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Dystopian discourse and national identity in Russian prose of the 2010s

Fragmentation of post-Soviet Russian nationalism

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened the new page in a history of Russian political identity. The starting conditions for the new period were too complicated because Russian nation in the early 1990s faced considerable difficulties: by the moment of the Soviet Union collapse, it was, as well as other nations, a product of the Soviet national policy and actually existed as an imagined community. The collapse of the Soviet Union and political transit from Soviet authoritarianism to post-Soviet democracy led to significant changes in Russian identity, actualizing its new dimensions which did not develop in the Soviet period. It is very difficult to determine general trends that determined social, cultural and political changes in Russian identity, but the Author presumes that “crisis” definition can be accepted as universal indicator and marker that relatively objectively describes and characterizes the main trends in the development of post-Soviet Russian identity. The forms of this crisis in Russian identity had different forms and Russian nationalist intellectuals understood the crisis in different ways. Russian nationalism in the post-Soviet era was predominantly cultural and intellectual phenomenon because political nationalism was among the marginal factors, it did not play a significant role and its political influence was practically invisible. Russian nationalism in the post-Soviet period developed as too fragmented and was presented in the political life of Russian society by two main trends which determined the main vectors, trajectories, and directions of development of Russian nationalist ideology.

The first trend, inspired by the post-Soviet Russian nationalist intellectuals of ethnic orientation was marginal because ideas and values of territorial revanchism, ethnic centrism, radical anti-Western aspirations, and denial of independent nations’ sovereignty in the post-Soviet countries were central and systemic ideas in the political agenda of Russian radical nationalism. The central ideas of leaders of radical trends in Russian nationalism of the 1990s and 2010s have much in common. Russian nationalists including too odious writer Aleksandr Prohanov, political philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, their political heirs of the 2000s and the 2010s as extremely prolific publicist Nikolai Starikov and pro-Kremlin television propagandists Dmitrii Kiseliov and Aleksei Pushkov, on the one hand, do not like the era of the 1990s and the first Russian president. They, on the other hand, declare love, devotion, faithfulness, and loyalty to political regime of Vladimir Putin.

The second trend in Russian nationalism was not influential as the first one. Cultural and intellectual trends in Russian nationalism always developed in the shadow of a more active and aggressive political nationalism. Russian culture and literature as forms of national identity and intellectual landscape as forms of existence and development of nationalism in its Western senses and understanding lost the aggressive onslaughts of radical Russian nationalism promoted by state media. The information resources and potential of “Kul’tura” and “Obshchestvennoe televidenie Rossii” were weaker and less effective than influences of “Pervyi kanal” and “Rossiia 1”. The moderate mass media, including several newspapers and magazines (“Novaia Gazeta”, “Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie”, “Neprikosnovennyi zapas”) promote Western understandings of nation and nationalism, based predominantly on the individual rights and freedoms, and significantly weakens ethnical components in nationalism.

Universal questions and answers: the inevitability of utopia. Different trends of Russian nationalism have different impacts and influences on society. Official nationalism, actively supported by state mass media, promotes myth about the special way of Russia and popularizes traditional nationalist anti-Western and anti-European discourse. Intellectual trends in Russian nationalism are marginal, the number of proponents of nationalism in its modernist understanding is too small. These different trends in Russian nationalism have different political and ideological preferences. Official nationalism, despite its amorphous, underdeveloped political culture, situational character, dependence on political elites and economic groups, actualizes conservative values in its ideological program. Intellectual nationalism has other values, including civil society, human rights, and freedoms. The features of political development in

Russia inspired the rise of official state nationalism. The alternative nationalist trends and ideas of intellectual communities and groups are marginal and also too marginalized and demonized by their opponents. The adherents of state nationalism cultivate extremely unattractive and negative image of intellectual nationalism. The spectrum of intellectual nationalism's sins, as adherents of official nationalism state, range from lack of patriotism to the betrayal of national interests. The representatives and theorists of different trends in Russian nationalism speak in different languages and act of political communication between them is impossible and too negatively affects on both trends in Russian nationalism. State nationalism withdraws into itself, cultivate the ideas of its political and ideological exclusivity. Intellectual Russian nationalism also prefers to exist in isolationism and tries to answer "vexed" Russian questions. The responses of the state and intellectual Russian nationalisms are practically the same. State and intellectual nationalists actually propose ideal political utopias or dystopias. This tendency to invent utopias as ideal constructs has one systemic distinction between ideological and political aspirations of state and intellectual nationalists. The supporters of state nationalism firmly and sincerely believe that their political ideas are quite feasible. They insist that only dirty machinations of internal and external enemies deprived Russia the opportunity to become a world leader. The proponents of intellectual trends in Russian nationalism became authors of utopian and antiutopian projects that actualize its predominantly intellectual nature. The social and political request to utopia in this context is versatile, but different trends of Russian nationalism propose diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive answers to internal and external threats Russia face with.

The purpose of the article.

The purpose of this article is the analysis of contemporary Russian intellectual (anti)utopian discourse in the contexts of Russian literature. The article has the following tasks: analysis of the genesis and origins of the (anti)utopian component in modern Russian political identity; analysis of political and social programs of modern Russia (anti)utopias; analysis of Russian (anti)utopian discourse in the world cultural and political contexts.

Methodological backgrounds.

