

Writing on the Margins? Building the New Literary Economy in Post-Soviet Kazakhstani Russophone Literature

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INTRODUCTION

THIS paper explores the process of building a new literary community of the young Russian-language writers in Kazakhstan starting from the 2000s. I argue that the collapse of the Soviet centralized ideological system of literary production has led to radical reconfiguration of Russian-language literary space in Kazakhstan. One fundamental change has been a shift in the relationship between the center and periphery. National independence put the new generation of authors in Kazakhstan in the simultaneously marginal and advantageous position of being both Russian and non-Russian writers. Their Russianness (in terms of ethnic and linguistic background of some of the authors) has given them some initial literary prestige and cultural/literary capital associated with Russian language and literature as well as some connections with literary life in the Russian Federation. Their non-Russianness (connected with their citizenship, ethnic background and complex identities) has enabled them to be more independent politically and aesthetically as well as to establish international contacts and to keep up with literary modernity or current world literary trends. In the crisis of previous literary infrastructure and a lack of support, the authors have created new ways of writing and (inter)acting within the literary sphere that can be called a new literary economy. Methodologically, I rely on the conceptual distinc-

tion between postcoloniality and decolonization, and I consider the formation of the new literary economy as a decolonizing practice¹. By creating their own community, subculture and, most importantly, literary works, the authors produce a new literary phenomenon that is less affected by the legacy of (post-)coloniality. While posing as new subjects, they thus transform their postcoloniality into a tool of decolonization: the writers do not identify themselves as belonging to periphery, nor do they ignore the frame of center/periphery. Instead, they have a more cosmopolitan view of the Russophone and world literary space as consisting of many centers, with Kazakhstan being one of them.

The young Kazakhstani Russophone authors' decolonizing way of thinking and acting manifests itself in their reflection on their own experience as well as on the transformation of this experience into literary works. Their perspective, sense of identity, and attention to the present moment results in the production of literary accounts of Kazakhstani realities². In this way, they invigorate Russophonia and strengthen the role of the Russian language as a realm of intercultural communication. Based on my analysis of the new literary economy in Kazakhstan, I consider Russophonia as a postcolonial space that now gives more and more opportunities for decolonizing practices. In this regard, Russophonia is the realm of different cultural and experiential worlds developed through the medium of the Russian language.

My assumption is that being a Russophone author gives a writer some literary capital, but the

* I would like to thank dr. Victoria Thorstensson and dr. Rossen Djagalov for their inspiring help as well as dr. Naomi Caffee and dr. Nina Friess for their valuable comments on the earlier versions of this paper.

¹ M. Tlostanova, *Dekolonial'nost' bytiia, znaniia i oschushcheniia*, Almaty 2020, p. 18.

² About the concept of decolonizing choice see Ibidem.

question is how the author will accumulate and increase this capital. To account for the situation of post-Soviet Russophone literature in Kazakhstan, I use Pascale Casanova's concept of literary capital. Based on my interpretation of Casanova, I introduce the concept of literary economy and assume that a new literary economy first means a new way of building and utilizing literary capital. According to Casanova, "literary capital is both what everyone seeks to acquire and what is universally recognized as the necessary and sufficient condition of taking part in literary competition"³. Literary capital is determined by a glorious past of a literature, its prominent books and its authors. The structure of contemporary literary space is conditioned by unequal distribution of the capital in the world⁴. Based on these ideas, one can assume that any economy is expected to produce something, and this production can lead to further accumulation of capital. I argue that the younger Kazakhstani authors produce a new type of literature (contemporary Kazakhstani Russophone literature) by (re-)writing language, time and space, and in doing so, they produce new bilingual, historical and spatial imagination that results in (their and their readers') new identity. In my view, this process of rewriting gives the authors an opportunity to create their surplus value. By "value" I mean new meanings and new ways of being Russophone.

One key theory in my research is Casanova's concept of literature as a world, a space in which certain structures and relationships are embedded⁵. The idea of literary economy assumes that literature is a self-regulating system. Here I refer to initial literate meaning of the Greek words οἶκος – 'household' and νέμωμαι – 'manage'. The concept of literary economy refers to the act of a new literature creating its own infrastructure and literary space, or in other words, when a literature attempts to give itself direction, including making its way to join world literary space. In this regard, literary economy is not only about money, because within this economy, the value can

be expressed in different forms, including prestige, number and quality of publications, literary awards, translations, etc.

Another important conceptual source to the idea of literary economy in my paper is the notion of moral economy developed by E. P. Thompson⁶. The concept means that economic activities are subjects to moral, not only material, regulations⁷. Particular groups of people can have some values and expectations associated with how an economy should work⁸. The idea of literary economy draws on this sense of mutual obligations, cooperation and community embedded in the notion of moral economy. As we will see in the following sections, a series of collective literary projects developed by the young Kazakhstani writers demonstrates that they have shared values, attitudes, and plans, and they perceive themselves as members of a new community.

EMERGING AS A NEW CENTER: BETWEEN SUCCESS AND MARGINALITY

"Literature ad marginem": this is how Pavel Bannikov, one of the informal leaders of the young generation of contemporary Kazakhstani writers, referred to Russophone Literature in Kazakhstan in 2015⁹. This definition reflects hierarchical ideas about the center and periphery, the superior and inferior. By invoking the sense of being on the edge, which refers to stereotypical and imperial geographical imagination, this qualification rejects a subordinate view of Central Asian literature as a cultural province of Russian literature¹⁰. Bannikov's position was supported by another Central Asian writer and critic, Evgenii

⁶ E. P. Thompson, *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century*, "Past & Present", 1971, 50, pp. 76-136.

⁷ Ivi, p. 79.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ P. Bannikov, *Literature ad marginem*, "Novyi Mir", 2015, 12, p. 196.

¹⁰ Interestingly enough, in a recent publication Bannikov comes back to this trope and reevaluates it, writing that: "previously the Kazakhstani literary community existed as if separately or on the edge, ad marginem. However, now, while being preserved conceptually (by not focusing on Russian literature in Russia exclusively), gradually this separation becomes a thing of the past". To give an image of what has happened in the period between the two publications, Bannikov calls these years "the return of the Jedi", while highlighting by that the Kazakhstani authors' stronger integra-

³ P. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, Cambridge 2004, p. 17.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ivi, p. 4.

Abdullaev, who also shared the idea that margins matter, coining one more metaphor for Russophone literature in Kazakhstan, “the Almaty anomaly”¹¹. This locution highlights the fact that Russophone literary life in Almaty is highly energetic, and in this sense, is an “abnormality” for the post-Soviet literary landscape outside of Russia¹².

