.5 million (*Novyi Mir*). By 2017, the printed editions shrank to 1,200 and 2,300, respectively, though as one can read both journals for free on the internet, their real reach is much higher.

39 See Abdullaev, "Almatinskaya anomalïya."

40 See <http://www.russpremia.ru/jury/> for the composition of the last jury. See [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Русская\\_премия](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Русская_премия) for an overview of the laureates from 2005–2016. All links accessed January 8, 2019.

awarding has been suspended, officially for financial difficulties that have not been explained in detail. The website of the Russian Prize ([russpremia.ru](http://russpremia.ru)) was last updated in November 2017; the Institute for Eurasian Research does not list the Russian Prize among its current projects.

Several authors from Kazakhstan were awarded the Russian Prize: Yurii Serebryanskii won it twice (in 2010 and 2014); Il'ya Odegov in 2013; and Mikhail Zemskov (pen name: Ivan Glagolev), the director of the OLShA, was awarded the prize for his "contribution to the development of Russian culture outside the borders of the Russian Federation" in 2016.<sup>41</sup> All my interview partners in Kazakhstan highlighted the importance of the Russian Prize for Russophone literature outside Russia. The Russian Prize has an excellent reputation among them. Though the Yeltsin Center is state financed, it is not considered to be pro-Kremlin, which is important for many of the young Russophone authors from Kazakhstan. The prize offered the possibility of publication by a good publishing house and allowed the authors to capture people's attention beyond their (and even beyond Russian) national borders. Prizewinner Il'ya Odegov states that the Russian Prize was a prize for the Russian language and a recognition of the Russophone literature that is written outside Russia.<sup>42</sup> Though there are literature competitions in Kazakhstan as well, most authors I met criticize them. In Odegov's opinion, the juries often consist of laypeople who cannot judge literary quality. A second point of critique is that the competitions' processes are not transparent. But Odegov's main criticism is that readers do not get access to the winning texts of such competitions.<sup>43</sup>

Together with the Soviet Union, the state censorship that regulated and shaped all of Soviet literary life ceased as well.<sup>44</sup> Nowadays, the Kazakhstani constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and creative activities, and

.....  
41 Ibid. In 2005, when the Russian Prize was awarded for the first time, Zemskov took second place for his text *Alma-atinskii istorii* ("Stories from Alma-Ata").

42 Il'ya Odegov, interview with the author, May 25, 2017.

43 See Odegov in Atoyants and Shaykenov, "Sneg v pautine".

44 In an interview, Serebryanskii considers that many writers lost their interest in writing literature after Soviet state censorship was abolished. In his opinion, the best texts were written under the conditions of censorship—at least in Russia. See Yurii Serebryanskii in Dmitrii Mazorenko, "Yurii Serebryanskii, pisatel': 'Kazakhstanskii pisateli byli obeskurazheny otsuststviem tsenzury,'" *Vlast'*, October 1, 2015, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://vlast.kz/writers/13289-urij-serebranskij-pisatel-kazahstanskii-pisateli-byli-obeskurazheny-otsuststviem-cenzury.html>.

ensorship is prohibited.<sup>45</sup> In practice, Reporters Without Borders ranks Kazakhstan 159<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in their 2018 World Press Freedom Index, and lists (now former) President Nursultan Nazarbaev as a “predator of press freedom”. All in all, Reporters Without Borders presents a bleak picture of the situation of the press in Kazakhstan, where “[t]he main opposition national newspapers were all banned in 2013, the remaining few are collapsing under the impact of fines, and any new independent newspaper is inevitably closed within months. Journalists are often arrested and the Internet is now closely controlled, with mass surveillance, imprisonment of bloggers and frequent cuts in access to news websites, social networks and messaging services.”<sup>46</sup>

To date, Kazakhstan’s independent literary scene has not been subject to these massive restrictions on freedom of speech and expression. My interviewees state that literature is rather free in Kazakhstan. One of the authors presumes that this is the case because the ruling elites do not care about culture in general and about literature in particular.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, literature has lost its status as a powerful propaganda tool, which it used to have in Soviet times. As in other countries, literature was replaced by television and the internet. For literature and writers, my interviewees agree, this might be even good, since it gives them the opportunity to write about what they want. Nevertheless, they say there are some taboo topics one should avoid, for example, (now former) President Nazarbaev’s family and its wealth. Another hot topic is the language policy, i.e. the question of what language—Kazakh or Russian—is spoken and written where and in which context. On the one hand, the Kazakhstani state propagates the country’s multilingualism in the so-called “trinity of languages-project”. In an address by the President in 2007, which can be still considered relevant, Nazarbaev states: “Казахстан должен восприниматься во всем мире как высокообразованная страна, население которой пользуется тремя языками. Это: казахский язык—государственный язык, русский

.....

45 § 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

46 Reporters Without Borders, “Kazakhstan”, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://rsf.org/en/kazakhstan>.

47 This argumentation is also true for Russia. For example, the famous author Grigori Chkhartishvili, alias Boris Akunin, states in an interview with the *BBC*: “Fortunately, Vladimir Putin doesn’t read books and fiction. So, he doesn’t think that literature is important. He thinks that television is important, mass media is important. About books, no, he doesn’t care. So publishing industry is still free in Russia, they publish practically anything.” Boris Akunin in Dorothy Feaver, “Emigranti – 1917 Revisited,” *BBC*, November 5, 2017, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09czx19>.

язык как язык межнационального общения и английский язык—язык успешной интеграции в глобальную экономику.”<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the state massively supports Kazakh as a state language and the language of all Kazakhstanis.<sup>49</sup> Especially for ethnic Kazakhs, some interviewees say, there might be situations where it might be problematic to speak and write in Russian, and not in Kazakh.

