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Representation of Hybrid Identity in the “Kazakhstani Text” of the Novella “The Smelting Boat” by E. Zejfert

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ABSTRACT

The authors of the article attempt to explore hybrid identity within the framework of the “Kazakhstan text”, which represents a sociocultural and artistic phenomenon in the work of an émigré author. The article may be considered a case study of identifying the “Kazakhstan text” in the novella “The Smelting Boat” («Plavil’naya lodochka») by E. Zejfert through a system of cultural codes, chronotope, intertextual references, and mythologemes. The novelty of the research lies in the fact that the “Kazakhstan text” in the works of E. Zejfert as a product of the hybrid identity of the author’s consciousness has not previously been the subject of literary analysis. The authors also justify the use of the term “Kazakhstan text” in the context of analyzing a specific literary work. This research into the presence of the “Kazakhstan text” in literary works created outside of Kazakhstan contributes to a deeper understanding of how geographical displacement influences the cultural consciousness of individuals. It offers insight into the nature of hybrid identity. The article substantiates the existence of the “Kazakhstan text” as a manifestation of hybrid identity in the work of E. Zejfert, a Kazakhstani writer who emigrated to Russia. It examines key elements of the “Kazakhstan text”, including the Kazakh cultural code, a “hybrid”

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chronotope, intertextuality, and mythologemes.

Keywords: Dialogue of Cultures; Hybrid Identity; Kazakhstani Text; Cultural Code; Chronotope; Intertextuality; Mythologeme; Elena Zejfert; Novella; The Smelting Boat

1. Introduction

Kazakhstan's national literature is actively interpreted within the boundaries of its local cultural space. However, against this backdrop, the representation of cultural codes that constitute the "Kazakhstan text" in Russian-language literature of Kazakhstan, which were created by members of diasporas or bilingual authors with a "dual" cultural identity, remains insufficiently studied.

Particular attention, in our view, should be paid to the representation of the "Kazakhstan text" in literary works by émigré authors whose consciousness reflects a hybrid combination of national and foreign – Kazakh – cultural layers. The reinterpretation of the "other" as "one's own" also affects the forms of chronotope in the artistic world of such works, where real migration is mirrored synchronously between the locations constructed in the text. Cultural code, chronotope, intertextuality, and mythologeme serve as the primary artistic channels of representation.

The aim of this study is to explore the "Kazakhstan text" as a product of hybrid identity in the novella "The Smelting Boat" by Elena Zejfert.

Research Objectives are:

- provide an overview of scholarly approaches to hybrid identity and local text;
- analyze the poetics of Elena Zejfert's novella "The Smelting Boat";
- examine the correlation between hybrid identity and the "Kazakhstan text";
- identify the key components of the "Kazakhstan text" through cultural codes, chronotope, intertextuality and mythologemes;
- develop a methodological approach for teaching and researching the "Kazakhstan text" using "The Smelting Boat" as a case study.

The object of this study is the novella "The Smelting Boat" by Elena Zejfert, which serves as the primary literary material for analyzing the representation of hybrid identity

within the framework of the "Kazakhstan text".

The subject of this study is the "Kazakhstan text" as a manifestation of hybrid cultural identity, as reflected in the poetics, imagery, and narrative structure of The Smelting Boat.

The research employs a combination of discourse analysis, narrative analysis, mythopoetic analysis, and structural-semantic analysis. These methods enable the identification and interpretation of cultural codes, chronotopic models, intertextual references, and mythologemes that constitute the "Kazakhstan text" in the work of Elena Zejfert.

2. Literature Review

The methodological foundation of this study is based on research in the fields of local text theory and hybrid identity, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of the work, which lies at the intersection of literary and cultural studies.

In the course of the research, key works on hybrid identity were examined, including those by Stuart Hall, Y. Volkov, G. Gizdatov, H. Bhabha, and V. Marotta^[1-6].

Additionally, studies on the representation of local texts were analyzed. These include semiotic approaches by Yu. Lotman^[7], who conceptualizes the text as both a communicative and receptive unit, and the notion of "supra-text" as discussed in the works of D. Magomedova^[8], N. Tamarchenko^[9], E. Mednis^[10]. The concept of the "urban text" was explored through the writings of D. Chugunov^[11], V. Toporov^[12].

It is worth noting that the concept of the "Kazakhstan text" as a "text of the country" has emerged in scholarly literature^[13]. P. Alekseev and D. Dyusekenov^[14] examined the representation of Kazakhstan in the works of Mikhail Prishvin, identifying both cultural and biographical factors underlying the writer's interest in the Kazakh context. Scholarly interpretations of the Kazakhstan text as a literary phenomenon are found in the works of G. Vlasova^[13], who explores the specifics of regional text embodiment in Russian-language prose of Kazakhstan. G. Vlasova defines the Kaza-

khstan text as “the realization of the country through images, motifs, chronotopes, and axiological evaluations”^[13]. She identifies several components of the cultural text, including biographical context, type of creative personality, and more.

An analytical framework for interpreting the Kazakhstani text has been developed by L. Abdullina^[15], who introduced the concept of the “literary landscape” and applied it to the study of a specific local space, which is the East Kazakhstani text. Several scholars, including S. Kaskabasov^[16] and S. Ananyeva^[17], have investigated the Eurasian context in the works of Kazakhstani writers.

The article represents an attempt to identify the key components of the “Kazakhstan text”, such as cultural codes, chronotope, intertextuality, intermediality, and the introduction of mythologemes, in the novella “The Smelting Boat” by Elena Zejfert.

3. Methodology

The methodological foundation of this study draws on a range of interdisciplinary research areas, including: Kazakhstani literature and the global image of Kazakhstan particularly the marginalization of Russian-language authors in Kazakhstan who convey Kazakh culture through the Russian language^[18], imagological models of auto/biographical narrative^[17], representations of non-native cultural themes in Russian-language literature of Kazakhstan^[19], national and cultural identity within the field of intercultural dialogue^[20], intermediality^[21, 22], national text theory^[11, 12], semiotics^[7] and national worldviews^[23, 24].

A central theoretical lens employed in this research is the concept of hybrid identity, understood as the “blending of traditions, beliefs, cultural customs, languages, and social practices”^[23]. This phenomenon is a direct result of social hybridization, triggered by factors such as migration, the dynamic interplay between globalization and localization, and processes of digitalization. Hybrid identity as a form of mixed cultural identification emerging from these conditions has become one of the most widespread modes of cultural self-perception in the contemporary world.

The methodological framework of this study is also grounded in the concept of modern identity as hybrid, as proposed by Stuart Hall^[1]. S. Hall’s view contrasts with the somewhat divergent perspective of Homi Bhabha^[4], who

explores culture within a unique space he terms the “borderland”, which is a site of interaction between different types of consciousness, where boundaries are clearly defined, and the “in-betweenness” that occurs between them is granted a special ontological status.