The metaphor of “literature ad marginem” points to an important feature of post-Soviet Russian literature. The modifier ‘Russian’ is problematic, because it fails to recognize the complexity of literary landscape in the newly independent states. Instead, here, the term ‘Russophone’ literature, which follows an established pattern of the concepts of Francophone and Anglophone literatures, has been proposed¹³. This term, on the one hand, stresses the deep connection between Russian and Russophone literature as written in the same language, and, on the other hand, emphasizes the difference between them¹⁴. Naomi Caffee argues that the term Russophonia refers to “the totality of social, linguistic, and geo-political environments in which Russian-speaking authors write and live”¹⁵. According to her, Russophonia includes “both ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking diasporas outside of the Russian federation, notably in émigré centers of the United States, Israel, Western Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus”¹⁶. This concept of Russophone literature is rooted in postcolonial methodology and refers to the fact that literature in Russian can be heterogeneous, expressing non-Russianness while giving voice to the other¹⁷. Dirk Uffelmann stresses the cyber-dimension of Russophonia and argues that

linguistic identities of Runet users in Kazakhstan are flexible and therefore “the Russophone identity of the Eurasian web community provides no more than a situational linguistic habit”¹⁸. This means that Russophone identity can be combined with many other identities.

How does Russophone literature differ from the literature of the Russian diaspora? While Caffee includes literature of diaspora in her definition of Russophone writing, I argue that they have some notable differences. The main distinction concerns the writers’ self-identification – whether or not they feel themselves as representatives of a diaspora whose identity is determined by the sense of attachment to the mother country. I argue that it is very difficult to find signs of such diaspora self-consciousness in the works by the writers with Slavic ethnic background in Kazakhstan analysed in this paper. On the contrary, the writers tend to embrace their Kazakhstani identity. To illustrate this, in one of his interviews Il’ia Odegov, a winner of the Russian Prize, whose works were published in major Russian literary journals, said: “Kazakhs are closer and more dear to me than Russians from Russia”¹⁹. This indicates that Odegov has incorporated Kazakhness as part of his subjectivity and identity. In a similar vein, *Kazakhstani Fairy Tales* (2017), a book by another winner of the Russian Prize, Iurii Serebrianskii, demonstrates the author’s fascination with the country’s landscape as his native environment, and shows that he does not perceive himself as a representative of diaspora²⁰. By proposing his “Kazakhstani folklore”, Serebrianskii constructs his version of what can be called a Kazakhstani super-ethnic national and literary imaginary. As we will see later, Anuar Duisenbinov and Diusenbek Nakipov also create their own versions of the Russian-Kazakh inter-language. This explicitly shows that the community of Kazakhstani Russophone writers is highly diverse. It demonstrates a

tion into the galaxy or mainland of contemporary Russian literature. See: P. Bannikov, *Ruskaia literatura v Kazakhstane: 2015-2020. Vozvrashchenie dzhedaev*, “Daktil”, 2020, 4, <<https://www.daktil.kz/4/article/pavel-bannikov/russkaya-literatura-v-kazakhstane-2015-2020-vozhraschenie-dzhedaev-47>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

¹¹ E. Abdullaev, *Almatinskaia anomalii. O novoi russkoi literature Kazakhstana*, “Novyi Mir”, 2015, 12, p. 188.

¹² Ivi, p. 195.

¹³ N. Caffee, *Russophonia: Towards a Transnational Conception of Russian-Language Literature*, PhD diss., University of California 2013.

¹⁴ Ivi, p. 28.

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 20.

¹⁶ Ivi, p. 28.

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 36.

¹⁸ D. Uffelmann, *Post-Russian Eurasia and the Proto-Eurasian Usage of the Runet in Kazakhstan: A Plea for a Cyberlinguistic Turn in Area Studies*, “Journal of Eurasian Studies”, 2011, 2, p. 178.

¹⁹ S. Ianyshv, *Kazakhi mne blizhe i rodnee, chem rossiiskie russkie*: Interv’iu s Il’ei Odegovym, <<http://www.russpremia.ru/press/000000246/>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

²⁰ Iu. Serebrianskii, *Kazakhstanskii skazki*, Almaty 2017.

complex postcolonial situation that strongly affects the ethnic group associated with former metropolia – i.e., there are not only Kazakhs writing in Russian and not identifying themselves as Russians, but there are also ethnic Russians (or Slavs) writing in Russian and identifying themselves as ‘other Russians’. Therefore, the nature of Russophone literature in Kazakhstan is more complex than that of the literature of the Russian diaspora.

The importance and specificity of Russophone literature that acknowledges the diversity of the Russian-speaking world is gaining attention in Russia. In December 2015, two well-known Russian literary journals, “Novyi Mir” and “Neva”, released issues completely dedicated to contemporary Kazakhstani literature²¹. These two issues are not isolated. They are evidence of the growing recognition of Kazakhstani writers’ creative merit. They indicate a trend in which the literary establishment (specifically in Moscow and Saint Petersburg) is becoming more aware of Russophone literature and its impact. Russian literary awards, too, are acknowledging contemporary Kazakhstani literature in a way they previously did not. This includes the Russian Prize – one of the top five Russian literary awards that was focused on writings by authors living outside Russia²². Since its conception in 2005, the Russian Prize has gone to Kazakhstani writers seven times. In 2016, the Prize was awarded to Almaty open literary school for “the contribution to the development and preservation of the Russian culture traditions outside the Russian Federation”. The Russian literary journal “Druzhba Narodov”, specializing in Russian literature outside Russia and translations, also looks closely at Kazakhstani authors: their works are published regularly in the journal. It is not by chance that in 2019 Il’ia Odegov joined its editorial board. Furthermore, in 2018 Iurii Serebrianskii also became the editor of the prose department of the online Russian journal “LiTerraTura”.

Such interest in the Russophone literature from

well-known Russian journals and literary awards indicates a significant change: Kazakhstani writers are no longer on a literary periphery. They are now in a new developing center of Russophone literature, which by definition can have many centers. Thus, contemporary Russophone literature is being decentralized. In its place, a new Russian-language literary space is being constructed, along with a new economy and new ways of (inter)acting within this space.

The decentralization of literature also reflects radical changes on the post-Soviet cultural and political map. As Edith Clowes argues, space and spatial metaphors became intrinsic to contemporary Russian consciousness preoccupied with “imagined geographies”, with periphery being the most important of them²³. Kevin Platt highlighted the significance of this spatial notion by showing that within the Russophone world, a center can be located on periphery: for example, Latvian Russians consider themselves to be representatives of a Russian high culture that likely cannot be found in Russia. Platt calls this situation the “center on periphery”²⁴. Clowes explains how such “imagined geographies” work in literature: contemporary Russian writers reconsider their identities and formulate their sense of self by creating “fictional spaces of self and other”²⁵.

The role of cultural production in shaping a new spatial meaning is highly important, because “there is no ‘fundamental’ or ‘natural’ relationship between culture and geographical location”, and “the very category of ‘Russian territory’ is itself produced by culture, and not the reverse”²⁶. In this regard, the young Russophone writers in Kazakhstan belong to “global Russian cultures”²⁷. They create their own spatial metaphors and geographies to express their Kazakhstani or global identities, and in doing

²³ E. Clowes, *Russia on the Edge. Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity*, Ithaca-London 2011, p. 4.

²⁴ K. M. F. Platt, *Gegemonia bez gospodstva / Diaspora bez emigratsii: Russkaia kul'tura v Latvii*, “Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie”, 2014, 127, pp. 210-211.

²⁵ E. Clowes, *Russia on the Edge*, p. 4.

