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“Shakespeare... was Russian writer probably because the name does not like Chinese”: two librotopias in post-Soviet literatures of Belarus and Russia

Personal incentives that forced the author to write this article or non-academic introduction

Academic articles root in the necessary formalised scientific backgrounds, but sometimes external factors that formally have nothing in common with science can stimulate and inspire us to write academic texts. The author of this article admits that two groups of reasons stimulated the writing of it. On the one hand, the author in 2016 began to write a new book focused on utopias and anti-utopias as forms and factors of the development of identities and political imaginations. On the other hand, several reasons that have nothing in common with my academic interests inspired me to write an article about librotopia – a new trend in the development of modern (anti)utopia where the book and reading become collective heroes or victims of transforming realities and consumer society. Personally, I love reading. When I entered the university I became a regular visitor to the library. My recent wedding and the move of my wife forced me to castling in my room and to free two shelves for my wife’s books. These simple manual manipulations and attempts to fit books in Russian, Ukrainian, Croatian, Bulgarian, English, Georgian, Latvian and other languages in several lines inspired unhappy and not too optimistic thoughts about the book’s fate in its traditional paper format. Visiting of huge trading malls is the forced duty of a resident of a contemporary city with a million population. My wife and me visited one of these centres a few days ago and we became involuntary witnesses of an unpleasant scene in a bookstore where one of the visitors did not use the language of Aleksandr Pushkin or Nikolai Leskov but preferred to speak the language of Zahar Prilepin and other prophets of the “Russian Spring”. He tried to explain a young girl who worked in a store that his child bought the wrong book and he wants to get his money back. Normal and literary words in his wrathful tirade were too rare. This scene once again inspired my unpleasant thoughts about the possible fate of a book in the world where a paper book is compelled to compete with electronic formats that radically change the forms and mechanisms of cultural communication. These disparate episodes with the indispensable

participation of the book became stimuli that inspired the author to write this article about librotopia.

Formulation of the problem

Utopia and anti-utopia are among the influential genres in contemporary world literature. Slavic national literatures are not exceptions to this universal logic of literature's development. National utopias in the Slavic prose emerged in the 20th century and reflected political and ideological changes and transformations. Russian utopia in the 20th century reacted subtly to the political demands of the intelligentsia and this genre was predominantly anti-authoritarian and anti-totalitarian in its ideological nature. The political status of literary utopia and anti-utopia determined the main themes, writers wrote about and intellectuals speculating and discussing also. The problems of the totalitarian state as a ruthless machine of assimilation and destruction of the hero's freedom and personality, attempts of heroic and almost always senseless protest against the totalitarian state became the central themes that determined the main vectors and trajectories of the developments of political utopia and anti-utopia in the national literatures of Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century when part of European countries were victims of right and later left totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.

Undemocratic political regimes did not trust writers, and utopia understood itself among marginalised and politically undesirable, inconvenient genres, but the crisis and the fall of the Communist authoritarianisms did not change radically the situation with utopias in national literatures. Other, simpler, easier and even primitive, genres proved to be more popular among the new readers of the societies where pseudo-culture of consumerism won. The triumph of consumerism was significant, its consequences were extremely destructive for the culture, but the new society could not organise the euthanasia of literature in general and books in particular. The new prophets and the gurus of the consumerism, who reproduced and served the new official discourse, prefer to subordinate literature, including the genres of utopia and anti-utopia. Mass literature reacted promptly to the beginning of the electronic era, and literature migrated from off-line formats to on-line actively and became an integral part of the culture of virtual space. High and elitist cultures of national intellectual communities also could not ignore these new tendencies and the crisis of archaic book culture, because the triumph of virtuality actualized the emergence and developments of new trends in the genre of utopia and anti-utopia. Librotopia or librotopia, focused on attempts to understand and revise

roles, cultural and social places and prospects of the book in its traditional forms in the new information society, became the intellectual responses of the Central and Eastern European high cultures to the expansion of digitality into the world of a traditional and partially archaic printed word.

What is this article about?

What librotopia is? The single definition of the concept of “librotopia” is absent. The body of classical librotopic texts, in difference to anti-authoritarian and anti-totalitarian utopias, has not arisen yet. The imagined body of librotopic texts is in the stage of constant expansion. The author presumes that librotopia or libro-utopia is a new trend in the actual developments of utopian or anti-utopian discourses. The librotopian texts focus on the fate of books in particular and book culture in general in dynamically changing information society or post-apocalyptic worlds that which were able to preserve the significant part technologies and fidelity to the principles of globalisation. Therefore, this article is an attempt to analyse librotopia as a new trend in the development of (anti)utopian discourse in Russian and Belarusian literature.

The purpose and objectives of the article

Analysis of librotopia as a new trend in the actual history of utopia and dystopia is the main goal of this article. The article has several tasks, including a study of the genesis of librotopia, the search for its historical and intellectual predecessors and forerunners in Soviet literature, an analysis of the main trends in the actual history of librotopia in the contexts of transformations and developments of national and political identities.

The corpus of sources

Librotopia belongs to the number of new and dynamically developing trends of utopian and anti-utopian literatures. Therefore, it is extremely difficult and problematic to define the boundaries of librotopia in modern prose. The author believes that several texts can be mapped and localised in the invented sub-region of “Librotopia” on the imagined maps of utopian worlds and anti-utopian spaces of contemporary literatures. Novels of Belarus writer

Viktar Martsinovich (Віктар Марціновіч) “Mova” (“Мова”)¹ and “Manaraga” (“Манарага”)² of his Russian colleague Vladimir Sorokin (Владимир Сорокин) can be identified and recognised as the first classical texts of the emerging librotopian canon.

Inventing librotopia

It is not easy to localize culturally and map mentally Viktar Martsinovich’s “Mova” and Vladimir Sorokin’s “Manaraga” in the contexts of modern literary utopia because the author actualized the problems of the co-existence of world of the book and the world without a book, a world of total librocentrism and radical rejection of the printed text as a phenomenon of modern culture simultaneously. The book, beginning with the Reformation and subsequent successes and progress of printing, became one of the main characters of the cultural and social history of the Western world, European intellectuals³ write about. Triumph and progress of the book turned it into a collective deity because library⁴ usurped the status of the temples of European civil and political nations. The progress and rise of the book predetermined the main vectors and trajectories of the development of the culture that began to dominate in the West from the 16th century. This type of culture can be defined as librocentric. The civil religion of Enlightenment and political nationalism transformed the book in particular and book culture in general into an effective instrument of indoctrination and the formation of new political nations.

European nations canonised the book, and this collective will assisted to its fetishisation and deconstruction in the 20th century. The deconstruction of the book as cultural archaism and text as a collective narrative and ideological message inspired writers to create the first anti-utopian texts, where the book migrated from the spaces of pure culture to the spheres of political struggle and confrontation. The collective text of the civil religion and belief in progress became a victim of desacralization. The genesis of librotopia became the result of the triumph of the civil religion of Enlightenment and modernity where the book monopolised the rights of the only collective and individual god who combined elements of pagan and Christian cults simultaneously. Mariia Cherniak, a Russian critic and historian of

¹ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net; Martsinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: Knihabzar

² Sorokin, V. (2017), *Manaraga*. Moskva: Corpus, 256 s.