Nevertheless, literature can be considered the freest medium in contemporary Kazakhstan. This argument is not weakened by the fact that most of the young Russophone literature is published in Russia. It is written in Kazakhstan, and—mostly via the internet—finds its readers in Kazakhstan.

## Kazakhstan and other topics of the young Russophone literature

According to one expert I interviewed,<sup>50</sup> the focus on the Russian market has led Kazakhstani authors to shy away from tackling specifically Kazakhstani issues in their texts, because these are of little interest to readers outside Kazakhstan. Pure Kazakh or Kazakhstani topics are indeed difficult, Il'ya Odegov agrees, because the Kazakhstani book market is too small.<sup>51</sup> However, Russo-

48 Nursultan Nazarbaev, “Poslanie Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan N. Nazarbaeva narodu Kazakhstana,” *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan*, February 28, 2007, accessed January 8, 2019, [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses\\_of\\_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan-nazarbaeva-narodu-kazakhstan-28-fevralya-2007-g](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan-nazarbaeva-narodu-kazakhstan-28-fevralya-2007-g). “Kazakhstan must be perceived in the world as a highly educated country whose population can use three languages. These are: Kazakh as the national language, Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication, and English as the language of successful integration in the global economy.”

For more details, see Aksana Braun, “Das sprachpolitische Projekt ‘Triedinstvo yazykov’ im russischsprachigen Diskurs Kasachstans,” in *Sprachpolitische Diskurse in russisch-türksprachigen Sprachgemeinschaften: Sprachen und Identitäten in Tatarstan und Kasachstan*, eds. Monika Wingender and Mark Kirchner, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 159–186.

49 For more details, see Ruth Bartholomä, “Die Diskussion um das Staatliche Sprachenprogramm für 2011–2020 in der Republik Kasachstan,” in *Sprachpolitische Diskurse in russisch-türksprachigen Sprachgemeinschaften: Sprachen und Identitäten in Tatarstan und Kasachstan*, eds. Monika Wingender and Mark Kirchner, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 117–158. The state census that is planned for 2019 will show how the language situation in Kazakhstan has changed since 2009.

50 The expert, who is very familiar with and well known in Kazakhstan's young Russophone literary scene, preferred to remain anonymous.

51 Odegov, interview. As I will show in the following, this does not hinder the author from writing this kind of text.

phone authors from Kazakhstan have also not reached high circulations in Russia with other topics. Serebryanskii points out that Russian literary critics recognize the literature of numerous Russophone Kazakhstani authors, nevertheless they do not reach a mass audience.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, the reception of authors like Chyngyz Aitmatov, the famous Kirgiz writer whose texts became classics of world literature, show that a worldwide readership may in fact be interested in supposedly peripheral topics. The best example of this is Aitmatov's novel *I dolshe veka dlitsja den*<sup>53</sup> (*The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*), which mostly takes place in Kazakhstan [sic] and deals with Kazakh realities. So maybe the readers' lack of interest is rather an assumed than a real one.

On closer examination, we can see that Kazakhstan serves as a setting for the subjects as well as a place of origin for the protagonists in the young Russophone prose. How Kazakhstan may function as a setting and a topic, I want to show through the example of two novellas by Odegov, *Ovtsa*<sup>54</sup> ("The sheep") and *Sneg v pautine*<sup>55</sup> ("Snow in the spiderweb"). *Ovtsa* takes place in a Kazakhstani aul, a small village, close to the mountains, probably near Almaty. The protagonists are Rafiza and Marat, an elderly married couple. Searching is the central motif of the novella. At first there is the search for a lost sheep, then for Marat who gets lost in the mountains while looking for the sheep. The search finally leads to a rediscovery of the protagonists' feelings for each other and their homecoming, which is the novella's second central motif. The names of the protagonists as well as some Kazakh(stani) objects such as kazy, a sausage made from horsemeat, and Beshbarmak, a pasta with meat, mark the novella as Kazakh(stani). Nevertheless, its subject is timeless and not bound to a specific place. Even though Odegov portrays Kazakh(stani) realities in his novella, they are neither formative nor significant to the plot.

52 Yuri Serebryanskii, interview with the author, May 29, 2017. This is true with the exception of the previously mentioned Daniyar Sugralinov. Although Sugralinov's novels take place in Russia, all his characters are Russian. This was well recognized in Kazakhstan. For example, the journalist Gulnara Bazhkenova points out that Sugralinov's novels have no relationship with Kazakhstan and are rather part of the Russian literary and cultural process. See Bazhkenova, "Daniyar Sugralinov".

53 Chingiz Aytmatov, "I dolshe veka dlitsya den," *Novyi Mir* 11 (1980), 3—185.

54 Il'ya Odegov, "Ovtsa," *Druzhiba Narodov* 10 (2013), accessed January 8, 2019, <http://magazines.russ.ru/druzhiba/2013/10/30.html>.

55 Il'ya Odegov, "Sneg v pautine," *Novyi Mir* 12 (2015), accessed January 8, 2019, [http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi\\_mi/2015/12/sneg-v-pautine.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2015/12/sneg-v-pautine.html).

The situation is different in *Sneg v pautine*. In this novella, Odegov tells four different stories about love: love between brothers; about the challenges to love in a couple's everyday life; the affection between man and animal; and a late passionate love that is not reciprocated. Because the four protagonist couples—the brothers Nazar and Abai, the young married couple Aliya and Daniyar, the craftsman Gena and a cat, the old bachelor Stepanych and the young athlete Tonya—also meet one other beyond their couple constellations, the storylines partly interlink.