The issue of hybrid identity has also been addressed by a number of scholars, including G. Gizdatov and his collaborators^[3], who examine “samples” of hybrid identity as manifested in the media discourse of Kazakhstan, a typical post-Soviet cultural space. These scholars identify three major socio-cultural projects in Kazakhstan: the Eurasian, the Pan-Turkic, and the liberal. G. Gizdatov’s approach to hybrid identity is further developed through the analysis of contemporary cultural products created by diasporic communities in Kazakhstan^[3].

As noted in the research of V. Marotta^[6], hybrid identity can emerge not only in the traditional direction of “indigenous” to “diaspora”, but also in the reverse direction, thus opening new perspectives for further inquiry in this area. Drawing on S. Hall’s concept^[1], cultural identity in a post-colonial society is inherently hybrid and dynamic; it is not a fixed essence but rather an ongoing process of becoming.

Following A. Kostina^[20], who identifies three models of intercultural interaction: equality, tolerance as acceptance of the other, and cultural closure, it is worth emphasizing that intercultural dialogue can only be considered genuine when it involves mutual understanding or, at the very least, a striving toward it. In the text under analysis, the author engages in cultural dialogue according to the first and most productive model of cultural interaction based on openness and equality. This approach to cultural representation is characteristic of the vast majority of Russian-language writers from Kazakhstan, both those who create within the country and those who reside abroad.

We define the “Kazakhstani text” as a supertext that concentrates cultural codes transmitting the realities, images, motifs, and ideas of Kazakh national and broader Kazakhstani mentality. This definition is grounded in the methodology developed by V. Toporov in his work on regional texts, specifically the Petersburg text.

A key distinction of the approach presented in this article from previous scholarly perspectives lies in its focus on the phenomenon of the “Kazakhstani text” in literary works created by representatives of both the titular nation and dias-

poric communities outside the territory of Kazakhstan. The study attempts to analyze cultural codes that have acquired a synthetic character due to the authors' geographical and cultural distance from the source culture.

In the literary text authored by a representative of the German diaspora of Kazakhstan, who has migrated beyond the traditional centers of diasporic concentration, a number of cultural codes are realized, closely tied to the type of chronotope embodied in the artistic space. In this way, the article seeks to establish a connection between specific elements of the author's poetics and manifestations of hybrid identity.

While similar approaches may be found in the field of émigré literature studies, what is crucial to the scholarly position argued in this article is the conceptualization of the image of Kazakhstan as viewed through the eyes of the author, Elena Zeifert, who not only emigrated from Kazakhstan but, as a repatriate to another country, constructs a territorial-cultural unity from a distinct dual perspective.

4. Results and Discussion

Literary scholar and author with roots in both Kazakhstan and Russia Elena Zeifert's novella "The Smelting Boat" carry the subtitle "A Karaganda Novella". It depicts the lives of its characters from 1766 to 2018. The interrupted fates of the German people in the USSR are reflected through the intertwined destinies of the novella's characters, who experienced emigration from Germany to Russia in the 18th century and deportation from the Volga region to Kazakhstan in the early 1940s. This is a story about the search for a home, which Karaganda became for Soviet Germans.

For Elena Zeifert, Kazakhstan functions as a recurring symbol composed of national cultural codes, reinterpreted through the lens of the author's "German" consciousness. It is through the interplay of "German" and "Kazakh" elements that a hybrid authorial identity is constructed. Kazakhstan is conceptualized as a distinct cultural space that integrates the familiar and the foreign, thereby articulating its own uniqueness through this synthesis.

An analysis of Zeifert's novella "The Smelting Boat" reveals several key components of the local (Kazakhstani) text: cultural codes, chronotope, and mythopoetic elements. In what follows, we turn to the poetics of the novella in order to identify markers of the local text and to define the nature of cultural hybridity as it manifests in the representation of

the "Kazakhstani text".

The influence of the chronotope on the novella's composition is closely linked to the structural elements of the localized "Kazakhstani text". "The Smelting Boat" is compositionally divided into two parts: "Пеленальщик" – "The Swaddler" and "Мяч луны" – "The Moon Ball".

Although compositionally unmarked, several parallel narratives unfold in the novella:

1. The lives of Germans in the Volga region.
2. The deportation from the Volga region and life in Karaganda.
3. The story of Luka's family: from Germany to Russia.
4. The love triangle: Friedrich – Lydia – Mark.
5. Mariyka's life in Karaganda. Elsa's return.
6. Anya's life in Karaganda. The meeting of Kirill and Anya.
7. Johanna and Julian's love story.

Each structural element of the text is introduced by a framing element that foreshadows its content. The framing text that precedes the main narrative is presented in two languages. The inclusion of the German-language passage serves as a marker of the author's hybrid identity.

The two main compositional parts of the novella are also divided by a framing element: a text dated September 5, 2016 (Moscow), where Elena Zeifert, as the real author, addresses the topic of seminars on "The Smelting Boat". Here, the author's reflection on the paradox of German reunification emerges, elevated to the metaphorical level that is characteristic of her narrative style.

The chronotope in the author's consciousness is distinctly divided into two components – time and space – proclaimed by the narrator at the very beginning of the story. Here, real time and artistic time converge: "All times flow simultaneously; only spaces, their decorations, and costumes change"^[25]. E. Zeifert notes "Storytelling always unfolds in the present tense, synchronously, whether it is the depiction of emigration from Germany to Russia, dekulakization, war, deportation, labor camps, or emigration from Russia to Germany"^[25]. This does not negate the presence of the past within the temporal field. The paradox of constructing the chronotope in E. Zeifert's novella is that the past and present function simultaneously without clear distinction. The narrative lacks transitions between times: for the author, only the here and now of artistic time exists, allowing the reader to feel

as though they are part of the vividly present actions, regardless of the historical period being described. For instance, in describing the Volga Germans aboard a barge, “times clung to each other”^[25], with historical figures and real individuals from various eras aligned on a single temporal axis: the brothers Christian August and Luka are transported to 1766, their father Caspar appears in a cathedral in Yekaterinenstadt, Rosa’s grandmother hides a passport with a German surname instead of her granddaughter’s, Nikolai Gastello remains in the eternal sky of 1941, and the dying exiles in the steppes of Karaganda.

As we can see, hybrid identity in Elena Zeifert’s novella is realized through the compositional structure of the text, in which two spatial frameworks are outlined based on the dichotomy of “own” versus “other”. The interplay between the framing elements referencing the “German” space and the characters’ presence within the “Kazakhstani” space in the main narrative (and vice versa) contributes to the hybrid nature of the constructed chronotope.