The author presumes that analysis of (anti)utopian trends of modern Russian literature can not be productive in the context of traditional practices and philological methods. Understanding Russian literature as a form of identity, the author believes that the studies of (anti)utopian discourse need qualitatively different methodological tools. If texts can be described and analyzed as fixed forms and dimensions of national identity, the methods of Nationalism Studies can be applied to the analysis of (anti)utopian discourse in contemporary Russian literature as a form of Russian identity. British historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in the first half of the 1980s proposed "invention of traditions" concept. This theory can be used for the analysis of (anti)utopias as textualized fictional invented traditions that fix collective social and political ideas about the ideal way of national development.

What is this article about?

The specificities and characteristics of historiographical situation determined the selection of the texts for analysis in this article. The author of this article tries to analyze some texts of contemporary Russian literature in the context of utopian motives in the development of Russian national identity. The sources base can be formal to general, but the author presumes that it is necessary to limit by a few texts, published in the 2010s, which actualize the key trends and trajectories of development (anti)utopia discourse in contemporary Russian prose as the collective field where different forms of Russian identity develop. Analyzing contemporary identity, the Author deliberately abandons analysis of utopia in Russian literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, but the continuity between modern Russian utopia and historical its forms is among promising topics for further studies. The author believes that some texts form the corpus of the sources for analysis of utopian components and antiutopian contexts in modern Russian identity. "Logoped"¹ ("Speech therapist") and "Poslednii Magog"² ("The Last Magog") of Valerii

¹ Votrin, V. (2012), Logoped. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 248 s.

Votrin³, “Pangeia”⁴ (“Pangaea”) of Mariia Golovanivskaia⁵ and “Poteriannye pokoleniia”⁶ (“Lost Generations”) of Yves Preston will form the corpus of texts analyzed in this article.

Historiography.

Utopia and dystopia are among the problems in the history of Russian and world literature which consistently attract the interest of scholars⁷. Historians, political and cultural analysts, sociologists and linguists are involved in the studies of utopias. The significant number of Russian and Western authors’ texts are focused on the genesis, genre specificity, history and interconnections of utopias with other literary trends, but theoretical and methodological problems including localization and mapping of utopia and dystopia in the context of national literature histories and contemporary literary situation⁸ are not so interesting for the author of this article. The author will not analyze the earlier utopian texts in Russian literature because they, on the one hand, were studied by other scholars and, on the other hand, it is more important and necessary to analyze the texts of contemporary Russian writers including Mariia Golovanivskaia, Valerii Votrin, and Yves Preston which were published since the late 2000s and did not become the object of academic interest in Russian and foreign historiography.

Formal orientation in sources.

“Logoped” and “Poslednii Magog” of Valerii Votrin, “Pangeia” of Mariia Golovanivskaia and “Poteriannye pokoleniia” of Yves Preston are too different texts that actualize various and mutually exclusive tendencies in the development of modern Russian literature. Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin can be formally localized among recognized representatives of contemporary Russian “classical” prose. They began to publish in the 1991 and 1995. By 2016 these authors formed their literary reputations by their texts published in previous years. Yves Preston unlike Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin is among the beginners of contemporary Russian literature and can be recognized and determined in comparison with them as the marginal or too post-post-modern figure in the context of Russian literature. Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin can be defined as traditional writers who publish without pseudonyms despite the fact that it is quite simple to find them in Russian Internet. Yves Preston as the product of the modern information age too differs from them. Yves Preston is a pseudonym of Voronezh aspiring writer Nadezhda Kochetkova. Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin are situational authors of utopias and Yves Preston differs from them in her semi-professional attitudes utopia. Yves Preston, as a student of Voronezh State University, wrote her bachelor paper about utopia in Western literature. Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin belong to writers who form “normal” Russian literature that continues to develop its traditions, but Yves Preston represents market and partly virtual dimension in contemporary Russian literature. The texts of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin can be located on the imagined maps of Soviet and Russian literature in the contexts of continuity between them, but the novel of Yves Preston has a secondary character in the context of Russian literature and contemporary mass Hollywood culture that marginalize her texts in the wider contexts of Russian literature.

² Votrin, V. (2009), *Poslednii magog*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 288 s.

³ Votrin, V. (2007), *Zhalitvoslov*. Moskva: Nauka, 356 s.

⁴ Golovanivskaia, M. (2014), *Pangeia*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 752 s.

⁵ Golovanivskaia, M. (1991), *Znakomstvo. Chastnaia kolleksiia*. Moskva: Moskovskii rabochii, 128 s.; Golovanivskaia, M. (1994), *Dvadtsat' pisem Gospodu Bogu: Roman*. Moskva: Knizhnyi sad, 119 s.; Golovanivskaia, M. (2000), *Protivorechie po suti: romany, rasskazy*. Moskva: Vagrius, 302 s.; Golovanivskaia, M. (2004), *Sostoianie: Moskovskii roman. Rasskazy*. Moskva: Ob'edinennoe Gumanitarnoe Izdatel'stvo, 232 s.; Golovanivskaia, M. (2009), *Nora Barzhes*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 240 s.

⁶ Preston, I. (2016), *Poteriannye pokoleniia. Roman*. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AST, 352 s.