The novella takes place in Almaty (in the text: Alma-Ata). Unlike in *Ovtsa*, the place in *Sneg v pautine* could not be elsewhere: The constellation of the characters—four ethnic Kazakhs and three ethnic Russians, identifiable by their names—and especially their interactions are quite typical of Almaty, a relatively open, tolerant, liberal city. This attitude becomes obvious with the protagonist Daniyar, who leaves his flat after an argument with his wife and spends the night in his car in the courtyard. Through this stay in a protected, but nevertheless public space, Daniyar becomes a kind of *primus inter pares* among the actually equal characters who the other characters meet whenever they enter the courtyard. Daniyar's liberal attitude becomes obvious in a conversation with his former classmate Leshka, who is Russian by name. After having lived in Germany and Russia, Leshka now lives in Canada and is visiting Almaty. In the portrayed conversation, Leshka agitates against homosexuals ("Педиков [...] много."<sup>56</sup>), people of color ("К тому же все таксисты – негры. Черные такие, страшные, рожи у всех бандитские, ужас просто."<sup>57</sup>), and the US ("враг у нас один. [...] Америкосы!"<sup>58</sup>). First, Daniyar comments on Leshka's outbursts with bewilderment, then ironically. Finally, he tells Leshka that only an idiot may so easily explain the world and leaves him.

The setting is also not interchangeable because the love of the inhabitants of Almaty for their city is the fifth love story told in *Sneg v pautine*. This love is related with a lot of nostalgic elements, which are, in the opinion of Pavel Bannikov, typical of prose from Almaty: For decades, the city was home to exiled

.....  
56 Ibid., chap. 15. "[There are] a lot of poofs".

57 Ibid. "Nearly all taxi drivers are niggers. They are so black, awful, they all have gangster mugs, it's just terrible."

58 Ibid. "We have a common enemy. [...] The Yanks!"

writers and artists, who created something like an Almaty myth in their works.<sup>59</sup> Over the last twenty years, the city has changed a lot, both in its cityscape and its social structure. Nostalgic elements appear, says Bannikov, because Almaty is not what it used to be and something has irretrievably disappeared.<sup>60</sup>

It is the myth of the garden city Almaty, whose old name Alma-Ata means ‘father of apples’ in Kazakh, that is portrayed in *Sneg v pautine*. In chapter 22, old Stepanych remembers: “Алма-Ата — это ведь сад. Здесь и был сад. [...] И город наш в этом саду вырос, как яблоко, — чистый, солнечный, румяный. Весь город в ручьях, в арыках. Течет вода с гор, и леденюшая! [...] Да, и весь город такой был — дом, вокруг него яблони, шелковник, груши... а рядом всегда арык. Выходишь на улицу, яблоко с дерева сорвешь, воды из арыка зачерпнешь, и не надо больше тебе ничего.”<sup>61</sup> Stepanych’s memory of the old Almaty is a declaration of love to a city that does not exist any more. He agrees with Daniyar, who argues that everything is changing: “Конечно, меняется, — кивнул Степаныч. — И Алма-Ата менялась. Столько лет менялась! И землетрясения случались, и революции, да чего только не было. Вот только что бы ни происходило, мы всегда знали, что выйдешь на улицу, а там солнце, небо, горы, деревья и арыки. И этого было достаточно, чтобы со всеми невзгодами справиться. А что сейчас? Я каждый день с утра гулять хожу, а солнце вот только сегодня увидел, впервые за несколько месяцев. Летом еще ничего, а зимой совсем ничего не видно. Туман какой-то [...]. А арыки? Почему вода по ним не бежит? Только мусор валяется и крысы шныряют. [...] И не улыбаюсь я, а только хмурюсь все сильнее. И все вокруг ходят такие же — злые, озабоченные,

59 The most important author to mention here is Yuri Dombrovskii (1909–1978) who was exiled to Alma-Ata in 1933 where he continued to be subjected to repression. After 1936, he was arrested and sentenced to jail and camp imprisonment several times. His novel *Khranitel’ drevnostei* (*The keeper of antiquities*) is considered to be the basis of the myth of Almaty. Yuri Dombrovskii, “Khranitel’ drevnostei,” *Novyi Mir* 7 (1964): 3–90 and 8 (1964) 10–67.

60 Pavel Bannikov, interview with the author, May 27, 2017.

61 Odegov, “Sneg v pautine,” chap. 22. “Alma-Ata—this is a garden. There was a garden. [...] And our city grew in this garden like an apple, clean, sunny, and rosy-cheeked. The city was full of streams, and small aqueducts. The water flows from the mountains, ice-cold! [...] And the whole city was like this—a house, with apple trees, mulberry trees, and pear trees around it... and nearby there was always a small aqueduct. You leave the house, pick an apple from the tree, draw some water from the aqueduct, and there’s nothing else you need.”

опечаленные. И это выносить уже невозможно.”<sup>62</sup> Stepanych’s declaration of love turns into an accusation, but without a concrete accused.

In contrast stands a thematically similar passage in chapter 8. Here it is the gloomy Abai who complains about the situation in the country in general and in Almaty in particular. Like Stepanych, Abai criticizes the raging environmental pollution that makes people ill or even kills them. But he locates those responsible: the country’s political elite: “Видишь ли, я раньше считал, что у нас во главе государства воры. [...] И ничего, жил с этим, знаешь, привык к этой мысли. [...] А сейчас гляжу вокруг себя и вижу, что ошибся, катастрофически ошибся. Не воры они, а убийцы...”<sup>63</sup> His brother Nazar disagrees with this point and sees a joint responsibility for the situation with every individual, but it is Abai’s harsh criticism that dominates the chapter. The naming of the characters makes this dialogue even more controversial: The name Abai awakes associations with the Kazakh poet, philosopher, and reformer Abai Qunanbaiuly, who is admired as a national symbolic figure in Kazakhstan. Whether the name of the second brother, Nazar, corresponds to the surname of Kazakhstan’s first President Nursultan Nazarbaev, who was still in charge when the novella was first published, remains unanswered. If true, it would make the dispute even more explosive.