One of the key means of constructing this chronotope is the mythologization of the artistic space. Notably, there is no clear division between the presence or absence of mythopoetic context in either the “German” or the “Kazakhstani” parts of the novella. Both spatial and temporal components of the chronotope are mythologized. At times, time itself is personified: “Time laughs prophetically, echoed by the earthworms of spirits”^[25]. It is alive, dynamic, capricious, and all-knowing. “...They (the Germans) were clustered together – time or some abnormal being tore them from nests, families, crevices, and shadows”^[25].

In addition to the mythopoetic representation of time, the narrative time incorporates classical manifestations of the chronotope, such as in Mariyka’s dream during her journey in a train’s “teplushka”. For the heroine, dreaming is an attempt “to alter reality”^[25] or find deliverance: if her mother takes Mariyka into her dream, salvation awaits. Dreams also become a way to layer the present and future: “Five or six years later, Lydia has a dream”^[25] – thus, the narrator describes the events happening “here and now” through Lydia’s recollections appearing in a future dream. In her dream about the cow Marta, Lydia misses her wet nurse, recalling her past life, when “nourishing milky blood flowed through her veins”^[25].

In these excerpts from the novella, the introduction of

an oneiric space becomes apparent, that is associated with the past, a temporal dimension devoid of the new Kazakhstani reality. Thus, the oneiric nature of the chronotope is not characteristic of the “Kazakhstani” text. The latter is realized through the mythopoetics of the authorial consciousness, which constructs the myth of “Kazakhstan as a new homeland”. This myth actively functions within Russian-language literature of Kazakhstan. Let’s now examine how the components of this myth are gradually embodied through elements of the chronotope.

The novella’s space is a journey, “a forced wandering”^[25]. Throughout the narrative, the axiological foundation of space undergoes distribution. The train’s arrival in Kazakhstan, in Karaganda, at the journey’s endpoint, is accompanied by epithets such as “unfamiliar” and “foreign”: “unfamiliar word,” “a word bitter and rough. Tasteless. One wants to spit it out,” “foreign land”^[25]. Based on this, we can conclude that for émigré writers, the “Kazakhstani text” is closely intertwined with the motif of wandering or journeying.

A person born in Karaganda, according to the narrator, “gains several lives”^[25], one of which remains forever tied to Kazakhstani soil, while, “if lucky”, the person might “be reborn” on another land. Viktor, his newborn son who dies immediately after birth, is considered “lucky” in this regard. Life in a foreign land becomes unnatural, alien; a person feels unhappy. Yet, the necessity to survive drives both physical and moral efforts aimed at preserving one’s lineage, even in houses made of earth, where it’s “easier to grow accustomed to the soil”^[25]. Upon learning of their deportation, the Volga Germans recall the words of Rosa’s grandmother: “They won’t send us beyond Karaganda”^[25]. For settlers, Karaganda is associated with the edge of the world, that is, the “Kazakhstani text” is linked to the concept of the “end of the Earth”, representing either the final point of a forced journey or even the end of life itself. This reflects a certain degree of pessimism in the perception of the Kazakhstani space. Historically, Kazakhstan, as part of the Russian Empire, was functionally related to places of exile, a role that continued during the Stalinist period of the USSR. As a result, the “Kazakhstani text” often carries the codes of “exile”, “settlement”, or “prison”. The pessimistic perception of Kazakhstan is closely tied to the motif of captivity and, consequently, psychological discomfort. This is evident

from the very arrival in Karaganda, depicted as a “bleak, windblown October steppe”^[25], and reinforced through a series of details such as “rails lying directly on the sleepers, without ballast,” and references to “Karaganda mines”^[25]. For a long time, Karaganda remains alien: “Even in summer, this steppe chills with an inner November frozen in stubborn crawl”^[25]. Russian soil, too, feels foreign to the Germans: Luka’s son rests in “a land that did not become his own”^[25]; “In another land, the Red House hides its sleeve”^[25]. In this soil lies “Luka’s face”^[25], as he searches for the lost child. “Karaganda doesn’t become home for everyone. But was the Volga forest any more welcoming?” the narrator asks^[25].

In Mariyka’s consciousness, the Karaganda steppe is an “alien land”, a “strange place of welcome”^[25]. Karaganda “smells of death”^[25], yet it already loves the girl, though it is “harsh, like metal”^[25], referred to as a “crust”, an “outskirt”. Even the snow here is black. However, by Part 17, the text poses a rhetorical question: “...are you my home? And where is your porch?”^[25]. The “Kazakhstani space” expands “inward” and “upward”^[25]. The Karaganda steppe “smells of whiteness”, which is likened to “a strip of forehead untouched by the sun beneath the Virgin Mary’s kerchief”^[25]. The Karaganda sky is gray: “The snow dimmed and became like ash, like the color of a bird’s feather in Lydia’s hand, Mark Felix’s opened eyes, the sky collapsing over Karaganda”^[25]. Lydia and Friedrich, having found love, dream of planting a violet on a post so that “the spring country roads of this sad village would finally sing and the eyes of the land would meet those of humans”^[25]. This “meeting” symbolizes settling into the land – a self-acceptance and acceptance of others in unity on Kazakhstani soil. For Rosa, a German woman who married a Russian against her father’s will, her daughter’s choice of a German fiancé seems unworthy: “She could’ve found herself a good Russian Stakhanovits boy, had Russian children, but no, she fell in love with a fascist, and you can’t beat this nonsense out of her! Rosa says this in Russian with an unshakable German accent”^[2].

The cited passages illustrate the thesis regarding the dynamic relationship between the notions of “one’s own” and “the other” in the narrative’s compositional structure. As the analysis shows, this opposition is not static but undergoes transformation due to the presence of hybrid identity: in the later parts of the novella, “the other” gradually becomes “one’s own.”

As previously noted, the system of cultural codes functions as one of the primary means of expressing hybrid identity, shaped by the sociocultural realities of the German diaspora in Kazakhstan. An interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to trace how national stereotypes of Volga German settlers in Kazakhstan influence the encoding of the literary text. For example, national gastic (culinary) codes: *lepeska* (flatbread) and *kurt* (fermented cheese)^[25], emerge as symbols of Kazakh hospitality and humanity, highlighting the support offered by the Kazakhs to German settlers.

The use of nominative Kazakh codes through character names: Yerkanat, Saule, the Bekenov family, Nurshat, as well as through the image of the Kazakh language (“Mariyka already understands it better than some German dialects”^[25]; “His Kazakh is coming along quickly”^[25]) creates a cultural hybridity within the novella’s fictional world.

