

About the author:

EKATERINA MANOYLO born in 1988 in Orsk, the city in Russia close to Kazakhstan, in an interethnic family, with a Kazakh father and a Russian mother. Manoylo graduated from the Literary Institute in Moscow in 2022. Her debut novel, *Dad Faces the West*, won the Alexander Pushkin's Litsei Award for young writers in both the best prose and the critics' choice nominations in 2022, before its publication as a book. The novel sold in impressive 40,000 copies in less than a year since its release. On publication, the novel was shortlisted for the Yasnaya Polyana Prize and longlisted for the Big Books Award in 2023.

As Ekaterina herself tells in the interviews, the idea of the debut novel came to her after she, just like the protagonist of the book, had to return to her native town to sort out inheritance issues after the funeral of her estranged father.

Manoylo's second novel, *The Wind Carries Away the Dead Leaves*, a road thriller about two sisters escaping from an abusive father, was published by Alpina Non-Fiction Publishers in early 2024.

Ekaterina is married, with three daughters, a dog and a cat.

*Selected Bibliography*

2024 — *The Wind Carries Away the Dead Leaves*, *novel*

2023 — *Dad Faces the West*, *novel*

The Alexander Pushkin's Litsei Prize 2022

The Critics Choice Litsei 2022

Shortlisted for the **Yasnaya Polyana Prize 2023**

Longlisted for the **Big Book Award 2023**

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Alpina Non-Fiction

Novel, 2024

272 pp

Film rights optioned

Dad Faces the West

Katerina Manoylo's debut novel has become a sensation that fell into focus of literary professionals before its publication, winning the prominent literary award for young writers in 2022, having sold in impressive 40,000 copies in a few months since its release. Manoylo has written an uncompromisingly honest novel about family violence, a search for national and cultural identity, about a child's imminent revolt against their parents that is a true token of love, about life that overcomes death, and, ultimately, about an unyielding craving for freedom.

Katya is a daughter of a Russian mother and a Kazakh father, living in a Kazakh village on the border between the two countries. Katya has always felt herself an unwanted burden while the family waited for a proper — that is, male — offspring. Katya turns seven when her brother is born. Emotionally struggling with her maternity, Katya's mother finds relief in the Christian Orthodox religion. The father takes longer shifts as a long-haul truck driver and is hardly at home. When Marat, Katya's brother turns two, he still does not speak, yet he sings in an angelic voice, like of Robertino Loretti. While their parents grow more estranged, Katya is the one to watch after the kid. Until her brother dies in an accident, caused by the father, in front of the girl's eyes. After the funeral the mother runs away with the family's meagre savings, donating the money to the monastery, the father finds solace in booze, and Katya — miraculously — is taken by her grandmother to Moscow, freed from the burden of her past and a grim future.

Since the little boy's funeral, the villagers start to hear Maratik's singing — sometimes, he is there to reveal their hidden (and often shameful) secrets, sometimes he warns against an imminent accident, illness or death. It is Maratik that Katya's father sees before his stroke.

Katya, 25 y.o., now lives in Moscow after her grandmother's death. Oddly attuned to sounds of the world, she works as a sound designer, rents a tiny flat from an abusive host and struggles to find her place in the big city. When she receives a call from her

aunt demanding retribution for the father's funeral, Katya hopes to invest the money she receives from the sale of the family's flat into a place of her own in Moscow. Yet her relatives have different plans for the family's property.

On arrival, Katya discovers that nightmarish village of her childhood has not changed. Here, a newborn girl is not a cause to celebrate, kidnapping a bride is just a common practice, family violence and abuse make a daily routine. These are not only national cultural and social traditions and norms, but this is also the routine that her family embraces. Katya finds moral strength to challenge these norms and to fight with the demons of her childhood, but will she find courage to look into the face of her dead father, when her cousin decides to get rid of an unwanted heir by locking her in the father's tomb? What song will Maratik sing to the sister, when she hears her deceased baby brother's voice?

The fabric of this debut novel is woven with contrasts: the harsh, candid, uncompromising customs of the Kazakh hinterlands and the tenderness, fragility of the young girls and children living there. The oppressive, stuffy routine of human life and the grandeur of a free, vast steppe. The cruel, exceedingly real actions of the heroes and at the same time the delicate, angelic voice of Katia's deceased brother, echoing throughout the village, spreading the secrets of its inhabitants.

Selected quotes

[Dad Faces the West comprises] vivid descriptions of human cruelty, selfishness, and foolishness, qualities inherent to people regardless of age. The shattered relationship between Katia and her parents illustrates not a generational conflict, but rather the incapacity for empathy and dialogue. It is this incapacity that defines the central theme of the novel.

Prochtenie

This writer definitely knows how death smells.

Afisha

The debut novel by the winner of the Litsei Prize, Ekaterina Manoylo, about a girl named Katia — the daughter of a Kazakh man, Serikbay, and his Russian wife, Naina — reads like fiction from days long gone, when brides were abducted in villages and mothers-in-law ruled over their daughters-in-law. But 34-year-old Ekaterina Manoylo, herself the daughter of a Kazakh and a Russian, invents nothing.

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