³ Akudovich, V. (1998), *Miane niama. Rozdum na ruinah chalaveka*. Minsk: Belaruski humanitarna-adukatsyiny kul’turny tsentr, 204 s.; Akudovich, V. (1999), *Nidze i nihto*, in *Frahmenty*, no 6 [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://knihi.com/storage/frahmenty/6akudovich.htm>; Akudovich, V. (2000), *Razburyts’ Paryzh. Dva niaspraŭdzhanyia ese*, in *Frahmenty*, no 9 [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://knihi.com/storage/frahmenty/frahmenty9.htm>; Akudovich, V. (2007), *Kod adsutnasti (asnovy belaruskai mental’nasti)*. Minsk: Lohvinaŭ, 216 s.

⁴ Barysevich, Iu. (1998), *Tsela i tekst*. Minsk: Belaruski humanitarna-adukatsyiny kul’turny tsentr; Dubavets, S. (1998) *Dzion’nik pryvatnaha chalaveka, 1989–1998: Apaviadanni, impresii, ese*. Minsk: Belaruski humanitarna-adukatsyiny kul’turny tsentr, 1998. 79 s.

literature, presumes that classical utopias invade, invent and construct categories of time as different forms of dichotomies. The logic of utopia invents a period before the realisation of the social and political ideal and the period after its realisation as necessary cultural element. Mariia Cherniak argues that "a catastrophe, a revolution or another break in continuity" take place between these epochs⁵, but Viktor Martsinovich's "Mova" fixed the prolonged catastrophe and the gradual degradation of the book as a form of existence of the old identities of nations and nation-states. Andrei Sokolov, a Russian critic, presumes that the biblioutopia became a unique and particular case of the development of a utopian genre in contemporary prose. Andrei Sokolov defines a biblioutopia in the following way: "*biblioutopia is an apologetic bibliomorphy which assert the existence or even flowering of bookishness in the future information society*"⁶.

Genesis and early precursors of librotopia

The problems of genesis and the early history of librotopia are extremely controversial and debatable. Imagined classics of Russian utopia of the 19th and 20th centuries lived and worked in a librocentric cultural world. They could not imagine in their wildest dreams or crazy nightmares that the book in its classical forms and understandings would become a cultural anachronism, a social atavism or a museum rarity. The classical writers were prophets and faithful servants of the librotcentric culture. They appreciated and respected the utopia and anti-utopia because these genres provided them with opportunities to express their political disagreements and protests. The book was imagined by them as an unshakable cultural institution. Despite the collective beliefs of Western intellectuals who became the heirs of Gutenberg's epoch and book cultural tradition, the history of the Western literature of the 20th century provides us with several examples how European and American writers tried to rethink the role and significance of the book in developments of society. The trajectories of the historical and cultural fates of the book in Western intellectual tradition ranged from its fetishization to gradual dying.

The political and cultural experience of the radical right and left dictatorships of the first half of the 20th century proved that the book can be the same victim of political manipulations, speculations, and ideology as a human enslaved mass. German writer Hermann Kasack was among the historical predecessors and ideological inspirers of

⁵ Cherniak, M. (2014). Sovremennaia antiutopiia na strazhe chteniia: traditsii i novatorstvo, in *Bibliotechnoe delo*, No 6 (216), ss. 7 – 13.

⁶ Sokolov, A. (2014). Biblioutopii i biblioantiutopii v epohu krizisa knizhnosti, in *Bibliotechnoe delo*, No 6 (216), ss. 2 – 6.

librotopia in Western literature. The novel “Die Stadt hinter dem Strom”⁷ can be localised on the literary maps of Western Utopia as a text the significant with elements of librotopia. The protagonist of the novel is Robert Lindhoff, the Orientalist, emerged in a librocentric world where the careful recording of events and the writing of the great collective text, and promotion of the grand narrative becomes his main task. The novel written in 1947 became an intellectual premonition of the crisis of the librocentric world and the cultural space inspired by the trauma of totalitarianism that the West received after the political triumph of fascism. Totalitarianism in its right or left versions caused numerous spiritual traumas of European intellectuals. The legacy of totalitarianism predetermined the main directions of the development of utopia and anti-utopia significantly as politicised and ideologized trends. If postwar European writers foresaw the crisis and the erosion of the librocentric world, American authors were more radical and resolute. Therefore, they were among the first intellectuals who tried to fix the existence of the book as a collective god in the world where other deities of comfort, consumption and entertainment occupied places of the book and monopolised its cultural roles. Ray Bradbury’s “Fahrenheit 451”⁸ became the first attempt to actualize the fate of the book in a mass society of total consumerism.

The novel of Ray Bradbury ushered and proclaimed the end and decline of the librocentric era, but this text did not become the first step in developing a new trend in the actual history of anti-utopia because the political and ideological motives of utopias and anti-utopias were more interesting to their authors than the cultural and social components of the crisis and decline of book culture and librocentric world. The most of the Russian authors in their utopias and anti-utopias preferred to actualize the ideal models of correct or incorrect social and political developments. Therefore, the book never was among the central collective imagined characters. This became the result of the fact that Russian literature developed as librocentric. The libro-centrism of Russian literature was the result of late modernization and idealisation of the book as a social and cultural institution and the imagined invented tradition. The history of Russian literature and the Soviet one as its private case of provides historians of national literatures with several unsystematized examples of attempts to actualize the problems of erosion or death of a book as an institution and librocentric culture as the form of social communication. Kirill Kostsinskii⁹ tried to invent libro-centric forms of utopian consciousness. Utopia of Kirill Kostsinskii belongs to a small number of relatively optimistic utopias of Russian emigration.

⁷ Kasack, H. (1947), *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom*. Berlin

⁸ Bradbury, R. (1953), *Fahrenheit 451*. NY.: Ballantine Press, 158 p.

⁹ Kostsinskii, K. (1990), Iogann Guttenberg i drugie, in Gereben, A. (1990), sost., *Tret'ia volna. Antologija russkogo zarubezh'ia*. Moskva: Moskovskii rabochii, ss. 148 – 159.

The book and the text as a phenomenon and forms of culture were among the collective social heroes of Russian writer. The protagonists of the Soviet literature were heroes who lived in a social and cultural world without books. Soviet heroes could be people with books, but they felt themselves normally and comfortably in a world without books because of books, on the one hand, and reading, on the other hand, actualized the different dimensions and forms of Soviet ideological reality. The reading or refusing to read of ideologically harmful and unacceptable literature was a form of forced or voluntary involvement in communist doctrine and ideology. The reading of forbidden books was a form of gaining of inner spiritual freedom and a new political and cultural identity. The book in the Soviet ideological hierarchy became a social and cultural institution because the authorities and the ruling elites subordinated literature to the ideological needs. The culture of reading¹⁰ in particular and the book, in general, became the forms of cultural and social exchange in the Soviet ideological hierarchy, but the Soviet ideological obligations could not save the book as the institution and reading as the process of the inevitable erosion and crisis. Soviet ideologization of literature became a form of euthanasia of the book and politically motivated killing of the reader because the reader in the Soviet cultural system of coordinates ceased to be a reader-creator, but became a reader who could consume ideologically adjusted and motivated book products only. Actually, Sovietization of literature and culture killed the reader and sanctioned the death of the librotcentric model of culture. Believing in the sanctity and political and ideological correctness of Soviet political communist doctrine freed the hero of Soviet prose from reading and communicating with the book. If the orthodox Soviet heroes were able to read, the range of their interests was too narrow because Soviet heroes preferred to read ideologically motivated texts that had nothing in common with normal literature. Formally, the Soviet hero lived in peace with books, but this social and cultural type of hero preferred to ignore the book as a cultural institution.