⁷ Ahlback, P. (2001), *Energy, heterotopia, dystopia: George Orwell, Michel Foucault and the twentieth century environmental imagination*. Abo: Abo Academy University Press, 279 p.; Appelbaum R. (2002), *Literature and Utopian Politics in Seventeenth-Century England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 256 p.; Bartkowski, F. (1991), *Feminist Utopias*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 198 p.; Booker, M. (1994), *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 408 p.; Morch, A. (1997), *The Novelistic Approach to the Utopian Question: Platonov's "Cevengur" in the light of Dostoevskij's Anti-Utopian Legacy*. Oslo: University of Oslo, 316 p.

⁸ Chantsev, A. (2007), *Fabrika antiutopii: distopicheskii diskurs v rossiiskoi literature 2000-h godov*, *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no 86, retrieved from <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2007/86/cha16.html>; Lanin, B. (1993), *Anatomiia literaturnoi utopii, Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, no 5, pp. 154 – 163; Tuzovskii, I. (2009), *Svetloe zavtra? Antiutopiia futurologii i futurologiia antiutopii*. Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskaia gosudarstvennaia akademiia kul'tury i iskusstv, 312 s.

(Trans)topia: the postnational prose of Valerii Votrin.

Valerii Votrin in his texts proposes and develops two imagined worlds, which, on the one hand, simultaneously contain elements of utopia and dystopia. On the other hand, Valerii Votrin imagines social realities which actualize the various levels and dimensions of identity in the utopian context. The “Logoped” novel actualizes utopian in Russian national context. “Poslednii magog”⁹ is an attempt to revise and map colonial and post-colonial experience in Russian identity. Therefore, utopia and dystopia in the texts of Valerii Votrin simultaneously actualize the national and post-national roots and backgrounds of Russian identity. The “Poslednii magog” novel is extremely interesting in the context of simultaneous coexistence and further cultural collision and development of different worlds and landscapes that had their own identities and cultural backgrounds. “Poslednii magog” is an attempt to instrumentalize constructivist paradigm of the Nationalism Studies in the context of fiction: anonymous heroes deprived of names, individuality and identity, which are integral components and elements of the traditional, archaic and patriarchal society. These depersonalized heroes gradually invent and imagine their identities in the form of a spontaneous protest against society and the world they belong to. “A man without a name”¹⁰ acts as a universal, serial, and the typical character of the social world in “Poslednii magog” novel. The Magog land¹¹ is imagined and invented as a country and territory located somewhere in collective representations about Central Asia. Uzbekistan, where Valerii Votrin lived before his emigration to Belgium, can monopolize status of a real geographical prototype for Magog land.

The country of Magogs in Valerii Votrin’s novel, on the one hand, is imagined as a perfect archaic and traditional culture, based on the mythological and symbolic understandings, perceptions and collective representations of the world. Mogog land, on the other hand, is in chronologically prolonged state of “eve” – special cultural and social situation in the traditional societies, which can be determined as almost perfect utopias, before eschatological situation. This situation is extremely tragic for traditional societies and attempts of heroes to find the best ways and forms for their own identification actualize tragedy because their cultural and social roles and places in society, they belong to, were assigned to them without their participation. “Poslednii magog” novel is too interesting and informative for scholars involved in Nationalism Studies and comparative analysis of social transitions from traditional to modern societies. Traditional social and cultural landscape of Magog land, as a collective image of the invented and idealized Asia, culturally and intellectually oppose and confront in the novel of Valerii Votrin with also imagined West as “the big city”¹². The collective West, or Ogon land, was imagined as topos of modernity and universality, as another form of the landscape which was radically different from Magog land. “A big, very big city” with “noisy cars drove through the streets”¹³ actualize in Valerii Votrin’s prose its universal roles of social and cultural antipodes to traditional idyllic steppes populated by naive nomads.

The perception of historical time in “Poslednii magog” assists to the actualization of anti-utopian elements. The time in the novel was not invented, but collective representations about it appear as deeply ahistorical. Ahistorical understandings of time actualize utopian message of Valerii Votrin’s novel: time was primitively excluded and simply removed from the system cultural and social coordinates of Magog land imagined and invented perfect static and immobile space. The death in the novel is the only dimension of time, which is uneven and discrete because heroes from Magog land and county of Ogon perceive and understand categories of “death” and “time” differently. The image of death is one of the central in the novel because it actualizes modernization contexts. The novel’s characters from the formal viewpoint left Magog land for the country of Ogon, but their politically motivated journey actualizes transition from traditional to modern society. This radical revolutionary transit was only attempted to realize a utopian political project: “Poslednii magog” novel continue in this context traditions of the Soviet utopia, but in contrast to the Soviet classical literature, social and cultural worlds of Valerii Votrin are too heterogeneous.

⁹ Parshchikov, A. (2009), *Pokidaia Arkadiiu*, Votrin, V. (2009), *Poslednii magog*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, ss. 278 – 286; Zelenina, G. (2008), *Chudnye zemli, chudnye proroki, zerkal’nye granitsy*, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, no 92, retrieved from <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2008/92/ze25.html>

¹⁰ Votrin, V. (2009), *Poslednii magog*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, s. 9.

¹¹ Votrin, V. (2009), *Poslednii magog*. s. 11.

¹² *Ibid.* s. 19.

¹³ *Ibid.* s. 19.