Both disputes are without consequences; neither of the men decide to act. Not only that: at the end, Abai collapses and dies in his flat and Stepanych gets shot. As Gena also fails to take home the beloved cat, there is only one happy ending in *Sneg v pautine*: Aliya and Daniyar, the young Kazakh couple, settle their dispute. The novella ends with the beginning of spring in Almaty. Traditionally—not only since Il’ya Erenburg’s *Ottepel*<sup>64</sup> (*The Thaw*)—this might be

.....

62 Ibid. “Of course, it is changing, — Stepanych nodded. — And Alma-Ata has changed. How many years it has been changing! There were earthquakes, and revolutions, a lot of things happened. But, whatever was going on, we always knew, whenever you leave the house, there is the sun, the sky, the mountains, the trees, and the aqueducts. And, this was enough to manage all these adversities. And now? I take a walk every day in the morning, and the sun I saw only today, the first time in several months. In summer, it’s still ok, but in winter, you can’t see anything. There is this fog [...]. And the aqueducts? Why the water doesn’t run there? They are filled with garbage, the rats are running around. [...] And I don’t smile, but frown even more. And all around me are like this—evil, worried, grieved. And this is unbearable.”

63 Odegov, “Sneg v pautine,” chap. 8. “You see, I used to think that they are thieves at the head of our government. [...] Never mind, I lived with that, you know, I get used to this thought. [...]. And now, I look around me and I see that I was wrong, terribly wrong. They are not thieves, but murderers.”

64 Il’ya Erenburg, *Ottepel* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel, 1954).

read as a symbol for an awakening and a new beginning. In the context of the novella, it resists clear interpretation.

In his novella, Odegov uses the freedom of contemporary literature to criticize environmental pollution in Kazakhstan. With his engagement with environmental issues—which is not limited to literature—he stands in a tradition of writers, not only, but also Kazakh(stani), who are committed to environmental protection. For example, Olzhas Suleimenov, the author of the influential novel *Az-i-Ya*,<sup>65</sup> was one of the leading figures of the Nevada Semipalatinsk anti-nuclear movement, founded in 1989, one of the first anti-nuclear movements in the former Soviet Union.

Another specific Kazakhstani topic might be the struggle for identity, be it on an individual or on a state level. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the binding but potentially uniting offer of identification the Soviet ideology made for decades also disappeared. In Kazakhstan, large parts of the political elite support renationalization, which means the Kazakhization, of the country.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, (now former) President Nazarbaev has regularly stated that Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic country in which people of different ethnic origins live peacefully together.<sup>67</sup> Thus, tension is rising between a mono-ethnic Kazakh and a multi-ethnic Kazakhstani identity.

No other author of young Russophone literature emphasizes the search for identity in such a present way as Yurii Serebryanskii does. Serebryanskii has Polish roots, he won the Russian Prize twice, as mentioned before, once as a Kazakhstani and once as a Polish author. The protagonists of his winning texts *Destination. Dorozhnaya pastoral*<sup>68</sup> (“Destination. Traveller’s pastoral”) and *Prazhaki*<sup>69</sup> (“Praguers”) are multilingual and cosmopolitan travelers—one

65 Olzhas Suleimenov, *AZ-i-YA: Kniga blagonamerennogo chitatelya* (Alma-Ata: Zhazushy, 1975).

66 Kazakhstan was the only Soviet Republic where the titular ethnicity was in the minority after independence. At that time, more ethnic Russians lived there than ethnic Kazakhs. See Marlen Laryuel and Sebastyan Peirus, *Russkii vopros’ v nezavisimom Kazakhstane: istoriya, politika, identichnost’* (Moscow: Natalis, 2007): 342.

67 See Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010): 12. See chap. 3 *ibid.* for more details on the “challenge of creating Kazakhstanis”.

68 Yurii Serebryanskii, “Destination. Dorozhnaya pastoral,” in *Schastlivaya zhizn’ zarubezhnogo cheloveka*, by Yurii Serebryanskii (no place of publication: Izdatel’skie resheniya, 2017), 3–76.

69 Yurii Serebryanskii, “Prazhaki,” in *Schastlivaya zhizn’ zarubezhnogo cheloveka*, by Yurii Serebryanskii (no place of publication: Izdatel’skie resheniya, 2017), 77–141.

could also say nomads, referring to a traditional Kazakh topos that is still vivid today. The novella *Destination. Dorozhnaya pastoral'* is set in nine different places in seven different countries. The Kazakhstani first-person narrator easily travels between them, but not all places are equally open for travelers, as he notices in Moscow: "Рюкзак у меня не большой, спортивный. Не хочу выглядеть приезжим. Здесь это может быть небезопасно."<sup>70</sup>

The two storylines of *Prazhaki* take place in Prague and Cape Verde. The characters are of international origin; however, the origin of the Prague storyline's Russophone protagonist and first-person narrator Yurii remains unclear. Yurii is temporarily living in Prague, working as a freelancer for a real estate agency. He does not answer question about his plans for the future ("А где собираешься жить? На каком языке?"<sup>71</sup>) nor about his origins. When his Asian girlfriend Ash asks him where he is from, he first ridicules her question ("Да фиг! Я в СССР родился. Космонавтом."<sup>72</sup>), then later, when he is drunk, he leaves her a note which says "Моя родина — KFC"<sup>73</sup>, signed "Сын полковника Сандерса"<sup>74</sup>. Here, the fast food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken and its founder Colonel Harland David Sanders are synonymous with the global culture that is independent of location. At least when drunk, the protagonist—whose former home no longer exists—thinks of himself as a part of this global culture.