The cult of the book in the official Soviet literature was mainly a formal external characteristic of the Soviet model of culture. It is very tempting to imagine and position Kirill Kotsinskii as a cultural and intellectual predecessor of Viktor Martsinovich. Kirill Kotsinskii's heroes also saved the books, but they were not fighting with the Russian-Chinese machine of assimilation and society of consumers, they opposed the communist ideology of the Soviet utopia. The libro-centric utopia of Kirill Kotsinskii was mostly happy and optimistic anti-utopia, historical and cultural alternative to the Soviet utopia because a book

¹⁰ Balla, O. (2007), *Praktiki neochevidnogo: istoriia chteniia kak istoriia cheloveka*, in *Novyi Mir*, no 12 [Electronic resource]. – URL: http://magazines.russ.ru/novi_mi/2007/12/ba16.html; Ravinskii, Dm. (2010), *Istoriia chteniia: razdvigaia granitsy issledovatel'skogo prostranstva*, in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no 102 [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2010/102/ra27.html>

utopia and communist Soviet utopia had radically and diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive basis and roots. Tat'iana Tolstaia's novel "Kys" can not be mapped among classic librotopias, but the author actualizes the images of the post-Apocalypse world that develops as heterogeneous and simultaneously existing landscapes freed from the book culture including such attributes as printed books and their reading. The book exists in the world imagined by Tat'iana Tolstaia as the cultural, social and intellectual archaism, an anachronism and rudiment of the era that preceded the global catastrophe. The world of the novel¹¹ develops as a natural economy of the neo-feudal type and its inhabitants have no natural and social needs for reading. The heroes of the novel live in a world that is free of books and exists in a total anti-book space.

Rudimentary reading skills have purely applied and utilitarian significance in this world. Therefore, Benedikt, the protagonist of the novel, when he got access to the books published in the 20th century falls into the situation of cultural shock, revealing an incomprehensible world of old culture and civilisation. Tat'iana Tolstaia's "Kys" did not become a librotopia in the classical sense of this trend in actual utopian and anti-utopian literature because the book emerged in it as a secondary collective hero and the author did not try to invent the world that deliberately refused to read books and destroy social cultures of reading. Viktor Martsinovich and Vladimir Sorokin in their texts actualized new forms and dimensions of utopian and anti-utopian consciousness and identities. Viktor Martsinovich and Vladimir Sorokin refused to imagine the world after the Apocalypse in the traditional sense, but they preferred to invent its new and more severe forms when the political and economic Apocalypse combines with the cultural fall and erosion of the book as a social and cultural institution.

The first librotopias – the first critical comprehensions

The emergence of librotopias of Viktor Martsinovich and Vladimir Sorokin, despite the fact that these texts became the first post-Soviet librotopias in fact and the genre they belong to, is not very well known and popular in Russia or in Belarus, inspired a variety of reactions and critical responses. The features of the cultural and political situations forced Viktor Martsinovich to use the formal universal but in fact politically archaic and obsolete language of utopia which was very convenient for writers who have difficult relations with non-democratic regimes and dictatorships. Belarus language becomes the main collective and

¹¹ Tolstaia, T. (2015), *Kys*. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AST

synthetic hero of the novel, and Viktor Martsinovich repeatedly pointed out¹² the importance of language problems for modern Belarus society, identity and current cultural, intellectual and literary situation. The novel became a media event and attracted the considerable attention of the readers¹³. Vladimir Sorokin defined his texts as a symbiosis of utopia and anti-utopia¹⁴, critic Iurii Saprykin perceived them as “an unhappy meditation on the fate of culture”¹⁵. Viktor Martsinovich identified his novel as “linguistic action”¹⁶, “unfunny”¹⁷ and “a little bit scandalous”¹⁸ “intellectual prose and mixed genre”¹⁹. Vladimir Sorokin defines “Manaraga” as a novel about the unpleasant future of mankind and book culture: “*mankind will start to get rid of home libraries, the book will forever migrate to cultural vaults. The paper book will become a museum exhibit, the circulations of paper books will be small, and their appearance will fascinate the real bibliophiles. The book will become an expensive pleasure for amateurs*”²⁰.

The range of opinions of critics is more diverse, but they prefer to accept the novel positively. Dmitrii Butrin defined “Manaraga” as “a text of the highest value and relevance... a heavy and important book”²¹. Elena Makeenko defined “Manaraga” as “a sad ballad about the book as a thing, a book as individuality, a book as a tangible memory of those who read it”²². Andrei Arhangel'skii became one of the first critics and commentators of Vladimir Sorokin's “Manaraga” and suggested that the writer deliberately and consciously “constructs

¹² Martinovich, V. (2016), “*Zhivu v odnoi strane, izdaius' v drugoi, prepodaiu v tret'ei. Obizhaet li eto menia? Skoree, eto polezno*”: Viktor Martinovich o zhizni, geroiah i knigah [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://bel.biz/interview/portrait/viktor-martinovich-o-zhizni-geroyah>; Martsinovich, V. (2013), *Belaruskii nebelarusy i nebelaruskiia belarusy* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://budzma.by/news/viktar-marcinovich-belaruskiya-nebelarusy-i-nebelaruskiya-belarusy.html>

¹³ Adamovich, A. (2014), *Uhasilisia iak mae byts': prezentatsiya “Movy” Viktora Martsinovicha* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://budzma.by/news/prezentatsiya-movy-viktara-marcinovicha-fota.html>; Serbin, A. (2014), *Doza “Movy”* [Electronic resource]. – URL: http://vitebsk4.me/news/literatura/doza_movi/; Borshcheva, O. (2014), “Mova” Viktora Martinovicha: blokaster s belarusskom kontekste, in *Belarusskii zhurnal*, 29 sentiabria [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://journalby.com/news/mova-viktora-martinovicha-blokaster-v-belarusskom-kontekste-234>

¹⁴ Dolin, A. (2017), “V Rossii nastoiashchee stalo budushchim, a budushchee silios' s proshlym”: Vladimir Sorokin – o svoei novoi knige “Manaraga”, in *Meduza*, 10 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-meduza-razgovor.htm>

¹⁵ Saprykin, Iu. (2017), *O novom romane Vladimira Sorokina* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-gorkiy.htm>

¹⁶ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Kogda moment triumfa pokazan natsii v soprovozhdenii liudei v noskah, eto stranno* [Electronic resource]. – URL: http://by.tribuna.com/tribuna/blogs/heavy_bald/576712.html; Martsinovich, V. (2013), *Maiio pakalen'ne z-za movy nia budze emihravats'*, in *Radyio Svaboda*, 13 chervenia [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://www.svaboda.org/a/25016059.html>; Martsinovich, V. (2013), *Mova – heta ne balyucha* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://budzma.by/news/viktar-marcinovich-mova-heta-ne-balyucha.html>; Martsinovich, V. (2013), *Tsi “sialianskaia” mova nashaia?* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://budzma.org/news/viktar-marcinovich-ci-syalianskaya-mova-nashaya.html>