²⁶ K. M. F. Platt, *Introduction. Putting Russian Cultures in Place*, in Idem (ed. by), *Global Russian Cultures*, Madison 2019, pp. 3-18 (8).

²⁷ Ivi, p. 3.

²¹ “Neva”, 2015, 12; “Novyi Mir”, 2015, 12.

²² “*Russkaia Premiia*” ob’ iavila imena laureatov konkursa po itogam 2016 goda, *Russkaia Premiia*, April, 21, 2017, <<http://russpremia.ru/>> (latest access: 12.07.2021). The prize does not exist anymore.

so they contribute to the decentralization of Russophone world(s). The reconsideration of the notion of the center and periphery impacts the writers' self-consciousness and identification. In the interviews I have conducted with Kazakhstani authors, they said that they feel themselves quite independent of the current situation in Moscow both politically and aesthetically, and they believe that the Russian capital is no longer the only center of Russian culture²⁸.

These considerations reflect a radical paradigm shift in post-Soviet times. The Soviet literary space was highly centralized and hierarchical. The power, ideology and state institutions played a critical role in it²⁹. This was an entirely state-controlled literary economy. Moscow was not only the literary capital, but also a political, ideological and economic center. According to Casanova, literary economy is always dependent on the center (or perhaps centers), because literary production is almost impossible without some power that authorizes the status of writers and their works³⁰. In the Soviet Union, this role of the center was strengthened for political and ideological reasons. After the collapse of the USSR, some key institutions (mostly state institutions) of former literary space disappeared. The centralized infrastructure was broken, and the very shift of the center and periphery changed the literary economy within the territory of the former Soviet Union. Some places that had previously been considered as the 'margins', especially outside of Russia, now were cut from the bigger centralized literary space and were forced to revitalize, change or start their own literary traditions. This is how self-regulation and self-organization of new literary communities were stimulated on the 'margins'. In this way, Russian/Russophone literature in Kazakhstan, as well as Russian-language community of authors in other post-Soviet states not only experienced a severe

crisis, but also got a chance to develop their own independent systems of literary relations.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the social and cultural situation in Kazakhstan was determined by the country's divided linguistic environment: although Russophone literature can be used to express Kazakhness, it is still written in Russian, and therefore it can be considered as an obstacle to nation-building and to the development of national culture³¹. The state language of Kazakhstan is Kazakh. At the same time, Russian is still actively used in the public domain, especially in the main cities and in the North and the East of the country. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (§7.2), the equal use of Russian language in state institutions is guaranteed. As the last 2009 census showed, 88,2% of Kazakhstani population fluently read in Russian³². It is possible that Russian will lose some of its prominence. Alternatively, Russian language might find its own niche (for example, as a tool of interaction between different ethnic groups, in mass media and higher education), regardless of the growing use of Kazakh³³. As Alexander Morrison pointed out, "it is clear that proficiency in the Kazakh language has increased significantly in the last 20 years, but it has not come at the expense of Russian"³⁴. On the one hand, shrinking of Russian-language public domain can potentially damage Russophone literature, but on the other, many Kazakh speakers might still be interested in reading and writing Russophone literary works due to widespread bilingualism among the Kazakhs. The continuing demand for books in Russian can be illustrated by the fact that in 2016 34,9% of all books published in Kazakhstan were in

³¹ "Tension is rising between a mono-ethnic Kazakh and a multi-ethnic Kazakhstani identity", N. Friess, *Young Russophone Literature in Kazakhstan and the 'Russian World'*, in N. Friess – K. Kaminskii (ed. by), *Resignification of Borders: Eurasianism and the Russian World*, Berlin 2019, pp. 149-174 (166).

³² "Itogi Natsional'noi perepisi naseleniia Respubliki Kazakhstan 2009 goda". Analiticheskii otchet. Astana (2011), 23.

³³ W. Fierman, *Russian in Post-Soviet Central Asia: A Comparison with the States of the Baltic and South Caucasus*, "Europe-Asia Studies", 2012 (64), 6, p. 1097.

³⁴ A. Morrison, *Russian Beyond Russia*, EurasiaNet, April 20, 2017, <<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/83296>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

²⁸ Bannikov, Pavel. Interviewed by Dmitriy Melnikov. Astana, July 2016; Duisenbinov, Anuar. Interviewed by Dmitriy Melnikov. Astana, July 2016; Omar, Kanat. Interviewed by Dmitriy Melnikov. Astana, July 2016; Sekerbaeva, Zhanar. Interviewed by Dmitriy Melnikov. Astana, July 2016.

²⁹ E. Dobrenko, *Socialist Realism*, in E. Dobrenko – M. Balina (ed. by), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 100-101.

³⁰ P. Casanova, *The World Republic*, op. cit., p. 88.

Russian and 48,3% in Kazakh³⁵. The book market in the country is still largely dominated by the Russian publishers. Ninety percent of works published in Kazakhstan are schoolbooks and textbooks³⁶. However, what poses a problem is the limited connection between Russophone and Kazakh literatures and media in the country. The two linguistic domains sometimes seem to inhabit parallel worlds. In this regard, it should be noted that some Russophone writers with Kazakh ethnic background (Anuar Duisenbinov and Diusenbek Nakipov) try to bridge this gap using translations and incorporating Kazakh into their Russian texts³⁷.

At the same time, the main problem hindering the development of Kazakhstani Russophone literature might not be the lack of state support, but instead the severely underdeveloped publishing and book market in the country. As both publishers and writers acknowledge, it is unprofitable to publish a book by a Kazakhstani author, because the book can be sold at cost price at best³⁸. There are only rare exceptions, with Iurii Serebrianskii's *Kazakhstani Fairy Tales* being one of them³⁹. This is one of the reasons why many young Kazakhstani authors try to

publish their works abroad, mainly through Russian literary journals and publishers. Bookstores are also reluctant to sell books by local authors, due to the scarce audience for this literature and perhaps also to the sellers' lack of understanding of or familiarity with contemporary literature. In addition, many readers have a biased view of Kazakhstani literature as inferior to Russian and foreign ones⁴⁰. This forces Kazakhstani writers to publish their works either on their own expense or to rely on sponsors' funds (or even, more rarely, on crowdfunding).

All these circumstances again reflect the marginality of Kazakhstani Russophone authors⁴¹. However, this crisis of literature as a social and cultural institution and "the compartmentalization of the literary field" is present even beyond Kazakhstan⁴². According to Evgeny Dobrenko and Mark Lipovetskii, it characterizes the larger context of post-Soviet Russian literature⁴³. The turbulence of post-Soviet history determined the current situation of Russian and Russophone literature. To fully understand the condition of contemporary Kazakhstani Russophone literature, we need to take into account this complex historical background. The way the younger writers deal with all the difficulties, as well as their efforts to join global literary space and to accumulate literary capital demonstrate that these authors acknowledge that the previous form of literary production is no longer possible. Many of them have accepted the challenges of the new political and economic era and developed their strategies to achieve literary success in these difficult circumstances.