In a more recent project, Serebryanskii tries to offer his readers something they can identify with. His book *Kazakhstanskije skazki*<sup>75</sup> ("Kazakhstani fairy tales") is an attempt to create a folklore for all Kazakhstani people, regardless of their ethnic origin. Existing fairy tales in Kazakhstan are usually divided

70 Serebryanskii, "Destination," 60. "My backpack isn't big, it's sporty. I don't want to look like a newcomer. Here, this might be dangerous."

71 Serebryanskii, "Prazhaki," 121. "Where are you going to live? In what language?"

72 Ibid., 136. "Oh fuck! I was born in the USSR. As a cosmonaut." In Soviet times, the myth of cosmonauts provided a possibility of identification rather than irony. The protagonist also refers to the myth when he introduces himself in broken English as "Йюрий [sic]. Как Гагарин. Ферст ин спейс!" (Ibid., 87. "Yurii. Like Gagarin. First in space!" [sic])

73 Ibid., 137. "My home is KFC".

74 Ibid. "Son of Colonel Sanders".

75 Yurii Serebryanskii, *Kazakhstanskije skazki* (Almaty: Aruna, 2017). I discuss this text in more detail in Nina Frieß, "Kasachstanische Märchen" – ein literarisches Identitätsangebot für alle Kasachstaner\*innen (Berlin: ZOiS Report No. 1/2019).

into ethnic categories. For instance, Theodor Becker's fairy tale collection *Märchen der Völker Kasachstans*<sup>76</sup> includes Kazakh, German, Uyghur, Korean, and Dungan fairy tales. At first glance, *Kazakhstanskije skazki* is a children's book. But, as with many fairy tales, it has a second, often critical, ironic, or even political dimension, which appeals to adults as well. The book's inclusive character becomes even more evident by the fact that it is bilingual: every Russophone fairy tale is followed by its Kazakh translation. It is noteworthy that *Kazakhstanskije skazki* is the only book mentioned in this article that was published in a Kazakhstani publishing house.<sup>77</sup>

When I talked to authors about contemporary topics in young Russophone literature in Kazakhstan, I often got the impression—and other interviews confirm this—that Kazakhstani Russophone literature is at a thematic turning point. For instance, a few authors indicate that the upheavals of the 1990s should find their way into literature soon.<sup>78</sup> Others hope for a literary analysis of the current events in Kazakhstan that goes beyond “the record of the moment in which we live”.<sup>79</sup> Whether this will be the case remains to be seen.

## Relationship with Russia and the Russian World

Kazakhstan's young Russophone writers have a lot of good contacts in Russia: Their works constitute an important point of reference on the *New map of Russian literature*. Kazakhstani writers themselves are in constant exchange with their Russian colleagues and they know well how to make use of the resources of Russia's literary market. Nevertheless, they are clearly not dependent on the Russian state. Making use of the resources of Russia's literary market is by no means synonymous with receiving subsidies from the Russian state

.....  
76 Theodor Becker, *Märchen der Völker Kasachstans* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1989).

77 However, most of the fairy tales were published a year before in *Druzhiba Narodov* 8 (2016).

78 See Bannikov, interview. See also Sugralinov in Bazhkenova, “Danijar Sugralinov”.

79 Serebryanskii in Dmitrii Mazorenko, “Yurii Serebryanskii, pisatel’”. However, the author notes that reflection needs time: “Это смешно, когда книги про тот же Донбасс появляются на прилавках через пару недель после развития основных событий. К ним нет никакого доверия. Сиюминутная литературная рефлексия вряд ли может иметь какую-то ценность.” Ibid. (“It's ridiculous when books about the Donbass appear on the bookshelves a few weeks after the things happened. You cannot trust this. This momentary literature can hardly be of any value.”)

(which might in fact result in such a dependence). Ol'ga Markova relates in the literary journal *Znamya* how her efforts to receive Russian funding for the projects of the Fund "Musaget" were to no avail.<sup>80</sup> In the same vein, Rosotrudnichestvo, Russia's Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation, which is in charge of promoting the Russian language and culture abroad, has not made any major advance on Kazakhstan's young Russophone literary scene. One can assume that Russian officials simply do not attribute enough importance to it.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, none of the authors in question is able to make a living as a writer alone. Every one of them works in a day job, often one somehow related to literature. Their need to earn money outside of the field of writing literature makes the young Kazakhstani authors independent of commercial success or failure. Many of them are trying to develop new means of financing, publishing, and distributing literature, most of them connected to the internet. Yurii Serebryanskii, for instance, was able to pay for the printing of his *Kazakhstanskije skazki* thanks to a crowdfunding campaign he launched on the internet.