Utopia and dystopia, symbolized by the land of Magog and the country of Ogon do not change and transform from one political state in another, but they coexist simultaneously and parallelly. The “Poslednii Magog” novel is based on cultural and intellectual oppositions of imagined and invented Magog and Ogon as two alternate worlds that exist simultaneously in different historical eras. Therefore, one of the novels’ heroes invent the perfect formula to describe the coexistence of these countries in his own imagination: “in the country of Ogon we always want to talk about land of Magog, and in land of Magog we can not speak about anything else, except the country of Ogon”¹⁴. The country of Ogon and the land of Magog appear as textualized and literaturized imagined communities and invented traditions. The unhappy inhabitants of Magog land imagine the country of Ogon as an ideal imagined community and universal way to salvation. The residents of Ogon tend to imagine the land of Magog also as invented tradition, but they preferred to actualize universal external threats in their collective representations about those who lived in the land of Magog.

Valerii Votrin in his novel, which formally belongs to utopia, actualizes the post-colonial situation in contemporary Russian literature: the traditional world of Magog land is colony periphery, country of Ogon monopolized status and symbolic role of West as the dominating centre. Formally, “The Last of Magog” belongs to a number of postcolonial and transcultural novels which are extremely rare in contemporary Russian literature. Analyzing political message of “Poslednii magog” it is logical to presume that its author felt discomfort within boundaries of utopia and dystopia genres. Classical forms of dystopian discourse exclude recognizable national characteristics and dystopia in this context is ideologically motivated and anti-national. The next novel of Valerii Votrin “Logoped”, published after “Poslednii magog”, actualized alternative representations about the utopian genre and its author preferred to localize it in formally national decorations.

(Anti)national dystopia.

The novels of Valerii Votrin “Logoped” as “Poslednii magog” may technically be located in the contexts of the modern Russian literary utopia, but these texts are extremely different. Formally, the novel “Logoped”¹⁵ was defined by critics as a linguistic dystopia. It belongs to utopias with its classical system characteristics: the state is authoritarian and undemocratic, repressive apparatus is active, power is monopolized by parochial semi-social group of speech therapists, speech therapists status is ancestral, conflict between totalitarian system and the oppressed citizen is simply inevitable... Valerii Votrin in his novel “Logoped” probably did not understand and realize that he expressed himself as true believing constructivist.

Valerii Votrin himself admits that “the language in the novel is an independent and terrible character, a parasite of consciousness... it is vernacular, personalized vernacular”¹⁶. The statements about the central role and system significance of language and linguistic imagination become common places in the most of academic texts focused on nationalism. If John Joseph¹⁷, Eric Hobsbawm¹⁸, Michael Silverstein¹⁹, Joshua Fishman²⁰, and Michael Billig²¹ analyzed language role in imagination, invention and construction of nations, Valerii Votrin actualized the role of linguistic experiments in authoritarian and non-democratic societies where questions of language were excluded from academic linguistic debates and became battle ground for loyalty and identity. If heroes of other anti-utopian novels in Russian literature could be extremely successful in ruling party and ideological speeches and meeting, the

¹⁴ Ibid. s. 28.

¹⁵ Bondar’-Tereshchenko, I. (2013), Zhizn’ na ulitse koi-kogo, Russkii zhurnal, 13 ianvaria, retrieved from <http://russ.ru/Mirovaia-povestka/ZHizn-na-ulice-koj-kogo>; Nikitin, A. (2013), “Pokazi iazyk!”, Znamia, no 12, retrieved from <http://magazines.russ.ru/znamia/2013/12/17v.html>; Vizel’, M. (2012), Voprosy iazykoznanii, Ekspert, 17 dekabria, retrieved from <http://expert.ru/expert/2012/50/voprosyi-iazvikoznaniia/>

¹⁶ Votrin, V. (2013), Dostatochno razbudit’ togo, kto vidit son, i mir zakonchitsia, Colta, 24 ianvaria, retrieved from <http://archives.colta.ru/docs/11428>

¹⁷ Joseph, J. (2004), Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious. Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 92 – 125.

¹⁸ Hobsbawm, E. (1997), Are All Tongues Equal? Language, culture, and national identity, Barker, P. (1997, ed.), Living as Equals. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 85 – 98.

¹⁹ Silverstein, M. (2000), Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality, Kroskirty, P. (2000, ed.), Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, pp. 85 – 138.

²⁰ Fishman, J. (2002), The primordialist-constructivist debate today: the language-ethnicity link in academic and everyday-life perspective, Conversi, D. (2002, ed.) Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 85 – 92.

²¹ Billig, M. (1995), Nations and languages, Billig, M. (1995), Banal Nationalism. London: Sage Publications, pp. 13 – 36.

central characters of “Logoped” actually have much in common with them in their attempts to politicize and ideologize language: “People! Love your language. It is your reliable bulwark and your protection. You are in safety within its walls. It is your only future, only with it you will get the goal. Language and goal are united. Relentlessly pursues its purity, observe the laws of language, language purity is the purity of your thoughts ... you are nothing without it”²².

Valerii Votrin in “Logoped” actualizes the changes in language policy in imagined utopian society: if speech therapists monitored pronunciation, the insurgent masses prefer to burn the books: “two major metropolitan libraries became victims of fire and almost two days were blazing as a huge smudge. Book ash was creeping around the city, and scorched pages, like dead butterflies, were striking in the windows”²³. The “Logoped” novel in this context is not an echo of indirect long-term effects of “Fahrenheit 451” by Ray Bradbury. The anonymous and serial heroes of Valerii Votrin burned books without fear of detention because their ideas were uninteresting and indifferent for them. The books were burned because the written word fixed forms and norms which were radically different from the pronunciation. Valerii Votrin in this context actualizes conflict between high and low cultures, a culture formed by ruling and educated political classes and cultures of the lower classes. These imagined and invented cultures symbolize various dimensions of formally fictional identities, but processes fixed in the novel by Valerii Votrin have much in common with historical processes of nations’ building. If the plot of “Poslednii Magog”, on the one hand, is localized in the two countries, imagined state intellectual and geographical images of “Logoped” interfere with Russian and the post-Soviet realities.