LITERARY TIME AS THE RESOURCE FOR A NEW LITERARY ECONOMY

The origin of the new literary economy in Kazakhstan has been determined by the dissociation from

³⁵ A. Turkaev, *Izdatel'skii biznes na grani vyzyvaniia*, kursiv.kz, April 5, 2017, <<https://www.kursiv.kz/news/kompanii1/odnoj-i-z-glavnyh-pricin-padenia-proizvodstva-izdateli-nazyvaut-ekspansiu-elektronnyh-knig-i-internet-magazinov/>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

³⁶ N. Friess, *Publishing in Kazakhstan: new ways for writers*, ZOIS Spotlight, 2019, 43 <<https://en.zois-berlin.de/publications/zois-spotlight/archiv-2019/publishing-in-kazakhstan-new-ways-for-writers>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

³⁷ See: A. Duisenbinov, *Ochen' stranno perezhivat' za kazahskii po-russki*, <https://adebiportal.kz/ru/news/view/ochen_stranno_perezhivat_za_kazahskii_porusski__2194?fbclid=IwAR2JRHbtnFLb6vnTbGla-FblLuzVYQyjqft_p6Eg4KlLwwQaZzaHbJ8Gbqc> (latest access: 12.07.2021); A. Nurgazy, *Korkyt*, <<http://articulationproject.net/10392>> (latest access: 12.07.2021); E. Diuisen, *Stikhi*, <<http://articulationproject.net/4394>> (latest access: 12.07.2021); A. Suleimen, *Stikhi*, <<http://articulationproject.net/4376>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

³⁸ M. Munbaeva, *V Kazahstane izdateli pobaivaiutsia novykh autorov, a pisateli ne veriat izdateliam*, zakon.kz, April 30, 2013, <<https://www.zakon.kz/4554534-v-kazahstane-izdateli-pobaiivajutsja.html>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

³⁹ The book is a unique project developed by the Kazakhstani publisher Aruna. A crowdfunding campaign initiated by the publisher and the writer and the sale of the book were successful. Due to this financial achievement and the public's interest, *Kazakhstani Fairy Tales* were recently published one more time. The reason behind this success is not only the unusual content of the book, but also the illustrations by the famous Kazakhstani painter Viacheslav Liui-Ko.

⁴⁰ M. Munbaeva, *V Kazahstane*, op. cit.

⁴¹ S. Romashkina, *Kazahstanskii poet kak vechnyi marginal: Inter'iu s Pavlom Bannikovym*, vlast.kz, September 18, 2015, <<https://vlast.kz/writers/13106-pavel-bannikov-poet-kazahstanskij-poet-kak-vecnyj-marginal.html>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁴² E. Dobrenko – M. Lipovetskii, *The Burden of Freedom: Russian Literature after Communism*, in Idem (ed. by), *Russian Literature since 1991*, Cambridge 2015, pp. 1-19.

⁴³ Ibidem.

the Soviet style literary economy of the older generation of writers. Particularly, the young authors are not satisfied with the moral or value aspect of the previously dominant economy. In an interview with a telling title, *The Young Poet and the "Naphthalene" of the Writers Union*, Pavel Bannikov explicitly and emotionally criticizes values and attitudes dominant in the literary circle of the older writers⁴⁴. When the interviewer asks Bannikov what he would change in how the Kazakhstani Writers Union functions, the interviewee replies that there is no point in changing anything, because this type of literary organization is no longer viable. "They are attached to the past", and they cannot adapt to the present⁴⁵. As an alternative, Bannikov proposes a "joint project" that he radically differentiates from "Union's thinking". According to him, the members of the Union are always concentrated on their own interests. Bannikov puts his idea in economic terms: the members' ineffective egocentrism "interferes with the production of a literary product for the public". On the contrary, "project thinking" is focused on the literary product. Bannikov considers literary festivals to be an example of this new type of thinking⁴⁶.

In 2010s, a number of literary festivals were held in Almaty. The name of the biggest of them, "Polifoniia" (2014 and 2015), suggests the young authors' propensity to accept the diversity and changes by listening to different voices⁴⁷. The festival's motto "To hear. To read. To understand" confirmed that the event was designed as a platform for interaction and artistic networking. The poetic festival *Sozyv* (2012 and 2013) had similar aims⁴⁸. The Writers Union and the festivals are remarkably distinct from one another in both structure and tone. The Union is a sep-

arate and even isolated entity with a strong hierarchy, membership and rules that make it a rather closed organization. It is very difficult to become a member of the Union (most probably not only in Kazakhstan, but in other countries, too). On the contrary, participating in a festival (and possibly becoming a member of its informal community) does not require formal membership, and in most cases new people are welcome (facilitating horizontal networking). The festivals do not impose obligations, whereas being a formal member of a hierarchical organization like the Union does. As Bannikov said, unlike the Union, the festivals were outward-oriented, i.e., oriented to the audience. They were arranged not to fix what already exists, but rather to incorporate new, innovative ideas and writing practices.

As one can see in the program of the literary festivals, one of their main goals was to understand the current literary situation and to examine recent trends more closely⁴⁹. More generally, this attention to the present moment points to the acute sense of literary contemporaneity in the organizers. My assumption is that the young Kazakhstani Russophone authors energetically draw on and further develop such an important resource for a new literary economy as literary time, and more particularly literary temporality of Almaty as one of the centers of contemporary Russophone literature. The writers' strong emphasis on literary time is evident in their commitment to create what they sometimes call "sovremennaia aktual'naia literatura" [contemporary relevant literature] and to join global literary time/space.

Relying on Casanova's concept of literary time and literary modernity, I emphasize the difference between the young and older generations of the contemporary Kazakhstani Russophone writers and their different approaches to the way literature as a cultural and economic institution should function⁵⁰. I argue that the difference between the two generations is a testament to the fact that there are two different models of literary time or (at least) two different literary temporalities in Kazakhstan. Ac-

⁴⁴ A. Kenzhebekova, *Molodoi poet i 'naftalin' Soiuz pisatelei: Interv'iu s Pavlom Bannikovym*, azattyq.org, August 9, 2014, <<http://rus.azattyq.org/a/interview-poet-pavel-bannikov/25479933.html>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ V. Rodenkova, *Slyshat'. Chitat'. Ponimat'*, <<https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/45161/slyshat-chitat-ponimat.html>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁴⁸ *V Almaty proidet vtoroi poeticheskii festival' Sozyv*, <<https://kapital.kz/kapital-style/18261/v-almaty-proidet-vtoroy-poeti-cheskii-festival-s%D3%A9zyv.html>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁴⁹ V. Rodenkova, *Slyshat'*, op. cit.

⁵⁰ P. Casanova, *The World Republic*, op. cit., p. 90.

According to Casanova, literary modernity is the key organizing principle of the world literary space⁵¹. It is the true center of the space: "The continually re-defined present of literary life constitutes a universal artistic clock by which writers must regulate their work if they wish to attain legitimacy"⁵². As I have mentioned above, the primary focus of the younger Kazakhstani writers is to be modern, not traditionalist. This is the main criterion by which they evaluate contemporary literary phenomena. According to Bannikov, the Writer's Union and the majority of its members do not meet this criterion⁵³. For this reason, the younger writers consider them as anachronistic⁵⁴. My assumption is that in contemporary Kazakhstani Russophone literature the difference between literary modernity (contemporaneity) and literary traditionalism can be seen in a writer's ability to use or at least to take into account postmodern poetics. Traditionalist writing not only tends toward realism, but also often contains some realistic clichés. Stylistic experiments are not welcomed within this approach to literature.