¹⁷ Uskoŭ, Iu. (2014), *Viktar Martsinovich napisau “baiavik pra belaruskuiu movu”* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://udf.by/news/kultura/95814-vktar-marcnovch-napsa-bayavk-pra-belaruskuyu-movu.html>

¹⁸ Martsinovich, V. (2014), *Viktar Martsinovich pra raman “Mova”*: “*Kniha vyishla rekordnym dlia Belarusi nakladam*” [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://news.tut.by/culture/416776.html>; Martsinovich, V. (2014), *Vyhozits' novy roman Viktora Martsinovicha “Mova”* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://martinovich.by/uk/?p=342>

¹⁹ Uskoŭ, Iu. (2014), *Viktar Martsinovich napisau “baiavik pra belaruskuiu movu”* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://udf.by/news/kultura/95814-vktar-marcnovch-napsa-bayavk-pra-belaruskuyu-movu.html>

²⁰ Saprykin, Iu. (2017), “*Ja – beznadiozhnoe literaturnoe zhivotnoe*”. Interv'iu s Vladimirom Sorokinym [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-gorky-media-saprykin.htm>

²¹ Butrin, Dm. (2017), *Samoszhigaiushcheesia prorochestvo*. Novyi roman “Manaraga” Vladimira Sorokina – o budushchih nas vntri Evropy, in *Kommersant*, 14 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-kommersant-dmitriy-butrin.htm>

²² Makeenko, E. (2017), “*Manaraga*” Vladimira Sorokina [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://esquire.ru/books-19032017>

post-apocalyptic spaces, variational worlds of the future that pretend to be the past”²³, where cultures of gifts and reading lost their sacred functions because they became “a commercial product, which is required to feed the largest number of paying customers”²⁴. Viktar Martsionovich, commenting on the novel, suggested that “he tried to gather in this unusual story understanding of problems including our identity, culture, language, history, localness (*tuteishas’ts’* or *мутаішайсьць*), provincialism, and alacrity to abandon something our own”²⁵. Russian critics²⁶ commenting on Vladimir Sorokin’s “Manaraga” suggested that a radical and revolutionary writer turned into a conservative intellectual who diligently pushes out and throws out modern mass literature from the post-apocalyptic world of the future where books will become wood for cooking of the luxury food. Andrei Rasinski states that “Mova” became “malicious social sentimental fiction and Belarus anti-utopia”²⁷. Pavel Abramovich presumes that it is very difficult to compare “Mova” with other texts of Belarus literature²⁸. The ideological message of Vladimir Sorokin’s “Manaraga” is comparable with the basic cultural ideas of “Mova”, but Viktar Martsionovich wrote about the crisis and the dying of identity, and his Russian colleague, as Galina Iuzefovich, Aleksandr Genis, and Boris Paramonov²⁹ suggested, tries to warn about the danger of consumption and displacement of genuine culture and art by their mass copies. Tsihan Charniakovich believes that the novel can be located in the context of alternative history³⁰, and Evika Otto correlates

²³ Arhangel’skii, A. (2017), “Eda gluboko pronikaet ne tol’ko v literaturu, no i v literaturovedenie”, in *Kommersant*, 10 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-kommersant-intervju.htm>; Arhangel’skii, A. (2017), Kul’turnaia politika, in *Kommersant*, 14 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-kommersant-arhangel’skiy.htm>

²⁴ Narinskaia, A. (2017), Kniga o vkusnoi i duhovnoi pishche, in *Novaia gazeta*, 7 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-novaya-gazeta.htm>

²⁵ Martinovich, V. (2016), “U menia vsio est’”: Viktor Martinovich o samovliublennosti, kvartire Aleksievich i “Flibuste” [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://citydog.by/post/marcinovicz/>; Martsionovich, V. (2016), *Stan movy ŭ nekal’kih paradokсах* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://budzma.by/news/viktar-marcinovich-stan-movy-w-nyekalkikh-paradokсах.html>; Martinovich, V. (2015), “Zadolbalo, Vitia!”: belorusskii pisatel’ Viktor Martinovich o novom romane *Pelevina* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://mag.relax.by/citynews/10407353-zadolbalo-vitya-belorusskij-pisatel-y-viktor-martinovich-o-novom-romane-pelevina/>; Martinovich, V. (2015), *Chert, ne znaiu, kak chetche vyskazat’ pozitsiiu, chtoby ne slyshat’...* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://martinovich.livejournal.com/74566.html>; Martsionovich, V. (2015), *Ne hachu byts’ adnoi litaratury z Prylepinym* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://budzma.by/news/viktar-marcinovich-nye-khachu-byc-adnoy-litaratury-z-prylepinym.html>

²⁶ Daniilkin, L. (2017), O chem na samon dele “Manaraga” Vladimira Sorokina, in *Afisha Daily*, 14 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://daily.afisha.ru/brain/4792-o-chem-na-samom-dele-manaraga-vladimira-sorokina-obyasnyaet-lev-daniilkin/>; Oborin, L. (2017), Vladimir Sorokin napisal roman o tom, vozmozhno li unichtozhit’ udovol’sstvie ot chteniia, in *Vedomosti*, 19 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-vedomosti-oborin.htm>

²⁷ Rasinski, A. (2014), Fantastychnyia pryhody kantrabandnai movy, in *Novy chas*, 20 veras’nia [Electronic resource]. – URL: http://novychas.by/kultura/fantastychnyja_pryhody_kantraba/

²⁸ Abramovich, P. (2014), Martinovich i etalony bellita, in *Belorusskii zhurnal*, 6 oktiabria [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://journalby.com/news/martinovich-i-etalony-bellita-otkrytoe-pismo-tihonu-chernyakovichu-248>

²⁹ Genis, A., Paramonov, B. (2017), *Istoriia chteniia: staryi i novyi Sorokin* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-svoboda.htm>; Iuzefovich, G. (2017), Kak pravil’no zhech’ knigi, in *Meduza*, 4 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2017/03/04/manaraga-vladimira-sorokina>

³⁰ Charniakovich, Ts. (2014), Zhanhlior na fythbol’nym poli, in *Radyio Svaboda*, 29 veras’nia [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://www.svaboda.org/a/26611599.html>

it with science fiction literature³¹. Mihail Baiaryn locates the novel among the complex and multi-level texts and novels-constructs³². Natalka Babina and Katsia Ruskevich defined the novel as a utopia³³, other critics emphasise that "Mova" is "text with a small glimmer of hope"³⁴.

The fall of the librocentric world

Viktar Martsionvich's "Mova" was published in 2014 in Belarus and Russian languages. "Manaraga" of Vladimir Sorokin was published in Russian in 2017. The world of "Mova" is one of the possible future developments when Russia and China become a unified state, which seeks to expand in Europe. Belarusians in 4741 by Chinese calendar represent the minority in the state, they live in, and Minsk belongs to a number of numerous densely populated urban centres in the Chinese territories of the former Eastern Europe. The world of "Manaraga" represents one of the versions of Vladimir Sorokin's post-apocalyptic worlds presented in his earlier texts including "Saharnyi Kreml'" and "Den' oprichnika". Mankind in "Manaraga" stopped "printing books and forever made the best of them museum exhibits"³⁵ when authoritarian Chinese-Russian authorities in "Mova" preferred more primitive and effective methods of deliberately destroying books in particular and book culture in general.