For all young Russophone Kazakhstani writers, Russian culture in general and Russian literature in particular constitute an important element of their cultural socialization. But all my interlocutors emphasize that this was not their only point of reference. Serebryanskii reveals that Russian literature was only one of several foundations for his creative work.<sup>82</sup> Bannikov says that in any young Russophone Kazakhstani writer's head, there were (at least) two

80 See Markova, "Nasha kul'tura za rubezhom."

81 The current largest official Russian-Kazakhstani literary project—the publication of the *Literaturnyi almanakh Kazakhstan–Rossiya* (*Literary almanac Kazakhstan–Russia*)—is financed by the Kazakhstani state. At the moment, the project consists of three volumes. Volume 1 contains classics and contemporary authors of the neighboring countries. Volume 2 contains texts by younger writers from both countries, among them authors discussed in this article. Volume 3 contains authors that are members of ethnic minorities in their country. See Ministerstvo kul'tury i sporta Respubliki Kazakhstan (et al.), *Literaturnyi almanakh Kazakhstan–Rossiya* (Almaty: Zhibek zholy, 2015; 2016; 2017). In this context, Laruelle argues that Russia can count on the loyalty of the Central Asian states and therefore spends less money on the support of Russian-speaking minorities than it does in the Baltics and Georgia, whose elites are much more skeptical about Russia. See Laruelle, *The "Russian World"*, 18. However, Russia retains its influence on public opinion in Central Asia through a shared information space dominated by Russian media. *Ibid.*, 19.

82 Serebryanskii, interview.

different cultural codes available of which he could make use.<sup>83</sup> Kazakhstani authors see themselves as enjoying a broader artistic foundation than their colleagues from Russia, who—at least in the perspective of my interviewees—often rely on Russian literary tradition alone, neglecting other literary traditions.<sup>84</sup> They see Kazakhstan’s literary scene as being more open, more tolerant, and more cosmopolitan. Serebryanskii and some of his colleagues tend to interpret this alleged tendency not primarily as a result of current developments, but as being connected to Kazakhstan’s traditional nomad culture. In their view, this specific culture is not peculiar to ethnic Kazakhs only, but it has been transferred onto all citizens of Kazakhstan.<sup>85</sup> This echoes a crucial official narrative of the state of Kazakhstan (which seems to be widely shared by young Russophone writers).

These Kazakhstani writers feel that they, as Russophone artists, would firstly be categorized as part of Russian literature. Many—but not all of them—would indeed put themselves in that same category and refuse the notion of Russophone literature. Kanat Omar, for instance, calls himself a “русский поэт, казах по происхождению и [...] гражданин Казахстана”<sup>86</sup>, echoing a famous quotation of Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Brodsky. Their refusal of the notion “Russophone” or “Russian-speaking” (*russkoyazychnyi*) might be attributed to a perceived pejorative connotation of these terms, which is rooted in the dominance of the Russian language within the Russian and Soviet Empires. In that context, using these terms in a non-judgmental sense seems to be impossible.

Kazakhstani writers draw a sharp distinction between Russian culture and the Russian state. As Bannikov puts it in our interview, “Русская литература, русская поэзия не равна российскому государству. Ни в коем случай. Она больше. И она может быть и может быть должна быть с ним не согласна.”<sup>87</sup> Odegov considers Russia to be an alien state.<sup>88</sup> All these writers

83 Bannikov, interview. See also Bannikov, “Literatura ad marginem.”

84 It is interesting to note that in most cases Kazakhstani Russophone writers get their access to literature beyond the Russophone space through the Russian language: in the form of translations into Russian.

85 Serebryanskii, interview.

86 Omar, interview; “Russian poet of Kazakh extraction and [...] with a Kazakhstani passport”.

87 Bannikov, interview; “Russian literature, Russian poetry does not equal the Russian state. Under no circumstances. It is more. And it [the literature; N.F.] does not have to and maybe even cannot agree with it [the state; N.F].”

feel committed to the idea of a Russian World, but as Bannikov puts it: “ни в коем случае ни в том смысле, в котором это имеет в виду мистер Путин”<sup>89</sup>. In their view, Russian civilization is not bound to the state of Russia but it exists wherever the Russian language is in use and may adopt a local character: “Здесь [в Казахстане; N.F.] очень много художников, художников в широком смысле слова, художников и поэтов, и литераторов, и музыкантов, которые продолжают традиции русского искусства, но будучи здесь и внося в него свою уже ноту казахстанскую.”<sup>90</sup> Obviously, the concept of the Russian World, which is volatile anyway, is subject to another reinterpretation, maybe not in theory, but in practice: it becomes (again) a genuine cultural concept with a unifying potential for Russophone people, but it stresses their variety and autonomy. In this interpretation, there is no place for the monopoly of a single player—such as the Russian state—and cultural hierarchy. Thus, Kazakhstani writers of young Russophone literature are in good company on the *New Map of Russian Literature*.

## Bibliography

- Abdullaev, Evgenii. “Almatinskaya anomaliya. O novoi russkoi literature Kazakhstana [The Almaty anomaly. On the new Russian literature of Kazakhstan].” *Novyi Mir* 12 (2015). Accessed January 8, 2019.  
[http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi\\_mi/2015/12/almatinskaya-anomaliya-pr.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2015/12/almatinskaya-anomaliya-pr.html).
- Aytmatov, Chingiz. “I dolshe veka dlitsya den’ [The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years].” *Novyi Mir* 11 (1980): 3—185.
- Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike. *Itogi Natsional’noi perepisi naseleniya Respubliki Kazakhstan 2009 goda* [Results of the 2009 national population census of the Republic of Kazakhstan]. Accessed January 8, 2019.  
<http://stat.gov.kz/getImg?id=WC16200032648>.
- Atoyants, Pavel, and Azat Shaikenov. “‘Sneg v pautine’. Pisatel’ Il’ya Odegov o problemakh, meshajushchikh tvorchestvu i svobodnomu sushchestvovaniyu. I [‘Snow in

---

88 Odegov, interview.

89 Bannikov, interview with Christian Siepmann and the author, June 12, 2017; “never in the way that Mr. Putin understands it”.