My definition of 'young writers' includes Kazakhstani authors who were born from the mid-1970s on (they have little or no Soviet experience), and I consider 'older writers' to be those born in the early 1960s or before (they were mostly educated in the Soviet Union). The gap between them is about 15-20 years. There are some exceptions, such as Diusenbek Nakipov, who in terms of his age belonged to the older generation (he was born in 1946), but in terms of his poetics, literary contacts and social position can be associated with the young generation. This may have something to do with the fact that he started his literary career after Kazakhstan's independence.

In this regard, it should be noted that despite the social and generational break caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the young generation of contemporary Russophone writers (who mainly live in Almaty) did not emerge from a vacuum. In

Kazakhstani republic, Russophone writing was an important phenomenon already in late Soviet time with some well-known authors of Kazakh ethnic background writing in Russian, such as Olzhas Suleimenov, Bakhytzhan Kanap'ianov, and Anuar Alimzhanov⁵⁵. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, literary traditions and institutions in its former republics were shattered. At the same time, in Kazakhstan the Writers Union continued to exist⁵⁶. However, due to lack of state support, it became a largely symbolic organization that is located in a building in the center of Almaty recognized as an architectural heritage. In the 1990s, radical social and cultural changes led new independent literary communities to challenge the Union's monopoly over national literature. This was a difficult period for Kazakhstani literature during which no major literary works by Russophone writers were published. One of the new communities was a group of writers cooperating with Musaget fund and publishing house (and journal "Apollinari", 1993-2009)⁵⁷ and the other was a community associated with Iskander publishing house (and journal "Knigoliub", 2001-2014)⁵⁸. After the fund Musaget ceased to exist in 2008, Almaty Open Literary School was opened in 2009 by its former members⁵⁹.

In the ten to fifteen years after independence, a gap between the older and young generations of writers appeared, and if the former was born within the Soviet context with its established literary institutions and canon, the latter "brought up itself"⁶⁰. However, already in the early 2000s, the work of the independent communities resulted in some publications in Russian high quality literary journals and in the

⁵¹ R. Tuksaitova, *Bilingvisticheskaia situatsia v sovremennom Kazakhstane*, "Russkii iazyk za rubezhom", 2007, 1, p. 100.

⁵² *Soiuzu pisatelei Kazakhstana ispolniaetsia 85 let*, <https://baignews.kz/news/soyuzu_pisateley_kazakhstana_ispolnyaetsia_85_let/> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁵³ M. Meklin, *Many Countries, One Language: Literature of the Russian Diaspora*, "Toronto Slavic Quarterly", 2004, 11, <<http://sites.utoronto.ca/tsq/11/meklin11.shtml>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁵⁴ P. Bannikov, *Preodolenie otchuzhdeniia*, "Literatura", December 21, 2014, <<http://literatura.org/criticism/757-pavel-bannikov-p-reodolenie-otchuzhdeniya.html>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ V. Savel'eva, *Pokolenie, vospitavshee sebja samo*, "Prostor", 2016, 12, p. 163.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ A. Kenzhebekova, *Molodoi poet*, op. cit.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

series “Contemporary Kazakhstani Novel” (2001–2003, sponsored by Fund Soros Kazakhstan)⁶¹. As for the generalization of these difficult years, Pavel Bannikov referred to the whole post-Soviet time as a period of alienation: “Alienation from the reader, from the publisher, alienation of the generations from each other, and the alienation of the authors of the national literary traditions”⁶². This multifaceted alienation meant that not only writers struggled to find their place and identity, but also the reader (and the publisher) was in a no less uncertain position⁶³. Kazakhstani Russophone literature is still in search of its reader⁶⁴. Some writers – in particular, those connected with Almaty Open Literary School – try to nurture their audience. The school apart from educating its students in creative writing and literary criticism regularly holds public events (including literary festivals and workshops) and organizes promotional activities through social media such as *Read the Kazakhstani* (*Chitai Kazachstanskoe*, 2016).

The gap between the older and younger Kazakhstani writers was clearly illustrated in a series of dialogues with writers from both generations published in the journal “Neva” in 2015⁶⁵. The first question was the following: “What names define the literary landscape of Kazakhstan today?”⁶⁶. It is peculiar that the three representatives of the young generation (Mikhail Zemskov, Iurii Serebrianskii and Il’ia Odegov – all associated with Almaty Open Literary School) and the two figures from the older generation (Svetlana Anan’ieva, a literary scholar and critic, and Valerii Mikhailov, a poet and an editor-in-chief of “Prostor” journal, the official Russian-language outlet of the Writers Union of Kazakhstan) listed completely different names⁶⁷. The former group named young writers and the latter group referred to authors from the older genera-

tion⁶⁸. This discrepancy demonstrates how deep the gap between the two generations is. In the questionnaire, there also was a question about the “specific features” of “young literature” in Kazakhstan. Responding to this question, Zemskov shared his overall vision of what the young generation of the writers does, pointing to diversity and cosmopolitanism as a result of the “break with the traditions of Soviet and Russian literature after the collapse of the Soviet Union”⁶⁹. He emphasized that world literature is as important for the writers as Russian Literature is⁷⁰. Anan’eva mentioned experimental styles, intellectualism and mixed genres of “young literature”, but did not refer to any particular name. Mikhailov expressed a certain scathing irony by saying that “‘young literature’ is perhaps relatively young, but is not very much literature”⁷¹. He referred to writings by many young authors as “texts” rather than “works”⁷².

In my view, by stressing the word ‘texts’ Mikhailov associated the writings by the young authors with postmodernist approach to literature, with the very word ‘text’ being highly important in poststructuralist theory. Mikhailov sees the tendency for mimicry and construction, production of literary texts in the young writers who, according to him, follow current trends⁷³. For him, ‘tradition’ is far more important than ‘originality’. Mikhailov’s points are crucial to understand the difference between the two generations of writers: while the older generation is preoccupied with tradition and canon, the young generation looks for sources of inspiration in different literatures, genres and styles.

I argue that the young writers’ striving to be modern is an attempt to challenge their marginal or peripheral position in Russian literature. To use Casanova’s concept of literary capital as a symbol of modernity (according to her, this is Paris)⁷⁴, the writers aspire to enter the world literary space

⁶¹ E. Abdullaev, *Almatinskaia anomaliiia*, op. cit.

⁶² P. Bannikov, *Preodolenie otchuzhdeniia*, op. cit.

⁶³ S. Romashkina, *Kazachstanskii poet*, op. cit.

⁶⁴ E. Abdullaev, *Almatinskaia anomaliiia*, op. cit.

⁶⁵ *Astana-Sankt-Peterburg. Dialogi kul’tur*, “Neva”, 2015, 12, <<https://magazines.gorky.media/neva/2015/12>> (latest access: 08.12.2021).