The imagined world of "Mova" is the world of winning society of professional consumers, who consume everything, but they exclude "history" and reject the concepts of "historical time" and "historical memory" as an archaic and totally unnecessary for them. The world of the novel is the world of triumphing East and it has its roots in stability and stagnation, the denial of history and abandons the past as ideologically harmful concept. The past is primitivized and perceived as the time that preceded Chinese in the social memory of the heroes of the novel. Chinese characters in the book tend to perceive Belarus as a region without a past. Therefore, a monologue of one of the Chinese characters of the novel sounds like a historical and cultural sentence to Belarus as a land that always was doomed to be the object of neighbouring countries' policies: "*you will never be masters of your own land ... Do not*

³¹ Otto, E. (2014), V Grodno prezentuiut fantasticheskii roman o beloruskom iazyke, in *Vechernii Grodno*, 21 oktiabria [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://vgr.by/home/culture/16198-v-grodno-prezentuyut-fantasticheskij-roman-o-beloruskom-azyke>

³² Baiaryn, M. (2014), *Viktar Martsionvich "Mova"* [Electronic resource]. – URL: http://bayaryn.blogspot.ru/2014/09/blog-post_24.html

³³ Babiba, N. (2014), Viktar Martsionvich – nadzeia belaruskai litaratury, in *Nasha Niva*, 18 kastychnika [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://nn.by/?c=ar&i=136668>

³⁴ dvAndrey, (2014), *Shto ū tsabe ioosts', akramia movy, z iakoj skladaiutstva tvae dumki i slovy?* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://delaemvmeste.by/martinovich/>

³⁵ Arhangel'skii, A. (2017), Kul'turnaia politika, in *Kommersant*, 14 marta [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.corpus.ru/press/vladimir-sorokin-manaraga-kommersant-arhangel'skiy.htm>

come to us! Russians come. Or Lithuanians! Or Venezuelans! Or Qataris! You just genetically are not ready to a decent life. Historically, you always were slaves. You were ruled by Polish, then by Russians. And you used to stand and obey"³⁶. Vladimir Sorokin's heroes also represent protagonists without a certain identity, which became the norm for generations that grew after a global catastrophe and a new world war. Formally the main characters of "Manaraga" can have Hungarian names and Slavic surnames, but their identities evolved as bizarre combinations of scraps and echoes of old European cultures: "I am the son of a humanist, the grandson of a dentist, the great-grandson of a lawyer, the great-great-grandson of a rabbi. And I know for sure - if you love the book, it will give you all its warmth. And I like Russian classics, although I have not read even a single Russian novel to the middle. And I will not fry a steak on a second-class writer, like Gorkii"³⁷.

Heroes of actual Russian librotopia actualize the birth traumas of mass consumerism and its culture because they have serial and stereotyped collective representations about it. External sources of information formed cultural and literary hierarchies for heroes of the post-Apocalypse world. The mass culture of post-information society, Vladimir Sorokin writes about, provided the inhabitants of the post-Apocalypse world with an idea of classical literature without reading any text. Viktor Martsinovich actualized tragical roots of Belarus history as the history of the land which was imagined by its neighbours. Belarus in Russian, Polish and Lithuanian historical memories was only invented and imagined construct, because neighbouring intellectuals preferred to imagine it as an arena for their own national projects and automatically excluded Belarusians from number of historical and political nations, and any attempts of Belarusian national movement and resistance were perceived and understood by Polish or Russian nationalists as historical and political misunderstandings. The political neglect of Belarusians as a nation led to the neglect of their cultural and linguistic characteristics and turned them from the nation into an object of foreign assimilations. Viktor Martsinovich imagines a situation in his "Mova" when originally Slavic Belarus language is recognised as a dangerous narcotic disease. Belarus letters and texts are banned. Belarus language is used only for the production of "skrutki". The last ones are accepted as the illegal and dangerous drugs. The protagonist of the novel, on the one hand, has a "degree in the humanities, received by him at the prestigious University of the Middle China... has no illusions about that ass, he lives in... he is constantly engaged in intellectual activities. This means to be temporarily

³⁶ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, ss. 103 – 104.

³⁷ Sorokin, V. (2017), *Manaraga*. Moskva: Corpus, 256 s. [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=1050959>

*unemployed*³⁸. The central hero of the novel lives in Minsk which is the central city of “*our entire Northwest area of China with its hundred million of inhabitants*”³⁹.

The world, imagined by Vladimir Sorokin in “Manaraga”, is not better than that, Viktor Martsinovich writes about, in the novel “Mova”. If the Belarus writer offers the world of victorious total consumerism in the totalitarian state, the world of “Manaraga” became a world of totalitarian consumption, when “*Guttenberg era ended in the complete victory of electricity*”⁴⁰. On the other hand, he illegally imports “skrutki” from Europe to China, which in the world of “Mova” begins immediately after crossing the Eastern border of Poland. He understands the risks and dangers of his profession and recognises that employees of Chinese special services will “lay out letter ‘ÿ’ by my insides and the will do it so that I still will be alive”⁴¹. Other characters in the novel perceive “skrutki” differently: on the one hand, “skrutki” is a form of acute narcotic sensations; on the other hand, “skrutki” are among the last attempts to preserve or restore the identity and slow assimilation of Europeans in the Sino-Russian or “Chinese-Russian” totalitarian world⁴². “Skrutki” texts in the novel usually were written in Belarus or Ukrainian⁴³ language. The different “skrutki” represent drug which is known as “mova”. “Mova” in the world of the novel differs from traditional drugs because “*mova is not addictive. It is medical fact. Talk to any doctor outside his comfortable office, where every word is recorded... he will tell You about it as a friend. Mova directly affects the psyche, it bypasses the body, so any poisoning is impossible. No toxicity – no withdrawal*”⁴⁴. Mova as a form of the drug in Chinese world of the novel is dangerous because it represents alternative to Chinese forms of thought and undermines monopoly of Chinese: “*text was handwritten in block letters in different sizes ... The text was rhymed... and beautiful. I read the first time and did not understand even a third part of it... I began to read the second time, and then I was covered by effect... the text stayed in my head forever, I will die and I will not forget it*”⁴⁵.

The end of a beautiful epoch or the death of a book

The use of “mova” as a drug in the novel assists to the awakening of the collective historical memory in the form of visions and hallucinations. Mova also stimulates actualization of the Slavic identity of the novel’s characters who could not understand the

³⁸ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 30

³⁹ Ibid. s. 96.

⁴⁰ Sorokin, V. (2017), *Manaraga*. Moskva: Corpus, 256 s. [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=1050959>

⁴¹ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 71.

⁴² Ibid. s. 8.

⁴³ Ibid. s. 126.

⁴⁴ Ibid. s. 16.