On the other hand, “Poslednii Magog” is a novel about the conflict between two different cultures and identities. Valerii Votrin in “Logoped” actualizes the internal protest, conflict and disagreement of citizen with an authoritarian and non-democratic system. The political nature of authoritarianism in this context is not important because it is not as significant as for oppressors in their attempts to unify society, as for oppressed who try to resist the dictates of the totalitarian statehood. Political message of Valerii Votrin in this context is the following: authoritarianism is always the same and it does not matter which groups, political ideologues or speech therapists, form political elite and take decisions. Despite the fact that speech therapists, representatives of formally peaceful and civil profession, control political power in the novel, they use the state repressive apparatus (*korrektsionnye doma* or correctional houses and *recheispravitel’nye kursy* or pronunciation remedial courses) for control and prosecution of those who can not pronounce the words correctly. The languages control the “Logoped” novel and attempts of its heroes to unify the linguistic landscape are a little different from the political practices of ideological authoritarianism of the 20th century. If traditional society in confronts with modern one in “Poslednii magog”, society in “Logoped” is a relatively developed modern and homogeneous and has much in common with Soviet or post-Soviet Russian inner peripheries.

The society invented and imagined in the “Logoped” novel has necessary utopian elements and system characteristics because its social roots and political backgrounds generate different and almost incompatible cultural and social realities. The simultaneous existence of collective farms, machine operators, drivers, cows’ trainers (*dressirovshchiki korov*), linguistic dissidents, and linguistic sects is normal for utopian world of Valerii Votrin’s prose. “Poslednii magog” may be defined as almost classical utopia, and its semi-Western and semi-Asian society was imagined and invented as originally fictitious. The events, Valerii Votrin write about in “Logoped”, have more connotations with Russian and post-Soviet cultural landscape. Therefore, “Logoped” can be analyzed as a form of national dystopia. The national component in the text of novel is actualized in the context of linguistic experiments of Valerii Votrin with Russian language on the pages of his novel.

The characters of “Logoped” have Russian names and surnames (Anna Timofeevna, Iurii Petrovich Rozhnov, Rodion Aleksandrovich, Sergei Romanovich, Rudol’f Ivanovich Shmitt, Ivan Molostnov etc.), and the geography of the novel also has a clearly Slavic origins and roots. The abundance of Russian names, surnames and patronymic in the novel of Valerii Votrin provide his dystopia in “Logoped” novel with archaic cultural elements in comparison with his previous novel “Poslednii Magog” which is more post-national. The novels of Valerii Votrin “Poslednii Magog” and “Logoped” actualize particular cases of utopia and dystopia, and also represent its local forms and regional dimensions. The utopian motives in the texts of Valerii Votrin actualize micro-utopia and assist to its integration in the wider historical macro-context. The novel of Mariia Golovanivskaia, published in the 2014, was also an attempt to

²² Votrin, V. (2012), *Logoped*. Moskva: *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, ss. 16 – 17.

²³ *Ibid.* s. 219.

actualize universality and inevitability of utopia in its macro-historical perspectives in different territorial, spatial, temporal and national contexts.

(Pan)topia: utopian and dystopian in the grand narratives of Russian literature.

The novel “Pangeia”²⁴ of Mariia Golovanivskaia is the most fundamental and significant among texts analyzed in this article. The novel, which includes 737 pages, exceeds analyzes texts in general and structurally also different from them. Formally, the “Pangeia” can be defined as a collection of parables, short stories and novels that are not strictly linked with storyline in general. “Pangeia” is a novel based on fragmented text and formed by three books, including 42 texts. The events, described in “Pangeia” as in “Logoped” of Valerii Votrin take place in formal Russian and post-Soviet system of coordinates with excursions into a history of Eastern European areas and lands²⁵ (ss. 43, 100 – 101) and into events that could be real or relatively real. The events in novel develop in non-fantastic and partly real geography and take place after “Great revolution”²⁶ which only mentioned in the text. Synthesizing realism with allegory, weaving and integrating elements of naturalism with fairy tale, Mariia Golovanivskaia imagines and invents a unique landscapes and worlds, which loses interconnection with reality and mutate in utopia.

The heroes and events of the novel, on the one hand, gave easily recognizable prototypes, and the text of the book is filled with allusions to contemporary political, social and economic processes in Russia, but Mariia Golovanivskaia, on the one hand, denies the obvious parallels with Russian reality: “Pangaea is not Russia in the literal sense of the word. But it is similar to Russia in the same way as dream connects with reality: it includes fragments of the past and fragments of the future, frames of reality and magic images of life are interwoven with magic ... it is shaky, multicolored, infinitely moving matter”²⁷. Developing this assumptions, Golovanivskaia Maria also pointed out that “Pangaea is a large country, it is very similar to Russia and at the same time it is not very similar... as a bouillon cube is not like the soup, but it is the essence of it” (Golovanivskaia 2014). Despite these assurances of the author realistic chapters of the novel actualize different dimensions and forms of Russian cultural, social and political realities. Anthroponomical system of the novel is mixed and mix characters with totally neo-Soviet and Russian names (Anna, Valentin, Boris etc.) with semi-biblical or biblical names (Eva, Lot, Iosif, Esfir’, Luka etc.) of other characters. On the other hand, it will be obvious simplification to claim and presume that Russia is the main geographical collective character of the novel.