The depiction of the Kazakh language and the motif of linguistic closeness reflect a shift in the characters’ value system within the dichotomy of “own” vs. “other”. Yerkanat is surprised: “just listen to how similar the sounds in Kazakh and German are” and “Kazakh and German dance their own dances, but sometimes the movements are the same”^[25]. When Yerkanat and Friedrich are introduced to the German and Kazakh languages, the Kazakh character remarks: “our throats are alike”^[25].

Words like “similar” and “the same” become stylistic markers in the narrative fabric of the novella, clearly stemming from the author’s hybrid identity, associated with the German ethnicity yet synthesizing the Kazakhstani cultural code in its diverse forms.

Delving into the historical past, the author introduces ancient images of Mongol rulers: “in an old metallurgical furnace, the armor of Batu Khan is melting”^[25]. The transition from “other” to “own”, the rapprochement of two cultures, occurs gradually and is first marked by a change in the naming of the exiles from “outcasts” to “Karagandy Germans”^[25]. A similar shift is seen in the case of the “indelible” inscription on a frosted window – *karagandinka*^[25]. And although Mariyka does not accept this “foreign” word, someone “unknown writes it from the other side of the glass”^[25].

Thus, it can be concluded that the “Kazakhstani text” in Elena Zeifert’s novella is conveyed through a system of cultural codes: landscape, culinary, nominative and historical.

The hybrid identity of Elena Zeifert's authorial consciousness is expressed through a gradual transition from the "foreign" Kazakhstan to the "familiar" Kazakhstan. The "Kazakhstani" space in the novella is represented by German and Kazakh homes, painted in each other's colors without coordination, standing side by side: "One of the apple trees, bending over the fence, bears fruit in the Bekenovs' garden"^[25], the city of Temirtau, reachable by bus, and the German Drama Theater with simultaneous translations of performances into Russian. The transition from "other's" to "own" is embodied through the psychological worldview of the characters: the flora of the Kazakh steppe becomes a source of inspiration for Friedrich: "This year's early May steppe still manages to delight with its belated tulips... Milky white, crimson, yellow. The shepherd admires them – indeed, a tulip is more beautiful than a rose!"^[25] and he involuntarily begins to hum a German tune about roses. The two floral symbols: Kazakh and German, merge in Friedrich's consciousness.

Hybrid identity is described by the author through the blending of the "other" and "own": at Russian Christmas, German children go caroling at the homes of Russian villagers, Roma, and others. However, Mariyka's strict grandmother opposes cultural blending: "We are Germans; we don't celebrate Old New Year"^[25]. Yet, in the minds of Kazakhstani children, there is no division between cultures. Their consciousness holds a unified multicultural vision of Kazakhstan, where no holiday is foreign. Learning that Johanna is among the carolers, the grandmother welcomes the children into her "sterile" home and treats them to sweets. For the generation raised in Soviet Kazakhstan, German identity ceases to feel native: "Germany does not accept Johanna"^[25].

The hybrid identity of the authorial consciousness, as realized in the "Kazakhstani text", also takes the form of intertextuality. In the digression of part 15, a quotation is introduced: "Ante Roman Treveris stetit annis mille Trecentis. Before Rome, Trier stood for a thousand and three hundred years", which the narrator interprets as follows: "It is not Trier that stands on Roman foundations, but Rome on Trier's", and further states, "In another country, the Red House hides its sleeve"^[25]. Another intertextual reference is found through the German line: "Er liebte Bücher, Dienen und Gesang..."^[25]. The intertextuality of the novella is further enriched by references to the lyric poetry of Georg

Trakl, from which the author borrows the image of a boy descending into the mines to collect stones (Section 6, Part Two, "The Ball"). Thus, another form of hybrid identity is revealed in the construction of the "Kazakhstani text": intertextuality. The inclusion of German quotations and allusions within the Russian-language narrative, referencing the native culture of the migrant author, underscores the hybrid identity manifested through intertextuality.

Alongside the aforementioned intertextuality, the poetics of the novella "The Smelting Boat" also demonstrate a moment of intermediality. In particular, the author references in the text a painting by Gustave Doré "Acrobats", or "The Acrobats' Family" (referred to in the novella as "The Death of an Acrobat"). It incorporates "a fresh Karaganda landscape"^[25]. In this painting, only the gray background remains, while all other figures acquire new outlines: Friedrich as the mother. The dying child's parents are "both human and supernatural beings from an infernal abyss", while "Karaganda repeatedly breaks away from the earth's bones as a chest-deep submerged angel's body"^[25]. Thus, the references made by the literary text to an art object exemplify intermediality, allowing for parallels to be drawn between different forms of art. However, the scope of the present article does not allow for a full evaluation of the intermedial aspect of the study, merely outlining the potential for further analysis.

One of the key components of the "Kazakhstan text" in E. Zeifert's novella is the mythopoetic nature of the narrative. For instance, the dead possess the ability to "bow" and "thank" the "frozen foreign land"^[25]. This feature of E. Zeifert's creativity is also realized through the names the narrator gives to Mariyka's mother: during her lifetime, the daughter calls her "Mudr"^[25], later "Sleeping Mother"^[25], and "Godly Mommy"^[25]. The mythopoetic character of the narrative is also conveyed through sacred signs – repeated actions: "three carcasses, three waltzes"^[25], and in the creation of a collective image of Soviet Germans – a child with the face of Catherine II, swaddled in a cocoon, waiting to transform "inside" into a butterfly. But the butterfly is never born; instead, Friedrich is born in Karaganda, thus transforming the forced existence of the Germans in the Kazakh steppe into a lived life.

The image of the boat, highlighted in the title of the novella, is also mythopoetic: the "fire-colored boat"

grotesquely appears in the imagined throat of Christian August. The boat symbolizes divine blessing: “Do you remember, Jesus, you sent us boats the color of water?”^[25]. The smelting boat on the river of life becomes “a lava lake”^[25], embodying the anger of Friedrich and all Germans deprived of their homes, families, lives, and freedoms, forced to forget their German language, bow their heads, and forget their birth name: “Throw me a boat from the sky, let it turn inside out in the air and fall to the bottom”^[25].

In the second part of the novella, Karaganda is portrayed as a living being: “Swallowing fire, scarred by mines, pregnant, it crouches on all fours, hiding its muzzle beneath its ripening belly”^[25]. The city’s zoomorphic imagery aligns with the mythopoetic background of the artistic world, giving rise to the image of the twin brother of the god of sleep searching for Karaganda. She is invisible. “The Corybantes dance on her spine, covered with a ram’s hide”^[25]. Simultaneously, a feminine image emerges – a “resilient” Muslim woman, Karaganda. She does not fit under Falconet’s horse, and the hands of a black boy and a white boy intertwine on a vase. In the second part of the novella – The Ball – the gendered essence of the image shifts: “Oh, boy Karaganda, descend into the mine for a precious stone”, before returning to a feminine form: “Karaganda modestly hides her black nakedness beneath temporary snow”^[25].