⁶⁶ Ivi, pp. 58, 141, 166, 222, 232.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁹ *Astana-Sankt-Peterburg*, op. cit., p. 59.

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

⁷¹ Ivi, p. 233.

⁷² Ibidem.

⁷³ Ibidem.

⁷⁴ P. Casanova, *The World Republic*, op. cit., pp. 23–24.

by synchronizing themselves with the present, i.e., with modernity embodied in such literary capitals as Moscow, New York and Paris. While coming back to the issue of surplus value, I assume that the young authors capitalize on literature’s power to redefine (rewrite) the existing conditions determined by the past, and the writers transform them into new, modern (or contemporary) literature. This means that literary imagination can produce the symbolic surplus value of a new reality and a new identity. One can find this strategy in Bannikov’s *Literature ad Marginem* article: in my interpretation, the author shows that the writers can transform traditional marginality of their position into originality (a new voice within the realm of Russian-language literature). Originality here means the production of the literary present, which can ensure integration into global literary time and space.

How do the younger Kazakhstani writers create the base of the new literary economy? One key institution that makes the new economic structure ongoing and effective is Almaty Open Literary School (OLSHA). The organization was established in 2009, and in 10 years it educated more than 300 students in prose writing, poetry and playwriting⁷⁵. Request to attend is high – and growing – and the admission process is becoming ever more selective⁷⁶. Almost all the best-known young Kazakhstani Russophone writers taught or studied in OLSHA. The institution has strong contacts with many famous Russian writers and critics. The school is essential to the development of the new literary economy for a number of reasons. First, it creates a real sense of community and provides a place for interaction. Second, it nurtures the audience of the young literature. Third, by educating young authors, it produces the future (and the present) of Kazakhstani Russophone literature.

young authors, it produces the future (and the present) of Kazakhstani Russophone literature. Nowadays, some OLSHA graduates, students and lecturers publish their works in the new online literary journal “Daktil”, launched in October 2019.

The journal “seeks to expand the space of Russian-language literature in Kazakhstan”⁷⁷. The editorial board of the journal sees it as “a platform where readers interested in contemporary literature could find relevant works of Kazakhstani Russian-language authors”⁷⁸. “Daktil” is also seen as a space for reflecting on the shape of Kazakhstani Russophone literature, and the editors particularly welcome literary criticism, because this is an underdeveloped part of this literature⁷⁹.

Another project that offers promising support to the new literary economy was born in July 2018. Ilia Odegov started his own online literary course/school called Litpraktikum. This is the first online literary course in Kazakhstan, and is organized as a group in WhatsApp Messenger and other media. So far, the course was taken by authors who live not only in Kazakhstan and Russia, but also in nine countries outside the post-Soviet region. As Odegov pointed out on his Facebook page, “during this year, one course has turned into a whole school”⁸⁰. Now, in addition to the basic course of creative writing Odegov teaches two more courses for advanced students (Short Story Formula – Formula rasskaza, and Litpraktikum Your Book – Litpraktikum Svoia Kniga). In total, within three years Odegov worked with many groups of students that constituted about 300 people. By July 2021, the students of Litpraktikum Your Book published nine books, with three more are under publishing process. One can see that Odegov’s online course is both his individual business project (students pay for their studies) and an important enterprise for the whole new literary economy of Kazakhstani Russophone literature. He expresses his ambition clearly in a comment in the course WhatsApp chat: “Let’s create the Union of Litpraktiks, which is a virtual alternative to the Writers Union”⁸¹.

⁷⁷ See <<https://www.daktil.kz/about>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁷⁸ <<https://www.daktil.kz/archive/issue/1>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ *Segodnia Litpraktikumu – 1 god*, <<https://www.facebook.com/odegov.ilya/posts/10220873574216066>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁸¹ While being one of the students of the course, I have come to a conclusion that the course can contribute to the new economy by

⁷⁵ See <<https://litshkola.kz/o-shkole/>> (latest access: 08.12.2021).

⁷⁶ Ibidem.

A comparison of OLSHA and Litpraktikum with the old writers' institutions reveals some key developments in the literary economy. Instead of finding new ways of writing and literary management, Writers Union in Kazakhstan still relies on a Soviet-style practice of arranging writers' congresses. In Kazakhstan in 2019, two major writers congresses were organized by the Union within mere months of each other. The First Forum of Asian Countries' Writers was held in Nur-Sultan on September 4, 2019. The President Kasym-Zhomart Tokaiev participated in the congress. The government spent about 722,000 USD on the event, and only the Writers Union participated in the competition for the supply of services⁸². The congress generated some questions and skepticism in the media⁸³. On July 4, 2019 in Nur-Sultan the International forum "Writers of the capitals of Eurasia" also took place⁸⁴. I posit that the main aim of these writers' congresses is not to create real development and progress, but rather to establish contacts within closed circles. Most likely, for some older writers, these events are opportunities to be recognized for their previous achievements. Events like these give the state the power to manipulate the literary landscape and limit membership in the literary society. Participation in these forums is considered as a kind of privilege that cannot be given to outsiders, including the young writers.

CAPITALIZING ON THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN RUSSOPHONE LITERATURE

According to Casanova, language can be considered as the main foundation for a literary economy⁸⁵. Following this logic, the emergence of a new literary economy in the young Kazakhstani Russophone

authors' circle presupposes a new way of using language. Thus, many writers develop their strategies to capitalize on Russian language's literary prestige. They can also capitalize on the Kazakh language, which is a mother tongue of many of their readers. This is why translanguaging is a very important strategy for some Russophone Kazakhstani authors, particularly for bilingual writers like Duisenbinov and Nakipov. Literary translanguaging is "the interspersing of words and phrases from different languages in any multilingual situation in the form of code switching and code mixing"⁸⁶. The chief goal of translanguaging is to make communication more effective. Writers can use this practice as an important tool to address their multilingual audience. This strategy allows them to keep Russian as their main language of writing while also granting them greater flexibility of expression, incorporating Kazakh or occasionally English words and phrases. Code-switching and code-mixing, which are essential aspects of translanguaging, give an opportunity to express more complex meanings that have specific Russian-Kazakh features and appeal to the local realities.

The Kazakhstani authors rewrite (sometimes even reinvent) Russian and Kazakh languages and by that they produce new meanings and literary economic relations. Particularly, the writers produce bilingual inter-language, which can express the state of mind of the majority of the Kazakhstani population (which is the bilingual majority). This language is valuable only insofar as it is relevant for the contemporary situation, providing new perspectives on topical social and political phenomena. For example, in his poems, Anuar Duisenbinov uses code-mixing to coin a number of words and phrases to offer an intellectual satiric view on political developments in the country. His poem, *Rukhani Ken-guru* makes fun of a state quasi-ideological program *Rukhani Zhangyru*⁸⁷. In another one, *Mangilik*

creating an international network of people who studied creative writing with one of the best-known Kazakhstani writers. This could potentially lead to the wider recognition of Kazakhstani literature within the Russophone world(s).