Reading the novel of Mariia Golovanivskaia, it is mentally possible to leave Russia and migrate to a country which is deeply integrated into the post-modern culture of the Bible, but lands of this imagined and invented country would be mapped and localized in one of numerous Russian historical memories. The country, invented and described by Mariia Golovanivskaia, is too deeply fragmented and this heterogeneity provides text of the novel with cultural, social and geographic diversities. Mariia Golovanivskaia, commenting on this feature of her novel, presumed that “special feature of Russian history is simultaneously existence of any previous epochs. Nothing is not going anywhere... it is in different concentrations, but of course they there are”²⁸. Modern Russian (anti)utopia in this context actualize tendency of complex and multi-levels manipulations with landscapes and territories as imagined and invented categories and collective representations. The novels of Valerii Votrin “Logoped” and “Poslednii Magog” provide readers and critics with spaces in their geographical sense and

²⁴ Bondar’-Tereshchenko, I. (2014), Liniia otreza: tonkaia krasnaia i zhirnaia belaia, Druzhiba narodov, no 1, retrieved from <http://magazines.russ.ru/druzhiba/2014/1/19b.html>; Bondar’-Tereshchenko, I. (2014), Poliubil korol’ gimnastku, Svobodnaia pressa, 8 iunია, retrieved from <http://svpressa.ru/culture/article/91957/>; Danilov, Iu. (2014), Roman “Pangeiia”, o kotorom zagovorili zadolgo do publikatsii, vyshel v izdatel’stve NLO, Kul’turaVRN, 21 maia, retrieved from <http://culturavrn.ru/literature/12313>; Grimberg, F. (2014), Pravdivaia skazka, Colta, 21 iulia, retrieved from <http://www.colta.ru/articles/literature/3965>; Liusyi, A. (2014), Roman “Pangeiia” Marii Golovanivskoi pohozh na gazetu s bibleiskoi istoriei: V novom romane Marii Golovanivskoi “Pangeia” predstavlena ocherednaia metaforicheskaia versiia Rossii, Vedomosti, 31 oktiabria, retrieved from <http://www.vedomosti.ru/lifestyle/articles/2014/10/31/na-stene-valtasara>

²⁵ Golovanivskaia, M. (2014), Pangeia. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, s. 43, 100 – 101.

²⁶ Golovanivskaia, M. (2014), Pangeia. s. 33.

²⁷ Golovanivskaia, M. (2014), Pobediat slabye, spasutsia ishchushchie, Novaia gazeta, no 106, 22 sentiabria, retrieved from <http://www.novaiaagazeta.ru/arts/65370.html>

²⁸ Golovanivskaia, M. (2014), V Rossii nikogda ne nastupit edinomysliia, Argumenty i fakty, 24 marta, retrieved from <http://www.aif.ru/society/people/1130349>

understandings. The territorial dimensions of these texts were mostly heterogeneous and universal division “we” / “they” actualized differences between them.

The text of “Pangeia” is more geographically complex, and its geography claims to be almost universal because the events in mythical and imagined world of the novel cover territories from rural, traditional and sleeping Russian periphery to Southeast Asia with its ethnic conflicts and contradictions. “Pangeia” in this context is the classic dystopia with true and undisguised political message. Mariia Golovanivskaia in her novel actualizes universal for Russian utopian discourse problems of modernization. Social and economic worlds and spaces of the novel are rooted in conflict between city and non-city, between centre and idyllic agrarian periphery. Mariia Golovanivskaia in her utopia novel “Pangeia” assists to demonization of the city and urban culture: “city is a trap for simpletons ... semi-slaves, semi-free, ready to live in plywood boxes for a bowl of chemical rice ... availability of girls in parks is the most important for freshly citizens... hungry, greedy, bawlers who trample each other in the commotion, and who do not remember the names of their children”²⁹. Despite these sentiments “Pangeia” can not be defined as an anti-urban novel, although one of its characters Kira Konstantinovna, formulates hard, bitter and unpleasant verdict, forecasting and predicting the fall of the city: “run out of town... there is nothing to do for thinkers here. Those who were here have already dead. Only shows or talk shows are in the need in town... people poke electric wires and blissfully twitch now”³⁰.

“Pangeia” as well as other texts that belong to the utopian discourse, actualize the conflict between the citizen and the political power, but the conflict, burdened by political controversies and confrontation of systems and ideologies, in the world, imagined and invented by Mariia Golovanivskaia, is too far from the classical utopias and anti-utopias of the 20th century. Authoritarianism is one of the central collective heroes of the novel: Lot, “a spiritual descendant of the dictators” and simultaneously “funny dwarf”³¹ is a bisexual, who deliberately and consciously chose homosexuality³² and combined it with love to Eve, “the world’s best dancer with emerald ribbons”³³. The image of Lot, on the one hand, represents the destructive potential of the power, and, on the other hand, projects the collective representations from scandalous chronicle about latest events in a text of the novel. Mariia Golovanivskaia imagines undemocratic rule in the extremely personified way and also mythologized it. Lot, the ruler of Pangaea, like a Byzantine emperor or Russian tsar almost has nothing in common with serial and typical authoritarian leaders from (anti)utopian novels of the 20th century where their authors invented society based on active manipulation with use of political ideologies and repressive apparatus of state control. Valerii Votrin and Mariia Golovanivskaia belong to number of traditional writers, their textual origins and roots grow genetically from texts of earlier Russian literature.