“The city equals a star, a split star named Malinovka, also known as the Akmol village”^[25]. Constantly changing mythological images expand the city’s scope, integrating it into both global reality and mythopoetic spaces. Just as the star is split, so is the world of a person who has lost harmony: “Majestic infant, bring me an unbroken star from the sky”^[25].

The mythologemes in Elena Zeifert’s novella are most often interwoven with Christian imagery, for instance, the author introduces the figure of the Christ Child and the Virgin Mary. However, these Christian symbols are placed within a broader framework that also includes elements of pagan mythology: “In one Christmas procession, magi, a hunter, a goat, a stork, and a bear all take part. The twelve departed roses of 1766 shed their petals. Lifting his eyes to the heavens, Luka ruthlessly squeezes Maria’s hand. Her face is touched by pain”^[25]. In the author’s perception, the infant symbolizes the German people: “A kissed, entangled infant in a foreign fabric is carried into Karaganda. The curtain of sunset is heavy like velvet, and the scaffold is exposed”^[25].

This infant is multi-faceted: it could be Paul or Lydia’s child, representing all living beings.

E. Zeifert’s gender identity enables the synthesis of German, Soviet, and Kazakh myths into a cohesive whole. For example, for Anya, the stories about the Civil War take on the form of a fairy tale – one that comes to life in the girl’s imagination: “Are those goosefoot plants or trees? Hands of manna descend upon the girl’s head”^[25]. Fairy-tale images are inseparable from everyday life: “The shaggy black Perchta throws handfuls of white flour from a clay pot into Luka’s face”^[25].

Playful culture – dolls, games – is presented as a part of Anya’s childhood during her summer days by the shore. Anya identifies with the doll Gerda “to have one heart with her”^[25]. In this space of play, Anya finds Agey and Gerda, only to lose them forever. “Then she must lose herself too”^[25]. By the second part of the novella, in the late 1990s, Karaganda has become home for Anya and other children of the generation born in Kazakhstan. It is their native land: “The evening scent near the house is childlike, gentle. A small garden with petunias, fragrant tobacco, and golden flowers guards the house on one side, while an apple orchard and raspberries protect it on the other”^[25]. The right to close the shutters of the house belongs to Grandma Rosa. Closing the shutters – a significant attribute of rural life – symbolizes family traditions. Carefully trimmed soil with flowers, lovingly replanted after a water pipe repair, represents love for Karaganda’s “reddish core”^[25].

In E. Zeifert’s “Kazakhstan text,” a local Karaganda narrative is constructed as a constituent of the broader Kazakhstani context. Karaganda is depicted as vast: “Nowhere had Friedrich seen such an open horizon as in Karaganda. The steppe sings, and only the blind cannot hear the song of its quiet colors”^[25]. This part of the story deliberately expands the boundaries of the chronotope by enlarging the spatial dimension associated with Kazakhstan – a newly mythologized homeland for the German settlers.

Hybrid identity is expressed through the synthesis of the “own” and the “other”, which, through experience, becomes “own.” This is evident in the fate of the protagonist Anya: although she moves to Moscow, “Karaganda trails after her,” and “The girl now lives not in Moscow, but in the fissure between Karaganda and Moscow”^[25]. Here, the preposition “between” becomes a key device in construct-

ing a synthetic space that generates a metatext, fusing the Kazakh and German local narratives. “The adolescent city is capricious, even hysterical. Anna pushes it away, loving and loved, but Karaganda clings to her again, deafening her with silence”^[25]. The author’s tolerance opposes the inappropriate remarks made by a nurse at a Moscow clinic: the nurse “turns Anya’s Kazakhstani passport over in her hands, seeing ‘German’ written there. She gazes suspiciously, hissing”^[25]. For this country, Anya is a stranger. She needs a “flowerbed” because there is “neither soil nor water” in her crack. Now, for Anya, Kazakhstani soil and her “father’s land” are synonymous^[25]. In the novella, we find not only the realization of the character’s spatial identity, but also her spiritual identity, in which German and Kazakh genetic memory are intertwined.

The mythologem of the “seed”, dropped “two hundred and fifty years ago”^[25] during the reign of Catherine the Great, becomes a metaphor associated with Mariyka as a representative of the German settler diaspora. To depict the image of emigrants, the writer employs two symbols: grain and ears of wheat. Mariyka, being small, is the grain – it is easier for her to accept the “foreign” and make it her own. Adult settlers who arrived in Glarus are “ears of wheat”^[25]; it is hard for them to take root in Russian soil. The porridge cooked by Lydia’s mother in Lilienfeld resembles “a small orange sun in a round pot”^[25]. Mythologems serve to convey the symbolic meanings introduced by the author to construct the artistic image of a “new” homeland – Kazakhstan.

Another recurring metaphor is the child. The village of Lilienfeld is portrayed as a child: “The child has grown weary, its tender eyelids are heavy”^[25], “Sleeping, wrapped tightly in the swaddling clothes of oblivion, he (Luka) is glad this is only a dream”^[25]. “Have you been born, infant? Not yet, not at all. Many kind hands are reaching out to me. I will come into the world only when I am completely alone”^[25]. The Volga town of Engels is also associated with a child: “The girl Engels was crying”^[25]. This symbol connects to the imagery of the cradle and childbirth: “The earthen body near the house keeps giving birth again and again. The father is the midwife”^[25]. “The smelting boat resembles a boat, a cradle, and a coffin”^[25]. The latter comparison encapsulates the essence of the Germans’ existence: the boat symbolizes the journey they are compelled to undertake, the cradle represents the new generation born on this path,

and the coffin reflects the losses endured along the difficult way. Among such losses, the author counts August, Paul, Mariyka’s father – his chest marked with wound-scars like medals. After Friedrich and Lydia find love, a new infant is born, embodying the pieces of all the deceased children: “Paul, Elsa’s daughter, Lydia’s son, and Viktor. ‘Swaddled Soviet Germans reluctantly lay in the Karaganda soil’”^[25].

Another mythologeme introduced by the author is the tree, representing family and lineage: “A tree grew, its fingers sang”. Often, the tree serves as a person’s support: “Lydia feels those gazes, searching for the trunk within herself”^[25]. In Zejfert’s artistic world, all vegetation comes alive: “The forest pressed against the river”^[25]. “No, Roma secunda, that’s not so”, – “No matter how ancient your vineyard and old your wine, Trier, born at sunrise, you are always morning. Your amphitheater grows inward. Germany has taken root in Kazakhstan”^[25]. Love entered the lives of Friedrich and Lydia, and the land on which the Germans had been forced to live ceased to be foreign. With the appearance of love in the lives of these young Germans, life is reborn: “Karaganda gives birth to a fairy-tale coal child”^[25]. “Siegfried is not the roots, but the trunk of the tree”^[25] – this mythopoetic image of the tree symbolizes growth and the continuation of life.