90 Ibid. “This country [Kazakhstan; N.F.] is home to many artists, literary figures, and musicians who carry on the tradition of Russian art and lend it a Kazakhstani dimension.”

- the Spiderweb: The writer Il'ya Odegov about the problems disturbing creative work and free existence. I]." *Tengri News*, July 16, 2018. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://tengrinews.kz/conference/264/>.
- Bannikov, Pavel. "Literatura ad marginem [Literature ad marginem]." *Novyi Mir* 12 (2015). Accessed January 8, 2019. [http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi\\_mi/2015/12/literatura-ad-marginem.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2015/12/literatura-ad-marginem.html).
- Bartholomä, Ruth. "Die Diskussion um das Staatliche Sprachenprogramm für 2011–2020 in der Republik Kasachstan [The debate about the state language program for 2011–2020 in the Republic of Kazakhstan]." In *Sprachpolitische Diskurse in russisch-türkischsprachigen Sprachgemeinschaften: Sprachen und Identitäten in Tatarstan und Kasachstan* [Language policy discourses in Russian–Turcic-speaking language communities: Languages and identity in Tatarstan and Kazakhstan], edited by Monika Wingender and Mark Kirchner, 117–158. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015.
- Bazhkenova, Gul'nara. "Daniyar Sugralinov: 'Osen'yu tochno budu v TOP-500 Amazona' [Daniyar Sugralinov: 'In autumn, I will definitely make it in the TOP-500 of Amazon']." *Esquire*, July 24, 2018. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://esquire.kz/daniyar-surgalinov-tochno-budu-v-top-amazon/>.
- Becker, Theodor. *Märchen der Völker Kasachstans* [Fairy tales of the peoples of Kazakhstan]. Alma-Ata: Kasachstan, 1989.
- Braun, Aksana. "Das sprachpolitische Projekt 'Triedinstvo jazykov' im russischsprachigen Diskurs Kasachstans [The language policy project 'Triedinstvo jazykov' [trinity of languages] in the Russophone discourse in Kazakhstan]." In *Sprachpolitische Diskurse in russisch-türkischsprachigen Sprachgemeinschaften: Sprachen und Identitäten in Tatarstan und Kasachstan* [Language policy discourses in Russian–Turcic-speaking language communities: Languages and identity in Tatarstan and Kazakhstan], edited by Monika Wingender and Mark Kirchner, 159–186. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015.
- Caffee, Naomi. "Russophonia: Towards a Transnational Conception of Russian-Language Literature." PhD diss., University of California. Los Angeles, 2013.
- Dombrovskii, Yurii. "Khranitel' drevnostei [The Keeper of Antiquities]." *Novyi Mir* 7 (1964), 3–90 and 8 (1964) 10–67.
- Erenburg, Il'ya. *Otpepel'* [The thaw]. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1954.
- Feaver, Dorothy. "Emigranti – 1917 Revisited." *BBC*, November 5, 2017. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09czz19>.
- Frieß, Nina. „Kasachstanische Märchen“ – ein literarisches Identitätsangebot für alle Kasachstan\*innen ["Kazakhstani fairy tales" – a literary offer of identity for all Kazakhstanis]. Berlin: ZOIS Report No. 1/2019.
- Gayfutdinova, Venera. "Zachem 'Meloman' nachal finansirovat' izdanie knig [Why 'Meloman' started to finance the publication of books]." *Forbes Kazakhstan*, December 19, 2016. Accessed January 8, 2019. [https://forbes.kz/process/zachem\\_meloman\\_nachal\\_finansirovat\\_izdanie\\_knig/](https://forbes.kz/process/zachem_meloman_nachal_finansirovat_izdanie_knig/).
- Gumyrkina, Irina. "Mikhail Zemskov: 'Kazakhstanskoi literature ne khvataet kritiki i ekspertnogo soobshchestva' [Mikhail Zemskov: 'The Kazakhstani literature is in