⁴⁵ Ibid. ss. 21 – 22.

words, but the rhythm of the language greatly influenced Belarus identity and actualized Belarus roots. The literature in “Manaraga”, on the one hand, stimulates imitations of the modernity of identity also which in the post-Apocalypse world, world wars and Islamic revolutions became an archaic remnant and rudiment of the old culture. On the other hand, the crisis and the fall of the librocentric world changed the attitude towards the book in general and classics Russian literature in particular. Russian classics ceased to be invented cultural tradition and migrated gradually to the space of simulations and imitations. The protagonists of the post-Apocalypse world are free to imitate any identity and correlate themselves with historical heroes, including the classics of Russian literature. Therefore, two heroes of “Manaraga” play roles of Russian classic Lev Tolstoi and his wife, imitating the strategies and tactics of their literary behaviour. If the heroes of Viktor Martsinovich’s “Mova” make and sell “skrutki” (*скрутки*) with real Belarusian texts of classical poetry, Vladimir Sorokin’s characters imitate the classics of Russian literature, including the texts of Lev Tolstoi⁴⁶. The text of Lev Tolstoi in “Manaraga” actualizes, imitates and simulates simultaneously the common places of Russian classical prose, including faith in the power and the values of spiritual messianism.

Actually Vladimir Sorokin imitates the stylistic features of the popular primitive literature for the masses and the stylistic features of the "high" classical collective text of Russian literature when Belarus poetical fragments, which were written or printed in “mova” on “skrutki”, represent samples of romantic and nationalistic poetry which inevitably awakened national feelings. Mova like a drug in the novel actualizes protest against the consumer society and attempts to its conscious unification: *“painful thrust of our civilization to substances and intangible drugs is nothing more than an attempt to overcome the emotional shock caused by a new type of relationship that presently offers us”*⁴⁷. Mova as a drug, in this context, is a synonym for national identity or a form of actualization of belonging to really existing or imagined community. The concept of “mova” in the novel has a dual meaning: mova is the actualization of Belarus identity and attempt to stop and slow down the process of globalisation that weakens the sense of belongingness to the nation. Mova also actualized the idea of the collective membership in the nation on general. The world of the novel is the alternative world where printed book in Slavic languages which are different from Russian one gradually die. The history of the book in this world is the history of its death as an archaism, because the book ceased to exist as a printed book. The books in the world of “Mova” usually are divided in the several sheets and sold as drugs.

⁴⁶ Sorokin, V. (2017), *Manaraga*. Moskva: Corpus, 256 s. [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=1050959>

⁴⁷ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 62.

The history in the world of “Mova” is a reversive history of regress which assists to the replacement of the printed books by handwriting ones: *“the books in mova remain abroad in great quantities, but they were bought for a pittance and used in the first five years. The books were used and... destroyed because re-reading of mova has no effect... it’s nonsense to keep the thing because you can get the death penalty for it... nobody has the desire to do it... the prices began to rise... the thousand was the price for printed book... later for a hundred of pages of the book... later one page will start to cost the thousand... the triads started to interest in mova... the sells of mova in the Northwest Territories became more profitable business than trafficking of heavy substantial drugs. There are no practical books which were not divided into pages... even in the largest libraries of the world such as the United States Library of Congress, all books in mova were stolen... it was did violently or quietly ... triads organised re-writing of fragments in mova from these books... the scribes are working abroad, in Warsaw and Vilnius, their work feeds the great army of smugglers. The huge and influential Gosnarkokontrol fed this army because if all dealers will be executed, the need in Gosnarkokontrol will disappear... they prefer to keep the industry in semi-dead state without total destroying... mova is not only an insubstantial drug that exists in the world but only it is an intangible drug that has an effect on local inhabitants”*⁴⁸. The sad history of the book in the world of “Mova” is a reversive history of social and cultural time from print media to the rare manuscript books. Therefore, one of the heroes of the novel was forced to recognise sadly and unfortunately that *“the time is the first thing that Chinese killed. The sense of time is the conventional category”*⁴⁹. The time in the novel is understood as archaic western European culture rudiment since it became a non-integrable category in the stable and conservative world of China, which became the sole and global hegemon because it gained control over Russia and Belarus, but some of the book’s characters had an alternative concept of time. Their ideas were alternative because Belarus in the context of that time was an equal actor in the history of other countries.

The collective representations about Belarus in Chinese world sound like a nationalist protest: *“the country was. The wonderful country. It had a history. The history of warriors and heroes. The history of the people, not worms. It had the culture that no longer exists. There were castles and palaces, churches with belfries and their sounds reflected in secluded lakes. The country had mova. It was our mova, Sergei. We were speaking in it. We are... me and you. We did it when we were Belarusians ... everything from this no longer exists. Originally they arrested in the streets for speaking in mova when it had the official status of public means of communication. When the police heard that a person does not speak in Russian, they came up and took him away... Then it became impossible to learn in mova... Then they proclaimed that mova was a drug and demolish all books in*

⁴⁸ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 80.

⁴⁹ Ibid. s. 80.

it”⁵⁰. Viktar Martsinovich in this context actualizes the real threats, Belarus language face in the authoritarian political regime. The authoritarianism radically changes and transform memory, it replaces the idea of the nation and identity by the collective ideas of loyalty. The idea to declare that national language was a drug became the act of political madness and hopelessness because it was impossible to assimilate Belarus speaking population. The attempts to form a negative image of mova became an attempt to marginalise those who were able to preserve Belarus identity. The concept of time in this cultural situation was deliberately erased from the collective memory because the category of time inevitably actualizes the collective representations about past as the national history, and China in the novel as stable and originally anti-historical country destroyed the independence of the Eastern European countries and deliberately dismantled national narratives about history as politically dangerous and socially unnecessary idea. Therefore, thoughts and ideas of one of the main characters of the novel sound very pessimistic: *"when we lived in 1991 or 2014, everything was simple and clear. You were born in 1977, you will die before or a little bit later 2077 because we are not Japanese and we can not live longer than a hundred years. The twentieth century is the past, the twenty-first is the future. The time was linear and monolithic. The man, who in 2013 said that 4711 is would simply be sent to loony bin... but today all of us live in this funny farm... there is no more monolithic time In Minsk and the concept of 'history' turned into a myth"*⁵¹. The radical transformation of the collective representations about time became changes inspired by the transformation of Belarus into the territory under Chinese control. The changes in the concepts of “time” were only the first steps in the radical transformation and erosion of cultural paradigms and foundations of Belarus society.

The era of Chinese domination became the time of the radical revision of traditional European ideas about books and reading. Chinese radically and deliberately rejected the book as the invention of European culture because the culture of hieroglyphs requires totally different cultural orientations. Chinese hieroglyphic culture becomes one of the incentives for the government to fight against mova as its competitor and an alternative form of cultural development. The collective representations of few Belarusian nationalists who kept their identity and other ideas about history, nations and cultures in the system of national coordinates have a much in common with the ideas of contemporary historians who specialise in Hittites or Babylonians: *“We save and retrieve words, we make their inventories. We have an own library, but it is, unfortunately, only one shelf. One regiment of the printing books published in different years and in different places. Twelve volumes, two without the cover, two more are assembled and glued on the page. And, of course, we have the mountains of disparate fragments:*

⁵⁰ Ibid. s. 189.

⁵¹ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 133.

*paragraphs of texts from books of unknown authors who are lost forever... it is impossible to determine when they were written... Our linguists work with these treasures: they dismantle, correlate, catalogize it... but until now, we have no one textbook... they were found and destroyed because they had the greatest danger... We are saving the word. We are looking for the lost synonyms, working with the memories...*⁵².