This complex philosophical metaphor is interpreted as a sublime though conditioned by the tragic historical twist of human destinies interweaving of cultures and national worldviews, which together form a synthetic spirituality of a unique kind, embodied in the contemporary Kazakhstani reality.

Some mythical characters are entirely products of the author’s imagination, such as the Cow God^[25] or Dolinka, the mother of all wolves. Dolinka is the capital of KARLAG (or the Karaganda Corrective Labor Camp, was one of the largest labor camps in the Soviet Gulag system). Elevating the “Kazakhstani text” to a mythopoetic level, the author intertwines reality and fiction, historical fact and abstraction. The Sovkhoz “Gigant”, (a state-owned farm in the Soviet Union, where agricultural production was centrally planned and managed by the government) established in 1930 in the Karaganda region, became a KARLAG location and remained until 1959. Among the mythical characters in Mariyka’s consciousness are “tsvergi” (can be translated as zwerge), who live underground and fear the sun. Sometimes, otherworldly characters are linked to real ones: Lydia

realizes that Viktor is the very same dwarf fated to be hers. Augustine from a famous Viennese street song comes to life, climbs out of a music box, multiplies while holding a bagpipe, and disappears into “a fiery abyss”^[25].

The “Soviet” genetics of the Kazakhstani text determines the inclusion of the Russian cultural code in E. Zeifert’s novella, which is manifested in several directions. The first and primary one is the language of the novella itself. It includes German-language insertions, which are translated in footnotes accompanying the main text. The second direction is cultural codes within the narrative field (e.g., “wandering in the matryoshka reflections”^[25]), as well as in the speech of the characters: Germans (“They fear speaking in German and take a long time searching for Russian words, clumsily moving their heavy German tongue, probing for Russian linguistic codes”^[25]) or Kazakhs (Yerkanat’s Russian speech). “Friedrich and Yerkanat are like relatives. Their Russian is tense and uncertain, but it is their only common language”^[25]. Russian is also present in Russified terms – “Russian Germans”^[25], Fedyka (Friedrich) – as well as cultural references: a volume of Pushkin, “Kuprin, Lermontov’s dramas, the dragons from Borodino, Sevastopol Stories, and The Elephant by Kuprin”, and geographic locations such as the village of Makeyevka, Friedrich’s birthplace. For immigrants from Germany like Luka and Christian August, even the “fertile Russian soil”^[25] feels foreign. It refuses to become “native”^[25], even for the lifeless body of Paul, Luka’s son.

As we can see, E. Zeifert’s hybrid identity allows mythologemes associated with German mythological consciousness and those that are classical for Russian and Kazakh cultures to coexist organically within the artistic space of the novella.

The concept of “water” emerges as one of the key themes, as evidenced by the inclusion of a water-related noun in the novella’s title, “The Smelting Boat”. Mariyka identifies herself with a river during her train journey to the Karaganda steppe, and “Lydia’s heart is like a river”^[25], as the narrator notes. Water and milk often intermingle, symbolizing the past life of abundance: “Lydia tilts her head back to the sky, falls into a milky river, rises, and drinks greedily”^[25]. In the characters’ minds, milky rivers are associated with the past, with the promised land: “The Virgin Mother holds in her aged hands before him milk rivers with jelly shores”^[25]. The image of water reappears in the narrative

when Lydia finds love, and the narrator’s tone becomes triumphant: “Cold water in the palm! Honey nectar!”^[25]. “A mountain spring gives birth to Lake Shaitankol”^[25]. In the author’s vision, a river represents the soul: “When you feel your inner rivers, life becomes a constant companion”^[25]. For the narrator, the river of the soul and the river of the Kazakh steppe are inseparable: “Lower your head into the Volga, your inner Volga, wanderer, and a star will rise above you. The Nura River – a stream of sweat on the skin of the Kazakh Upland – its waters are brackish in the lowlands. The Ishim and Tengiz await Nura. German, Russian, Volga dweller – in the river, in the strong river, lies your heart, a muscular red pouch, in the Volga, not in the Nura. No two rivers are alike. Leave your heart here; throw it into the water and let it flounder there without you”^[25].

Multicultural hybrid identity in the novella “The Smelting Boat” is also expressed through the synthesis of religious codes. Sacred imagery in the novella remains immutable: “And only the Lutheran church stands invisible, as it always has”^[25]. The angel, however, appears in a grotesque form, into whose throat “thousands of the persecuted enter”^[25]. Rosa tries “to fight the angel” but fails^[25]. “The angel strides widely through Karaganda – one foot in Mikhaylovka, the other already in Tikhonovka”^[25]. The angel, grotesquely oversized, is present in every event of the Germans’ lives. “The house crouches, screaming”^[25]. Mark Felix observes that “the dry Karaganda steppe gleams with its fat side, preparing to bury non-existent temples”, but this is impossible: the young German sees that “the church does not exist, yet its light shines”^[25]. Soviet life seeks to replace traditional sacredness with its own, but the older generation of Germans resists, as evidenced by Anya’s grandmother, who disrupts this “initiation”: “Oh Lord, once we had relics of Christ’s Tomb and the Virgin Mary’s Belt... now banners! Lunacy!”^[25]. In the final parts of the novella, the Gothic cathedrals of Germany – powerful bastions of faith – look upon Johanna “from below”^[25]. Christianity is embedded in the text through the figure of Father Sebastian, whom not everyone can discern – accepting the sanctity of faith is not universal.

For the German settlers, resettlement to Karaganda is associated with a code of violence. The description of Mark Felix’s life is portrayed as the breaking of the human spirit – the “smelting boat”^[25]. It involves overcoming the natural

movement of the tongue when pronouncing native words. Mark resists these changes with his entire being. Surviving this crucible, Mark Felix seemingly gains a new essence, a new language: “The tongue melted in the mouth like an apple, becoming a faint aura of an angel of growth and pain, living inside a seed and breaking through the iron skin of the fruit with strong hands”^[25]. Native German speech represents light for the hero. However, his mind still refuses to accept the foreign land, the foreign language, and the work he must perform during Christmas. The Stalinist regime’s violent destruction of the national worldview marks the collapse of national identity but not the spiritual one, for “even in poverty, one can surround oneself with an abundance of the soul”^[25]. Mark Felix accepts the “foreign” through faith – Sebastian finds the right words, after which the mad young man “pours Karaganda soil into his left ear”^[25]. “Beneath the ground, a new root system is born” – a metaphor for growth and rebirth, accompanied by descriptions of German life in exile throughout the novella. However, this process is extremely difficult for the settlers: “Germans are too rough to snugly fit alongside Kazakhs and Russians; an absurd gap remains”^[25]. The central event of historical memory conveyed by E. Zeifert is how the Kazakh land received the settlers: “Yerkanat saved Friedrich’s life, gave him shelter, fed him, found him a job – without the Kazakh, the German would have perished”^[25].