Despite their literary experiments with language and text as political and cultural messages, Valerii Votrin and Mariia Golovanivskaia remain in the traditional Russian literary discourse and intellectual landscape. The author presumes that Mariia Golovanivskaia (born in the 1963) and Valerii Votrin (born in the 1974) continue and develop traditions of different writers’ generations of Russian and Soviet literatures. They have much in common with their predecessors including style and topic preferences. It is logical to presume that it is necessary to continue the chronological line in the development of Russian contemporary utopian fiction, but in this context we face with some chronological gaps of the 1990s. The novel “Poteriannye pokoleniia” of Yves Preston actualizes more discreteness than continuity in development of Russian (anti)utopian discourse.

Dystopia for (of) mass consumerism.

Yves Preston is the youngest author among the writers analyzed in this article. These factor definite trajectories and the main vectors of her writings. The novel “Poteriannye pokoleniia” is radically different from other texts analyzed in this article.

Yves Preston defines her novel as a dystopia, believing that “when I was just beginning to develop the world of Poteriannye pokoleniia, I thought it would be a dystopia. The most noticeable difference between dystopia and dystopia express in the social system... dystopia demonstrates us a stable society

²⁹ Ibid. s. 21.

³⁰ Ibid. s. 54.

³¹ Ibid. s. 105.

³² Ibid. s. 111.

³³ Ibid. s. 122.

where supposedly there is harmony and justice. This society is strictly regulated, it offers a number of specific rules that serve to maintain harmony: the rejection of emotion in order to avoid conflict ... If dystopian hero remains safe until harmony is declared... the dystopian hero is never safe. A dystopian society is always defective, disharmonious. If there is a 'system' it would originally unjust and oppressive... The social system in the *Poteriannye pokoleniia* is disharmonious because it has only one task – to prepare for war ... I tried to create the illusion of a full-fledged society, the society of ensuing justice”³⁴ (Preston, 2016). This opinion is very debatable and the novel only from a formal viewpoint can be located in the contexts of utopian literature because it has more in common with science fiction texts which were market oriented and intended for mass consumption.

If novels of Valerii Votrin and Mariia Golovanivskaia have formal or actual Russian roots, the text of Yves Preston genetically belongs to a completely different cultural traditions generated by culture of mass consumerism and has nothing in common with traditions of classical Russian literature. Utopian novels of Valerii Votrin and Mariia Golovanivskaia have a tough masculine core despite the fact that “Pangeia” is overpopulated by female heroes, but the characters of female utopia of Mariia Golovanivskaia have a lot in common with the classic and almost stereotypical female characters of classical Russian and Soviet literature. They are, like them, suffer, love, die, but they are too far from political slogans and do not demonstrate their ideological preferences too actively as heroes of Yves Preston do it. Women characters of Preston Yves are fundamentally different, they generate, express and develop protest political sentiments of the 20th century and in this context, they are not genetically related to the earlier images of women in Russian literature. Feminization of dystopia in the novel of Yves Preston excludes her novel from the greater context but radical changes of gender coordinates did not effect positively: the heroes of “*Poteriannye pokoleniia*” are too schematic, extremely serial, and almost the same. Heroes’ primitivization assists to general dumbing of her text.

The novel of Yves Preston from a literary viewpoint is too marginal, and it has nothing in common with other texts analyzed in this article. This transformation, degradations, and degenerations of novel characters became results of the genesis of the novel in depths of mass consumerism culture: it will be too naïve to expect the deep inner feelings of the heroes and vivid style of the text which originally developed as Internet project with the orientation to market. It is also possible to try to find positive sides in the novel of Yves Preston. Formally, we can assume that the “*Poteriannye pokoleniia*” can be defined as a psychological dystopia, although this interpretation is too superficial. Yves Preston attempted to describe the psychological features of her characters and their psychological worlds, but these pages in her novel are among unsuccessful in comparison with characters of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin. We can presume that geographically limited space, characters of Yves Preston live in, radically affected their psychological experiences, but Russian and Western anti-utopia of the 20th century provides scholars with examples of strained psychological experiences of heroes who lived in more totalitarian regimes than the characters of Yves Prestons’ book. The novel “*Poteriannye pokoleniia*” in general can be defined as one of the first Russian feminist antiutopian novels, but it is a secondary in a wider literature context. The secondary has three stimulus and intellectual backgrounds, including Russian and Soviet utopia, Western utopia and contemporary culture of mass consumerism.