⁸² *Na forum pisatelei stran Azii iz biudzheta vydelili bolee 281 milliona tenge* <<https://rus.azattyq.org/a/30146408.html>> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁴ L. Amantaeva, *Forum "Pisateli stolits Evrazii" proidet v Nur-Sultane*, <https://www.inform.kz/ru/forum-pisateli-stolic-evrazii-proydet-v-nur-sultane_a3544383> (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁸⁵ P. Casanova, *The World Republic*, op. cit., p. 67.

⁸⁶ U. Chakravarty, *Exploring Literary Multilingualism in Indian Diasporic Writing*, "Forum for World Literature Studies", 2018 (10), 3, pp. 528-552 (529).

⁸⁷ In Kazakh, it literally means "spiritual renovation"; Russian equivalent is *modernizatsiia soznaniia*. The program was proposed by Nursultan Nazarbayev in April 2017. See A. Duisenbinov, *Rukhani*

Zhel, he satirizes another state program *Mangilik El*⁸⁸. While *Mangilik El* literally means the “eternal people” or “eternal country”, *Mangilik Zhel* means “eternal wind”, and this poem is devoted to Nur-Sultan, a city known for its windy weather. Many other of Duisenbinov’s poems (including his *Tilech* that is analyzed in this paper) show that a Russophone writer can capitalize on the Russian language and Russian-Kazakh bilingual interplay in a number of ways. Duisenbinov’s verb *zhangirnut’sia* is used by some young intellectuals as a witty wordplay. These memorable (for the Kazakhstani reader) examples of the new Russian-Kazakh interlanguage can be considered as unique linguistic products crafted by Duisenbinov (and some other authors). His code-mixing and code-switching are integral to his fame as a poet.

Duisenbinov explicitly reflects on the nature and prospects of the Russian-Kazakh inter-language in a bilingual poem where he calls the language *tilech* (тілечь) and presents it as a new important concept (written in 2015)⁸⁹. *Tilech* is an abbreviation of Kazakh *mil* [language] and Russian *речь* [speech]. The poem is *vers libre* and has a narrative structure. It tells a short life story of a Kazakh boy who is told by adults to speak Kazakh, although the adults themselves speak Russian. When the boy grows up, he finds himself combining Kazakh and Russian in a rather strange way (from the narrator’s point of view), adding Kazakh morphemes to Russian words. He has trouble communicating his ideas because of the linguistic confusions, i.e. code-mixing. In the middle of his storytelling, the narrator switches to explicit first-person discourse and denounces this chaotic *tilech*: “I just hear how *tilech* in line with its strange sound / plops, grunts, darts from everywhere”⁹⁰. However, Duisenbinov finishes the poem

by praising *tilech* and suggesting that it merits further attention and cultivation:

с другой стороны не кажется ли вам что в тілечи
обернутая в слоистую раковинку двух языков и множества
культур
может лежать жемчужина будущей действительной толерант-
ности
а не просто политического слогана
может тілечь призвана стать катализатором действительной
взаимовыгодной реакции культур и мировоззрений
способной привлечь глубинные человеческие ресурсы
страдающей постколониальным комплексом страны.⁹¹

It is worth noting that the adjective “postcolonial” appears here, and *tilech* is seen as the antidote to the “postcolonial complex” of Kazakhstan. From Duisenbinov’s point of view, the complex is about people’s mindset, not about languages themselves. The poet presents *tilech* as something precious, a “pearl”, that has been developing for a long time “in a layered shell of two languages and many cultures”, that is, in the long history of interactions between the Kazakhs and Russians. The poet suggests that it is up to the contemporary Kazakhstanis to render *tilech* either a thing that “plops, grunts, darts”, or a treasury of “a future true tolerance”. However, I think that the poem indicates not only how Russian is used in Kazakhstan, but also how the Russian language can be developed into an inter-language by incorporating Kazakh words and morphemes (one could say into ‘Kazakhstani Russophone language’). This inter-language can have a greater cultural and even cognitive value. It can become specific bilingual cultural capital of those who create it.

While developing his literary translanguaging, Duisenbinov takes Russian not as a preexisting canonical form, but rather as an opportunity for experimentation and the means of production. While every prominent poet transforms and even renews language to some extent, a poet who draws simultaneously from two languages (as Duisenbinov does) can transform them much more radically than a poet

Kenguru, < <https://litteratura.org/poetry/2712-anur-duysenbinov-ruhani-kenguru.html?fbclid=IwAR19AMISD26tUsXR0q2soadR5Z7HOWFikbVy4-QjMLgOqyqLm-cTJGOt1GY> > (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁸⁸ Idem, *Mangilik Zhel*, < <http://textonly.ru/seli/?issue=42&article=38842&fbclid=IwAR2UV-vYRoXPz8F5RknQ9YFmjo8qXZr4T01CKp3j5cThpzE4eaX6dF9QLQE> > (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁸⁹ Idem, *Тілечь*, < <https://www.facebook.com/notes/2844572382427923/> > (latest access: 12.07.2021).

⁹⁰ “Я только слышу как тілечь в соответствии со своим странным

звучанием / шлепает хрюкает шмыгает отовсюду”.

⁹¹ “On the other hand, don’t you think that in *tilech* / wrapped in a layered shell of two languages and many cultures / may lie a pearl of a future true tolerance - / and not just of a political slogan / probably *tilech* is designed to be a catalyst for real / mutual reaction of cultures and worldviews / it could attract hidden human resources / of the country suffering from the postcolonial complex”.

writing within a single linguistic and literary tradition. In this and other bilingual poems, Duisenbinov thus shows some additional and at times unexpected meanings of Russian words, which are illuminated by the intuitive meanings of code-mixed Russian-Kazakh words and phrases. Duisenbinov reconsiders the semantics of some words and creates Russian words that are new and unfamiliar to his readers. The added value of these words and phrases became a vital part of Duisenbinov's distinguished style. Here the Kazakh language can enrich Russian, which means that in the young Kazakhstani literature Kazakh can strengthen the Russian language's literary capital.

Another vivid example of the strategic use of the literariness of Russian to strengthen new Kazakhstani literature is Dusenbek Nakipov's writings. Nakipov also incorporates Kazakh words into his Russophone works. He sometimes gives a Kazakh translation of a Russian word hyphenated with the Russian word. For example, in his novel *Wind's Shadow*, he calls one of episodic characters, an old kind Kazakh woman, *babushka-azheshka* (бабушка-ажешка: the first word is Russian for 'grandmother' and the second is Kazakh, with the same meaning, but with the Russian suffix *шка*)⁹². *Azheshka*: this is how many Russophone Kazakhs call their grandmothers. Nakipov fully appropriated the capital of Russian literature and the literariness of the Russian language, using this capital to further develop his own creativity and writer's self-consciousness.

Nakipov's works (as well as Duisenbinov's) mark an important phase in the postcolonial development of Kazakhstani Russophone literature, in which previously marginal writers can produce something new and enrich Russian or Russophone literature. Russophone writers transform supposed marginality into originality by transplanting the literary capital of Russian literature and literariness of Russian into a new bilingual Russophone language. This specific language can in turn be the main capital of new Kazakhstani Russophone literature. Casanova believed that the literariness of a language

is tightly linked to literary capital of literature written in this language: "Certain languages, by virtue of the prestige of the texts written in them, are reputed to be more literary than others, to embody literature"⁹³. Nakipov takes the Russian language as a self-valuable aesthetic phenomenon, incorporates Kazakh into it and, as a result, produces his literary and linguistic surplus value.