- need of critics and a community of experts']" *Vlast'*, October 16, 2018. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://vlast.kz/writers/29972-mihail-zemskov-kazhastanskoj-literature-ne-hvataet-kritiki-i-ekspertnogo-soobsestva.html>.
- Institut literatury i iskusstva M. O. Auezova MON RK. *Sovremennaya literatura naroda Kazakhstana* [Contemporary literature of the peoples of Kazakhstan]. Almaty: Evo Press, 2014.
- Kovalev, Georgii. "Rynok kazakhstanskoi literatury perezhivaet renessans [The Kazakhstani book market is experiencing a renaissance]." *Kapital*, December 26, 2017. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://kapital.kz/business/65513/rynok-kazhastanskoj-literatury-perezhivaet-recessans.html>.
- Lankina, Tomila, and Kinga Niemczyk. "Russia's Foreign Policy and Soft Power." In *Russia's Foreign Policy. Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations*, edited by David Cadier and Margot Light, 97–113. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015.
- Laruelle, Marlene. *The "Russian World": Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination*. Washington, D.C.: Center on Global Interests, 2015. Accessed January 8, 2019. [http://globalinterests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FINAL-CGI-Russian-World\\_Marlene-Laruelle.pdf](http://globalinterests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FINAL-CGI-Russian-World_Marlene-Laruelle.pdf).
- Laryuel, Marlen, and Sebastyan Peirus [Marlene Laruelle and Sebastien Peyrouse]. *'Russkii vopros' v nezavisimom Kazakhstane: istoriya, politika, identichnost'* ["The Russian question' in autonomous Kazakhstan: history, politics, identity]. Moscow: Natalis, 2007.
- Maksatkyzy, Bayan. *Obo mne i ne tol'ko* [About me and not only]. Almaty: Kursiv, 2017.
- Markova, Ol'ga. "Nasha kul'tura za rubezhom: nuzhna podderzhka [Our culture abroad: in the need of support]." *Znamya* 8 (2008). Accessed January 8, 2019. <http://magazines.russ.ru/znamia/2008/8/so7.html>.
- Maiskaya, Yuliya. "Kak reanimirovat' knizhnyi rynek v Kazakhstane [How to reanimate the book market in Kazakhstan]." *Total*, September 28, 2016. Accessed January 8, 2019. [https://total.kz/ru/news/kultura/chto\\_mojet\\_reanimirovat\\_knijnyiy\\_ryinok\\_kazhastana](https://total.kz/ru/news/kultura/chto_mojet_reanimirovat_knijnyiy_ryinok_kazhastana).
- Mazorenko, Dmitrii. "Yurii Serebryanskii, pisatel': 'Kazakhstanskije pisateli byli obeskurazheny otsutstviem tsenzury' [Yurii Serebryanskii, writer: 'Kazakhstani writers were discouraged by the lack of censorship']" *Vlast'*, October 1, 2015. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://vlast.kz/writers/13289-urij-serebranskij-pisatel-kazhastanskije-pisateli-byli-obeskurazheny-otsutstviem-cenzury.html>.
- Morrison, Alexander. "Russian Beyond Russia." *Eurasianet*, April 20, 2017. Accessed January, 2019. <https://eurasianet.org/russian-beyond-russia>.
- Ministerstvo kul'tury i sporta Respubliki Kasakhstan, Posol'stvo Respubliki Kazakhstan v Rossijskoi Federatsii, Literaturnaya gazeta (Moskva), and Soyuz pisatelei Kazakhstana, eds. *Literaturnyi almanakh Kazakhstan–Rossiya* [Literary almanac Kazakhstan–Russia]. Almaty: Zhibek zholy, 2015; 2016; 2017.
- Nazarbaev, Nursultan. "Poslanie Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan N. Nazarbaeva narodu Kazakhstana [Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbaev, to the People of Kazakhstan]." *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan*, February 28, 2007. Accessed January 8, 2019.

- [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses\\_of\\_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-nnazarbaeva-narodu-kazahstana-28-fevralya-2007-g](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-nnazarbaeva-narodu-kazahstana-28-fevralya-2007-g).
- Odegov, Il'ya. "Ovtsa [The Sheep]." *Druzhba Narodov* 10 (2013). Accessed January 8, 2019. <http://magazines.russ.ru/druzhba/2013/10/3o.html>.
- . "Sneg v pautine [Snow in the spiderweb]." *Novyi Mir* 12 (2015). Accessed January 8, 2019. [http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi\\_mi/2015/12/sneg-v-pautine.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2015/12/sneg-v-pautine.html).
- Olcott, Martha Brill. *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010.
- Oraz, Dina. "Ot tkani teksta k tkani prostranstva [From the material of the text to the material of the space]." *Literaturnyi portal*, October 12, 2018. Accessed January 8, 2019. [http://adebiportal.kz/ru/news/view/ot\\_tkani\\_teksta\\_k\\_tkani\\_prostranstva\\_\\_20713](http://adebiportal.kz/ru/news/view/ot_tkani_teksta_k_tkani_prostranstva__20713).
- Otkrytaya Literaturnaya Shkola Almaty. "O shkole [About the school]." Accessed January 8, 2019. [http://litshkola.kz/?page\\_id=9](http://litshkola.kz/?page_id=9).
- Polovinko, Vyacheslav. "Fantasticheskaya Dar'ya i gde ona obitaet [The fantastic Darya and where she lives]." *Esquire*, December 6, 2016. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://esquire.kz/fantasticheskaya-daryya-i-gde-ona-obitaet/>.
- Reporters without borders. "Kazakhstan". Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://rsf.org/en/kazakhstan>.
- Romashkina, Svetlana. "Pavel Bannikov, poet: 'Kazazhstankii poet kak vecnyi marginal' [Pavel Bannikov, poet: 'The Kazakhstani poet as an eternal marginal']." *Vlast'*, September 18, 2015. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://vlast.kz/writers/13106-pavel-bannikov-poet-kazahstanskij-poet-kak-vecnyj-marginal.html>.
- Serebryanskii, Yurii. "Destination. Dorozhnaya pastoral' [Destination. Traveler's Pastoral]." In *Schastlivaya zhizn' zarubezhnogo cheloveka* [The happy life of a foreigner], by Yurii Serebryanskii, 3–76. No place of publication: Izdatel'skie resheniya, 2017.
- . "Prazhaki [Praguers]." In *Schastlivaya zhizn' zarubezhnogo cheloveka* [The happy life of a foreigner], by Yurii Serebryanskii, 77–141. No place of publication: Izdatel'skie resheniya, 2017.
- . *Kazakhstanskii skazki* [Kazakhstani fairy tales]. Almaty: Aruna, 2017.
- Suleimenov, Olzhas. *AZ-i-YA: Kniga blagonamernnogo chitatel'ya* [AZ-i-Ya: The book of the right-minded reader]. Alma-Ata: Zhazushy, 1975.
- Velichko, Maks. "Umerla Ol'ga Markova [Olga Markova passed away]." *Karavan*, December 5, 2008. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://www.caravan.kz/news/umerla-olga-markova-157164/>.
- Zhuravleva, Ekaterina. "Kto zarabatyvaet na knizhnom rynke Kazakhstana [Who makes money on the Kazakhstani book market]." *LS*, August 25, 2018. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://lsm.kz/knizhnyj-biznes>.