Therefore, the text of “*Poteriannye pokoleniia*” is literally overflowing with cultural collective traumas of its secondary character in the context of Russian literature history and external Western influences: on the one hand, the author wrote her novel under the obvious influences of “*Divergent*” by Veronica Roth, and “*The Hunger Games*” by Suzanne Collins. On the other hand, Soviet roots of the novel sprout in its content: the titles of the parts “*Smotritel*” (“Caretaker”), “*Kandidat*” (“Candidate”), “*Kursant*” (“Cadet”), “*Nositel’ znaniia*” (“Knowledge carrier”), and “*Patsient*” (“Patient”) overlap with the titles of parts “*Robinzon*” (“Robinson”), “*Gvardeets*” (“Guardsmen”), “*Terrorist*” (“Terrorist”), “*Katorzhnik*” (“Convict”), “*Zemlianin*” (“Earthling”) of Arkadii and Boris Strugatskii novel “*Obitaemyi ostov*”³⁵ (“Inhabited island”). The author presumes that Russian and Soviet utopias minimally affect the text of Yves Preston, which mimically simulates foreign language discourse. The text of her novel only formally belongs to modern Russian literature because it was constructed in the style of literary translation. Formally, the non-Russian author’s pseudonym, deliberately non-Slavic names of the characters, absence of bright national and cultural characteristics localize text in transcultural contexts of the contemporary culture of mass consumption. Formally, text and style of “*Poteriannye pokoleniia*” are

³⁴ Preston, I. (2016), *My ne poteriany: beseda c Iv Preston, Ballada o vymyshlennyh mirah*, 13 iunia, retrieved from <http://olh-rig.livejournal.com/41883.html>

³⁵ Strugatskii, A., Strugatskii, B. (1971), *Obitaemyi ostrov*. Moskva: Detskaia literatura, 320 s.

secondary because Yves Prestons' "novel" could be written by any other foreign writer in any different from The Russian language.

Preliminary conclusions.

The novels of Mariia Golovanivskaia, Valerii Votrin and Yves Preston formally belong to the contemporary Russian prose but actualize different and mutually exclusive tendencies of its development and transformations. Social backgrounds and roots of these texts are too different. The author presumes that the crisis tendencies in the development of Russian national identity, the collapse of the democratic political project and the objective inability of Russia to transform itself from the former empire into a modern nation-state became the intellectual and cultural stimulus which inspired Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin turns to utopia genre. Utopia and dystopia in these social and cultural contexts become the universal political language which actualized protest potential of literature because the formal political institutions have the symbolic character in contemporary Russia and their role is minimal and they are virtually invisible in the political space. Utopian texts of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin in this cultural situation became expressions, dimensions and forms of Russian intellectual nationalism, and periodically attempts of Russian writers to create texts in the genre of (anti)utopia assist to its transformation into invented tradition.

The novels of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin can be analyzed as an invented tradition because they actualize the collective political representations about special historical way of Russia, peculiarities of the Russian political culture and identity, ideas about the special mission of Russia as its historical and collective social stigmata and cultural trauma. This collective cultural trauma, on the one hand, in actual Russian identity became a result of forced political, social and economic modernization, which Russia experienced in the 20th century. Russian identity, on the other hand, was injured in these political experiments, and the attempts of radical transplantation of Western political institutions and social practices in Russian heterogeneous social, political and economic landscapes were extremely radical because institutions and relationships were too archaic and traditional. Political groups and social classes in modernizing Russia were not ready to modernization and new transplanted institutions and relations were rejected because they were genetically alien and belonged to Western political tradition and culture. This intellectual collective trauma of modernization periodically inspires Russian authors to write in the genre of utopia.

The texts of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin in these cultural contexts are deeply protested, but their protest has predominantly intellectual backgrounds and utopian or dystopian texts became attempts to actualize the universal values of human rights and freedoms. The author understands that this hypothetical assumption may seem too primitivizing (anti)utopia in contemporary Russian literature, but this genre is one of the most politicized and ideologized trends in Russian literature. The texts of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin represent intellectual attempts to actualize political roles and tasks of literature and they generally belong to ideologically motivated and stimulated utopian tradition in Russian literature. The prose of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin are the original invented tradition of Russian identity based on the values of the Western modern nation-state. The texts of Yves Preston also belong to utopian discourse, but they actualize completely different motives and values.

From a formal viewpoint, it is possible to analyze the novel of Yves Preston, on the one hand, as the first text in contemporary Russian prose, where Western post-modern cultural discourse was so ably and consistently simulated and imitated. On the other hand, the novel of Yves Preston is the first feminist novel in dystopian style in Russian literature, where the author develops a feminist discourse and her text is overpopulated by mostly female characters that monopolized formal men's roles and responsibilities from military service and participation in war to functions of political repressive control and suppression. Comparing the texts of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin, on the one hand, and the novel Yves Preston, on the other hand, it is important to emphasize that they actualize the various forms of identity: Maria Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin are among traditional authors who propose a formal identity symbolized by a nation-state, Yves Preston actualizes post-national and transnational forms of identity in the world where the nation and the nation-state became a historical anachronisms and archaic misunderstandings.

Different forms of Russian political and historical memories generate the texts of Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin, where they actualize traditional social and cultural request to utopia as collective representations about ideal or non-ideal worlds. The text of Yves Preston actualizes another

social, cultural and political demand for mass consumption. Therefore, it will be just naive to suppose that Mariia Golovanivskaia and Valerii Votrin will write continuations of “Pangeia”, “Logoped”, or “Poslednii magog”, but the continuation of “Poteriannye pokoleniia” will be normal and logically motivated step especially if market will consume and readers will welcome the first part of this transcultural attempt to write dystopian novel, localized in non-Russian cultural coordinates.

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