The linguistic and political situation in the novel with Belarus language is a very sad and endorses the illusion that mova have a future, but this idea is misleading: Viktor Martsinovich does not want completely lose hope because history provides the historian with examples of political and cultural language revival that seemed dead. Hebrew is a classic case when linguistic nationalism in the context of political will to promote the revival and flourishing of a new national language. Hebrew is a universal example in these historical and intellectual contexts for fighters for the preservation of Belarus language. The world in the novel “Mova” is a world of victorious consumption that superseded and removed the book and reading as a social and cultural institutions and practices. The social world of the novel is not a word centred or libro-centric one. The visual dimensions and forms of culture replaced the book in Slavic languages that are different from Russian because *“in the country, where once there were millions of books, there is not one publication. Everything was destroyed, not by the state - there is its capacity simply would not be enough! It was demolished by ordinary citizens. Their fear of being imprisoned in the ‘demonstration case’. It was paranoia. It was their caution”*⁵³. “Skrutki” replaced the printed books in this world of consumption and winning collective phobias. “Skrutki” were divided into three types in the novel: *“statements written by the hand from the old book are small leaves with weak psychedelic charge. Fragments with four lines, a paragraph of prose, and a few suggestions that were taken from nowhere and it is difficult to understand what they are about... if there are more unfamiliar words, the effect will be stronger... you will remember a significant part of the words that occur most frequently... it becomes much more difficult to achieve satisfaction: you will need more doses or more delicate pieces with a specific vocabulary... Man can not write fragment of mova by himself... But there is a legend that somewhere, perhaps abroad, there is a sect that right now, today, they are creating new texts for sticking out. But I do not believe ... the second type of skrutki is presented by manual extracts with the larger effect ... the third type is the most expensive... and super exclusive ... third price category... books. It's a rarity, and the luxury”*⁵⁴.

Identities in the world without books

⁵² Ibid. ss. 194 - 196.

⁵³ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 79.

⁵⁴ Ibid. ss. 40 – 44.

This division of texts as forms of non-material drugs is deeply symbolic, and its intellectual roots are contradictory and debatable. On the one hand, it is logical to assume that the author of the novel imitates an academic style or parodies the scientific discourse. On the other hand, the classification and typology of the text reflect the current state of the literature, where the texts for daily consumption coexist with intellectual texts that have a very limited number of possible readers. The world of the novel with a social and cultural point of view is the world that exists in a particular time system of coordinates. The future world of the novel is the world where historical memory was radically altered and modified, integrated into a totalitarian discourse of Chinese culture and ideology. Minsk in the novel acts as a collective spatial character with rare street inscriptions in Russian, but the values and meanings of these inscriptions were forgotten or radically changed and replaced by other ones: *“Kolas Street is named in honor of the farmers of the Northwest Territories... houses are called hrushchevki because they are small... nearby trees and balconies in May and June are full with hrushchi”*⁵⁵.

Viktar Martsinovich presumes that the modern Belarus society has a problem with the historical memory and the culture. Commenting on this situation Viktar Martsinovich stressed that *“Belarus is anti-scientific society... here the scientists, and indeed, in principle, reading people have no access to the power (God bless it with the government), they are not allowed even to use the channels of communication”*⁵⁶. Writer defines Belarus society as *“a society which considers its own culture as a secondary one and historically provincial. This society is looking into the mouth of other cultures ... everything is too spontaneous in Belarus. There is no such instrument, as the memory in Belarus. It is a society without memory”*⁵⁷. The situation of memory in modern Belarus became the result of forced authoritarian modernization of the Soviet period, when the inner predominantly agrarian periphery forced to become industrialized and urbanized region, where the local population was unprepared for such radical changes, and regional identity which became national could not effectively resist the trends of unification, including Russification and assimilation. Vladimir Sorokin actualized the same identity crisis after the world wars and the Islamic revolution. Vladimir Sorokin's heroes declare pathetically that *“modern literature lives only in the space of holograms, it does not need paper”*⁵⁸.

The world, imagined by Vladimir Sorokin, is the world that gradually and slowly returns to prosperous consumerism. Vladimir Sorokin's world combines elements of the autumn of the Middle Ages and an irresistible charm of the early bourgeois consumption.

⁵⁵ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 51.

⁵⁶ Martinovich, V. (2013), *Kogda ia chitaiu otzvyv na svoi knigi, dumaiu, mozhnet, ia uzhe ne belorus?*, in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 24 iulia

⁵⁷ Martsinovich, V. (2016), *Represavanaia leksika. Belaruskiia slovy, kanfiskavanyia ruskai movai* [Electronic resource]. – URL: <http://budzma.by/news/represavanaya-lyeksika-byelaruskiya-slovy-kanfiskavanyya-ruskay-movay.html>

⁵⁸ Sorokin, V. (2017), *Manaraga*. Moskva: Corpus, 256 s. [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=1050959>

National intellectuals in spite of all their efforts to fight against inferiority complexes could not make Belarusian culture more attractive and slow assimilation. Therefore, novel's characters represent culture of the post-historical tense and the world where history lost its meanings and ceased to exist, and collective understandings of the history became too fragmented, illogical and confused: *"she smiled incredulously and with this smile she went with me to the room where so solemnly, as in a museum, black book with the inscription "Шэкспір. Санеты" laid on the table. 'What is it?' - she asked by sharply suddenly shrunken voice. 'The Book' - I explained, - 'You see... any Shakespeare. I have not heard about him, he was Russian writer probably because the name does not like Chinese. He was maybe Old Russian because there are no such names now... 'William'... maybe Russian writer of Jewish origin ... The Jews have always very wonderful names. I, for example, studied in school with a Jew, so he had a name Izia. 'William' in comparison to this does not sound so strange"*⁵⁹. The novel's characters socialised in a non-democratic Russian-Chinese society, where the history was politically calibrated and reduced. Therefore the exclusion, rejection and denial of the achievements of world literature formed the world that exists without historical time and out of time in general. The world of "Mova" does not need in the past because the past is a history, and every national history is too archaic for political elites of "Mova" and it can not be integrated into the society of the victorious Sino-Russian world of mass consumerism. The world of the novel is the world where cultural meanings and values were replaced by others, and historical memory exists and functions in the mode of forgetting and repression of moments which are not integrable in the unified official discourse.