E. Zeifert’s novella represents a mythopoetic “Kazakhstani text”. Through a system of sacred images, such as *the boat, the infant, the tree, and water*, the author constructs a unique artistic reality in which displacement and adaptation acquire symbolic and metaphysical meaning. The mythopoetics of the work are formed at the intersection of various cultural and religious codes. The syncretism of mythological motifs creates a sense of depth and polysemy, where loss, estrangement, and the search for a homeland attain mythic status. Local topoi: Karaganda, the steppe, the cemetery, the house, are transformed into symbolic spaces that mark transitions between worlds. The characters live in a state of “in-betweenness”, constantly navigating between their German origins, the Russian language, and the Kazakh landscape. The image of the main character, Anya, embodies this “borderline” condition as an existential norm.

Thus, the “Kazakhstani text” in Zeifert’s novella emerges as a multilayered cultural formation, where the artis-

tic language of myth becomes a universal means of expressing historical memory, spiritual searching, and the creation of a new identity at the intersection of cultures.

5. Experimental Work

The experimental part of the study involved a set of pedagogical activities aimed at developing skills for interpreting Kazakhstan’s image in literature.

The pedagogical experiment was conducted with fourth-year undergraduate students specializing in “Russian Language and Literature”. To implement the experimental work, an elective course titled “Kazakhstan’s Image in World Literature” was developed. The sample consisted of 100 fourth-year students from the Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, divided into an experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG). The basis for forming these groups was an initial diagnostic test, which allowed for the allocation of students into the respective groups.

To assess students’ ability to interpret the image of a country in literary works, the following diagnostic tools were used: a questionnaire developed by authors, which included questions on the understanding of concepts such as “national image” and the image of a country, as well as knowledge of Kazakhstani societal realities, Kazakh national cultural codes, and historical facts related to the Soviet period of Kazakhstani history. The experimental group demonstrated lower initial results. In one of the groups, an additional one-hour seminar titled “Kazakhstan’s Image in World Literature” was conducted outside of regular class hours.

At the second stage of the experiment, as part of the elective course, the development of philological competence among future teachers of Russian language and literature was carried out in the experimental group. For this purpose, the following descriptors were identified:

- Knowledge of imagology as a scientific field and the concepts of “the image of a country” and “national cultural code”.
- Skills in the comprehensive analysis of literary texts, including broad interpretations within the context of both global and Kazakh national culture.
- Ability to identify typological, philosophical, psychological, and axiological foundations in the embodiment of the author’s ideas.

- Skills in interpreting national cultural codes.

The development of these skills was carried out in stages. At the third stage, students were introduced to historical facts about the Stalinist resettlement of diasporas to Kazakhstan, analyzing the preconditions and consequences of this historical phenomenon. Additionally, students prepared reports on the cultures of the German, Kazakh, and Russian peoples to enhance their ability to distinguish national cultural codes.

At the fourth stage, students read E. Zeifert's novella "The Smelting Boat". To develop skills in interpreting Kazakhstan's image, the following project tasks were assigned for group study:

1. Analyze the elements of artistic time in the novella and

identify its forms.

2. Identify spatial locations within the Kazakhstani setting and create a diagram illustrating movement within the novella's artistic space.
3. Identify Kazakh cultural codes in the novella, examine their uniqueness, and analyze their connection to the sociocultural context.
4. Examine the relationship between "self" and "other" and analyze how the author's evaluation of these categories transforms as the plot develops.

At the fifth stage, a final diagnostic assessment was conducted using the method of reflective essays. The results of the experiment are presented in diagrams (**Figures 1 and 2**).

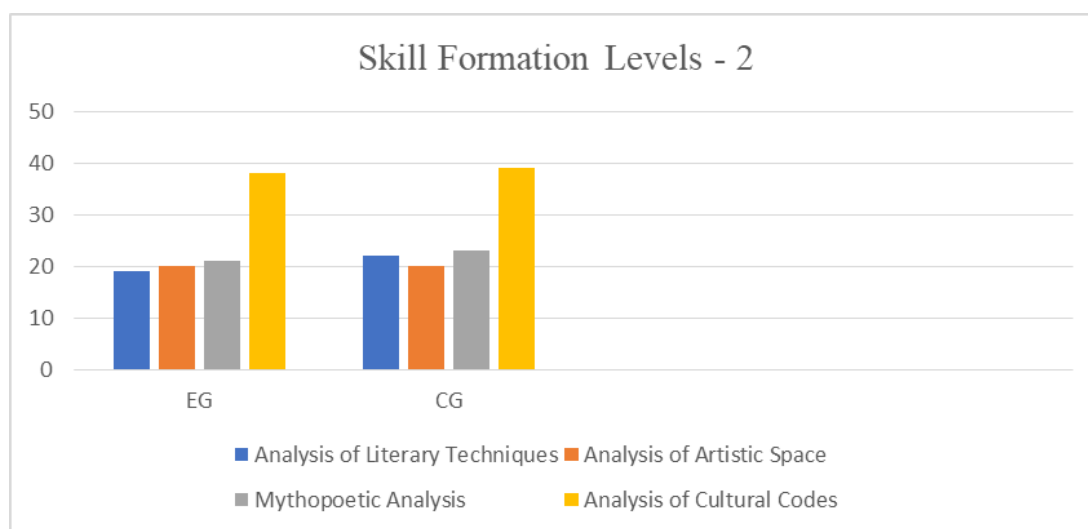


Figure 1. Results of the Initial Diagnostic Assessment.