In a similar vein, we may consider Nakipov's strategies in his novel *Krug pepla* [The Circle of Ashes], first published in Almaty in 1995⁹⁴. The novel is a mythological account of an ancient tribe of the samions (*samiony*) who are supposed to be ancestors of the Kazakhs and probably of all humankind. They lived near mountains and established the first language and norms of human life. Their main achievement in the novel is the domestication of wild horses, which allowed the tribe to fulfill their dream to go deeper into the steppe. One can see the way Russophone literature produces new identity and imagination in Nakipov's portrayal of the samions' proto-language, which combines Kazakh language, Kazakh embodiment and Kazakh spatiality. This is especially evident in Nakipov's poetic interpretation of the word *dala* (a Kazakh word for plain). The samions enjoyed the very pronunciation of the word *dala*, which shows that this word gave them even bodily pleasure. At the same time, this word was a kind of revelation about the steppe in the sense that the word was not just coined, but was suggested by the very samion's experience of the steppe. In the storyline of the samions, the issues of proto-language, the steppe and nomadism are intertwined. The name Gigi that the samions gave to wild horses is onomatopoeic as it mimics a horse's neigh (most probably, here Nakipov refers to the Russian-language imitation of the sounds). The samions adore wild horses. They take gigis as the unity with or even the extension of the steppe grass: "Gigi and the grass are inseparable – the grass is in Gigi's gallop"⁹⁵. One description of the gigis says that they "appeared from the depth of

⁹³ P. Casanova, *The World Republic*, op. cit., p. 17.

⁹⁴ D. Nakipov, *Ten' vetra*, op. cit.

⁹⁵ Ivi, p. 82.

⁹² D. Nakipov, *Ten' vetra*, Almaty 2009.

the plain" which the samions from ancient time had called "ddd-aaa-lll-aaa... and the vowel "a" could be pronounced for a very long time as it were manifesting the reverence for the plain"⁹⁶. Although the whole text of the novel is in Russian, the word for the plain (the steppe) is Kazakh. Moreover, while describing proto-language, Nakipov implies that in fact it was the Kazakh language, thus ascribing to Kazakh the symbolic value of having archaic, primordial roots. However, Nakipov does this in Russian, and he plays with Russian language, because despite the fact that proto-language was Kazakh, the very name of the ancient tribe consists of Russian words *sam i on*. In my interpretation, this signifies that, while the writer is very sensitive to the phonetic texture of Kazakh, still he considers the Russian language as a metalanguage that allows a Kazakh writer to express his fascination with his native Kazakh language. This is a useful example of the way the literary capital of Russian helps a Kazakhstani writer to express his Kazakh identity.

To summarize, in contemporary Kazakhstani Russophone literature, one can see attempts to produce combined inter-language through the incorporation of Kazakh into Russian literary texts. For some authors, this dialogue of languages is vital and functions simultaneously as a literary device, a strategy of imagination and even a spiritual experiment. The inter-language is an important way the Kazakhstani authors may produce new literary intellectual assets while relying on the Russian language. Their linguistic skills and cultural intellectual background grant them a specific type of Kazakhness that can be called cosmopolitan Russophone Kazakhness. Russophone Kazakhness is somewhat different from Kazakh Kazakhness in the sense that it is expressed and understood mostly in the Russian language.

CONCLUSION

Historically, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the radical economic shift from a planned Socialist economy and centralized publishing policy

to a free publishing market, the structure of and relationships within overarching Russian-language literary space have completely changed. In Kazakhstan, when the young generation of writers started to build a new literary economy, they faced a number of serious problems including the economic crisis, a very poor book market, and disregard from the government and local audience. In addition, they experienced the older generation of writers' disrespect and strong dependence on the previous state-focused type of literary economy. However, young authors have attempted to build a new literary economy that is based on horizontal networking of literary festivals and informal communities, rather than on a hierarchical structure and self-isolation of the originally Soviet institution of writers' unions.

To account for these developments in post-Soviet Kazakhstani Russophone literature, I expand the concept of literary capital and stress its social relevance. Literature is one of the basic forms of the cultural production of meaning. It creates narratives that allow to make sense of the world and of the current social reality. Literature can thus legitimize a new identity, linguistic landscape, national territory, etc. This process of meaning-making through narrative (along with the literariness of national language and prestige of the literary past) can potentially become new literary capital. My assumption is that a literature's competitiveness within the bigger literary space and its value for a national culture is largely dependent on its ability to produce new and relevant meanings and ways of communicating ideas. This production always takes place within the framework of specific values, rules, procedures and types of interaction that I call in this paper a literary economy.

The young Kazakhstani Russophone literature is a vivid example of the fact that marginality and difference can be an advantageous initial asset for literary capitalization. The metaphor according to which the young authors write on the margins speaks to their postcolonial condition. At the same time, while building the new literary economy based on a new type of self-organization, infrastructure and post-independent political realities, the writers decolonize

⁹⁶ Ibidem.

their identity and creativity. They do so by transforming the Russian language into their own version of Russophone (Russian-Kazakh) inter-language, which is now their own language.

When the writers produce difference (in this case, the difference of ‘other Russianness’ or ‘non-Russianness’ within Russian literature) that has social meaning and artistic merit, they also produce the surplus value that can be used as their literary capital in interactions with other authors, readers, and different institutions in Kazakhstan, Russia and abroad. Here the writer is both a worker and an entrepreneur, because he has a desire and ability to produce (artistically) more meanings of marginality and otherness and he can sell (or present to the audience) the product of his work. Some of the Kazakhstani writers skillfully capitalize on what can be seen as a critical source of outcome in Russian-language literature outside Russia, that is, on marginality as a new, distinct position and perspective within the larger space of Russian literature. This particular position reflects the Russophone writers’ ability to look at their own self – their own Russianness or Kazakhness – with a unique outsider’s perspective.

◇ *Writing on the Margins? Building the New Literary Economy in Post-Soviet Kazakhstani Russophone Literature* ◇

Dmitriy Melnikov

Abstract

This paper explores the process of building a new literary community of the younger Russian-language writers in Kazakhstan starting from the 2000s. As a response to the shortcomings of previous literary infrastructure, writers created new ways of writing and literary interactions that can be called a new literary economy. The concept of literary economy refers to the act of a new literature creating its own infrastructure and literary space, with the objective of joining the world literary space. The younger Kazakhstani authors produce a new type of literature by (re-)writing language, time and space, and in doing so they produce new bilingual, historical and spatial imagination that results in a new identity. In this process of rewriting, authors create surplus value for their works and capitalize on their particular literary and cultural identities. By ‘value’ I mean new meanings and new ways of being Russophone.

Keywords

Russophone Literature, Literary Economy, Kazakhstan, Post-Soviet, Marginality, Literary Capital, Literary Time, Russian-Kazakh Bilingualism.

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