The social world of "Mova" is a fantastic and unreal at first glance only: Ukrainian and Belarus languages were officially banned in the Russian Empire and politically stimulated only in the early Soviet Union, where in general they were perceived as archaisms and political misunderstandings of irresponsible intellectuals who did not understand, did not accept, but deny benefits of Russification in their unwillingness to become part of "a new historical community" known as the "Soviet people". Tamizdat and samizdat in the Soviet period were illegal, punished and persecuted like "skrutki" in the novel. Minsk could look like in hypothetical reality, as Viktor Martsinovich described it in his novel, if the Soviet Union did not fall in 1991 and if the unification and destruction of national identities would continue in the coming decades. It is not so important which external or internal political forces control and format historical memory in forms of forgetting or actualization of this or that events. It is more important that different forms and strategies of the work with past leads to the same social and cultural results and impacts: national meanings lost their symbolic senses and

⁵⁹ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, ss. 73 – 74.

formally non-national universal ideologically marked and ethnically alien contexts and collective representations replace them. The world of the novel represents the world based on the contradictions of dualism, the simultaneous coexistence and confrontation between different paradigms, but the number of these paradigms and forms of development is minimised by two. The future world, imagined by Viktor Martsinovich, consists of only two collective representations about the world including Western cultural, social and political ideas and the Sino-Russian world: “*impoverished multicultural Polish Europe, and well-fed, happy, monoethnic China*”⁶⁰. If Belarus and Russia into the world of the novel became the collective victims of Chinese expansion and assimilation, Poland with Warsaw remains the last stronghold of European values. Therefore, the “crystal clear” Warsaw, overrun by the Chinese, is presented as a city where “*there is a lot of sky and some clouds, where the bridge is wide shoulders, and more sun reflect in the buildings than there is in heaven... where there is so much space... the heart becomes crowded and legs want to go in all directions... and the idea that your rucksack is full with high-quality leaves with selective mova which is more powerful than LSD brings poignant pleasure*”⁶¹.

Warsaw in the novel actualizes its symbolic role of a bridge and a mediator in narcotic traffic between the West and the former Eastern Europe, captured and occupied by the Chinese, but the drugs which the hero of the novel illegally transport from Poland, are a form of cultural and social salvation, an attempt to revive Belarus identity. Warsaw in the novel appears as the last chance to join the Slavic world with the rest world, where Slavic texts are imagined as drugs. Warsaw in the novel was imagined as part of Europe, a European final edge before the immense territories of Chinese Asia. The world of the novel gradually lost national borders and dividing lines, steadily transformed into the world of mixed cultures and transnational identities, an Anti-utopian world in “Mova” is the new world where “*good areas here end and Turkey begins. They fry the meat, trade in bulk by the Mavi jeans, sell souvenirs from Paris and Pamukkale. ‘A discount! Discount!’ – they shout and expose the banal truth that they do not sell the goods, but cheap opportunity to buy for a penny something unnecessary. Everyone has his own merchandising. They say that there are not only the Turks and Turkish women but also Moroccans, Ethiopians and Pakistanis. But for me, there are only Russian and Chinese. All the rest have the same faces... million of the same smiles. One word is multiculturalism. We have Sinology, they have multiculturalism. We need to stop because we can finally confuse, we can accept Islam and we will not notice, that we will trade souvenirs from Pamukkale. Just ask how to get to the river, and at the same time try not to buy anything. And do not let yourself be drawn into the ‘Dom znakomstv’: sex will be the most common, with some filthy Frenchwoman who will imagine herself as the exotic Iranian or*

⁶⁰ Ibid, s 24.

⁶¹ Martinovich, V. (2014), *Mova*. Minsk: 34Mag.net, s. 15.

*Afghani... between the Turkish quarter and the river, you will find a large red character "narod" which opens the entrance to the yellow ghetto. Warsaw Chinatown looks like just Minsk one: it seems that Asian market took roots and became the village*⁶².

Viktar Martsinovich's "Mova" and Vladimir Sorokin's "Manaraga" have a lot in common in the contexts of threats few intellectuals face in the post-Apocalypse world. If powers flood the market with false "skrutki" in the "Mova", mysterious enemies of "Kitchen" learned to make molecular copies of the first editions of classic literary texts in "Manaraga". Vladimir Sorokin as Viktar Martsinovich opposes the economic, market and bourgeois rationalities of a mass consumption culture with dying high cultures of the librocentric world. Therefore Vladimir Sorokin in "Manaraga" was forced to admit that "our market dictates its laws. It is merciless"⁶³. Actually, Viktar Martsinovich and Vladimir Sorokin in their novels actualized the same idea. The impersonal massed with their serial depersonalised consumerism inspire conflict with the elitist high culture of the few intellectuals and the clash of two libro-centric and anti-librocentric worlds are inevitable in fact. The globalised and standardised world of the novel has a lot in common with modern social and cultural realities, but the West in real history became the motherhood of globalisation, and China in Viktar Martsinovich's novel launched swift and irreversible mechanisms of globalisation. The current political and economic globalisation promote the variety and diversity of cultures, but China is in the "Mova" assists to the unification of cultural spaces and attempts to assimilate Slavic cultures and destroy any non-Chinese identities. The non-Chinese ethnic and cultural elements in the social and political world of "Mova" mutated in external appendixes to the hard core of Chinese culture, which forms the new repulsive world and defines the main vectors and trajectories of its development. The new world of "Mova" is the world where mova transformed, on the one hand, in the memory or even its fragments and, on the other hand, mova became drug that stimulates linguistic imagination and assists to the preservation and revival of language as a basis of national identity.

Conclusions

The crisis of the libro-centric model of development is the first trend that determines vectors in the development of utopia. The contemporary world of nations and nation-states became the result of the prior development of book culture. The handwritten, manuscript and later printing book was its central and system element, but technological progress and

⁶² Ibid, s. 9.

⁶³ Sorokin, V. (2017), *Manaraga*. Moskva: Corpus, 256 s. [Electronic resource]. – URL: <https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=1050959>

development of printing transformed book as a cultural product into the invented tradition and it occupied the central place on a pedestal of modern culture, but the technological breakthrough of the early 21st century and processes of virtualization significantly undermined and weakened these cultural values and the monopoly of the book. The crisis of the libro-centric model of development also significantly weakened adaptive potencies of utopia and anti-utopia, but they continued to be significant and influential in the cultural discourse. European writers tried a few times to capture the trends of the crisis of the book as the social and cultural institute in their utopias and dystopias, they fixed tendency of the gradual erosion of the world with its libro- and literature-centered preferences. The crisis of the libro-centered model of collective representations about landscape significantly reduced the utopian and anti-utopian trends in the development of modern identities. Actually, this crisis made utopia unnecessary because postmodern culture as a culture-construct of consumer society provides its members with a set of ready-made tactics and strategies of the behaviour.

The visualised culture freed humanity from the need to read and understand senses and meanings of the textualized messages. The virtualization desacralized world and cultural and intellectual message of utopias become archaisms in the modern era of nations-states. Modern utopian and anti-utopian discourse migrated from the text, on the one hand, in the visual environment and space. Russia and Eastern Europe are not the exceptions from this universal logic of utopian identity's degradation. On the other hand, the modern utopian identity actualizes its links with nationalism, nations as the imagined communities, and the invention of new national, political and cultural traditions. The classic utopia of modern history and classic utopias of the 20th century were national and even nationalistic in some rare marginal cases, they claimed to be universal and the authors of utopias and dystopias tried to speak in the language of the social and political classes, they strongly denied and rejected the nation as a relic of history, political and ideological misunderstanding and cultural archaism. The crisis of libro-centric model suggests that utopia-as-book will be gradually replaced by utopia-as-images or just mutated in it. Utopia-as-image institutionalised itself in the forms of movies or graphic novels and it seems that this form of utopian identity will be too ambitious in its attempts to replace the modern model of utopian culture, identity and consciousness which preferred to have a book as its systemic and fundamental basis. The author believes that textualized utopia continue to be interesting to historians who will accept them as constructs and the invented traditions. The new forms of utopia's developments and existence will stimulate genesis and the further development of other invented traditions of other imagined communities which will not able to resist the universal temptations of utopia.

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