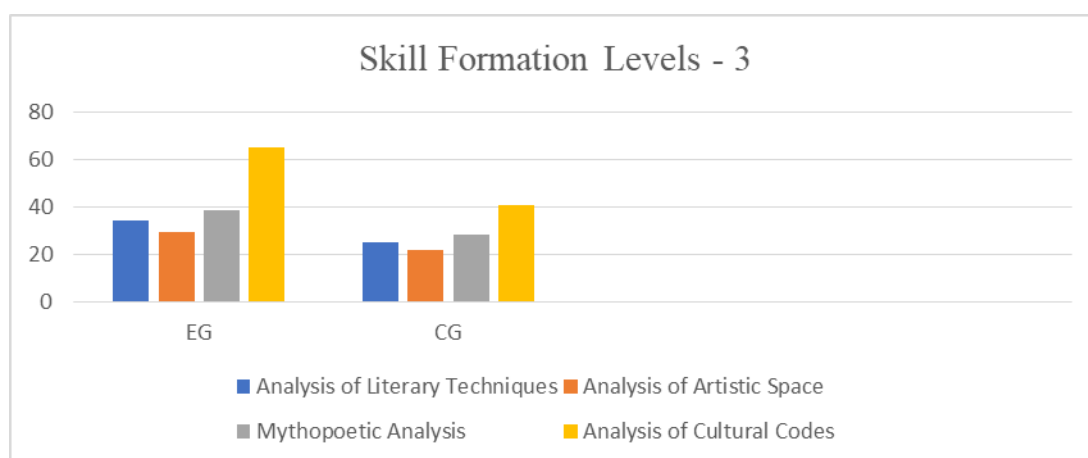


Figure 2. Results of the Final Assessment.

As shown in the figures, the experimental group demonstrated a significant improvement in their skills for interpreting literary works.

6. Conclusions

The study of Kazakhstan's image in world literature focused on E. Zeifert's prose. The analysis of her novella "The Smelting Boat" within the context of the "Kazakhstani trace" revealed several key features of the author's poetics:

The novella incorporates multicultural codes – German, Kazakh, and Russian – rooted in an autobiographical foundation. This fact supports the idea of the author's hybrid cultural identity. E. Zeifert belongs to a group of cultural figures born and raised in Kazakhstan who later emigrated. Her authorial consciousness artistically refracts a historical event – the forced resettlement of Volga Germans to Kazakhstan – through real, mythopoetic, and surrealistic spaces, layering past and present, as reflected in the dates embedded within the framing text.

The "Kazakhstani text" in the work of an author with a hybrid cultural identity takes the following forms of expression: a synthesis of Kazakh, German, and Russian cultural codes; the spatial coordinates of the chronotope include three vectors: German, Russian, and Kazakhstani locations. The movement of characters in the artistic world begins in Makeyevka, transitions to Glarus, and then to Karaganda, encompassing several points of unfolding action. From there, the movement diverges: some remain within Kazakhstan, some relocate to Germany, and others ultimately settle in Moscow. This trajectory expands the artistic space within the chronotope, marking both historical locations and modern centers of German, Kazakh, and Russian cultures.

A notable dynamic emerges in the evaluative component of the characters' consciousness: Karaganda is initially perceived by the settlers as an alien space, a foreign land. However, by the novella's conclusion, Kazakhstan attains a revered status as home. Not only does the generation raised on Kazakhstani soil embrace this new homeland, but even the adult settlers come to inhabit Kazakhstani space, making it "their own."

E. Zeifert's prose is inherently multicultural, weaving together the images and motifs of three nations. The Kazakhstani cultural code is conveyed through onomastic, nomi-

native, gastronomic, animalistic, and other forms of representation. A crucial element is the formation of a new identity for the characters, wherein German and Kazakh cultural codes merge into a unified mental worldview.

The image of Kazakhstan in "The Smelting Boat" is dual in nature. On one hand, it is spatially associated with violence and the deprivation of choice. On the other, it aligns with a humanistic paradigm of goodwill and openness displayed by the native Kazakh people, who ensured the survival of Germans and other communities forcibly resettled by Soviet authorities to the Kazakh steppes. The author portrays a positive image of the Kazakh people, emphasizing their spiritual breadth, humanity, and tolerance in welcoming representatives of other cultural systems into their homeland.

E. Zeifert's artistic work represents a philosophical exploration of the surrounding world, creating an artistic model that blends the imagery of several countries: Germany, Kazakhstan, and Russia. The novella "The Smelting Boat" is compositionally divided into two parts. In the first part, Germany and Russia serve as the main loci of the plot, while in the second part, the focus shifts to Kazakhstan. The chronotope of the artistic world is distinctly split into spatial and temporal components. In the author's vision, time is personified, endowed with the qualities of a living organism. In the artistic world of the novella, the land can be hostile or hospitable, but ideally, it is envisioned as native. The emigrant fate of the Germans in the novella is linked to multiple "lives", each leaving its imprint on their worldview. Space is presented from a dual perspective: Kazakhstan simultaneously acts as a site of persecution and as a place of spiritual salvation. The "rupture" of the chronotope is harmonized into wholeness by the novella's conclusion.

The central idea of the novella is the depiction of the Germans' movement from "foreign" to "native", with Kazakhstan becoming an integral part of the characters' worldview. The layering of cultural elements and the signs of different mentalities in the novel's conclusion are harmonized and unified into a non-binary conglomerate.

The accumulation of German and Kazakh cultural codes in the novella is realized through a mythopoetic interpretation, the ornamental nature of the prose narrative, the lyricism of the authorial voice, motifs of sacredness, original metaphors, as well as the inclusion of intertextual elements both Russian and German.

E. Zejfert's multiculturalism is expressed on several levels:

- Imagery: Characters bear the traces of various national cultures.
- Plot: The characters move between different spaces, experiencing shifts in lifestyle.
- Linguistics: German, Russian, and Kazakh lexemes are interwoven; the text alternates between Russian and German.

The philosophical reflection on the fate of Russian-Kazakh Germans highlights several stages: forced relocation from Russia to Kazakhstan, the burdensome process of adapting to Kazakhstani realities, the search for belonging within Kazakhstani space, the overcoming of alienation, and the transformation of the perception of Kazakhstan – from a place of exile to a space of new belonging.

Kazakh cultural codes are conveyed in the novella through onomastics, toponyms, gastronomic references, and sacred motifs. These characteristics of Kazakhstan's image in E. Zejfert's Russian-language prose are shaped by the autobiographical and sociocultural dimensions of the author's mindset. Spiritually, historically, culturally, and geographically connected to Kazakhstan, the author channels transformations rooted in this connection through an intercultural lens. These changes take the form of a synthetic artistic world, embodying different yet paradoxically intertwined national and cultural components of mentality, which can be described as the "Kazakhstani phenomenon", where various ethnicities not only coexist but are seamlessly woven into a unified cultural fabric.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M.K., S.A.; methodology, G.A.; software, M.M.; validation, M.Kh., S.A. and G.A.; formal analysis, G.A.; investigation, M.K.; resources, G.A.; data curation, M.M.; writing—original draft preparation, M.K.; writing—review and editing, S.A.; visualization, S.S.; supervision, S.A.; project administration, M.M.; funding acquisition, S.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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