DOI:10.17951/sb.2020.14.119-156
Studia Białorutenistyczne 14/2020 LITERARY STUDIES
ISSN: 1898-0457 e-ISSN: 2449-8270

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One People, One Language, One Literature? Changing Constructions of the History of Old Belarusian Literature (1956–2010)

Jeden naród, jeden język, jedna literatura? Zmieniające się konstrukcje historii literatury starobiałoruskiej (1956–2010)

Адзін народ, адна мова, адна літаратура? Змены ў рэканструкцыі гісторыі беларускай літаратуры (1956–2010)

Abstract

Histories of literature mirror views and experiences of their own age and thus are constantly being rewritten. This is true also for the history of Old Belarusian literature. The short introductions and comprehensive overviews, written in the period between the Thaw and the Lukashenko era (1956–2010), contain astonishingly different constructions of the literary past. The article analyses a dozen books in Belarusian, Russian and English and it singles out the most import changes, such as the role of the literature of Kyivan Rus′ or periodization. However, the most prominent development is the step-by-step recognition of the multilingual nature of the literary heritage. This concerns the existence of texts not only in Eastern Slavonic varieties, but also in (Old) Church Slavonic, the discovery of Neo-Latin authors, and finally, the rehabilitation of Polish as a language of Belarusian literature. Although Old Belarusian studies in the post-Soviet years have been a field of innovation and reevaluation, even the most actual syntheses contain blind spots. The existence of texts in Lithuanian and the literary production of ethno-cultural minorities are hardly ever even mentioned. The idea of *one* common language

* Financing: Funded from the budget of the Institute of Modern Languages and Literatures and the Institute of History of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, from the funds of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for activities promoting science (contract no. 615/P–DUN/2019) and under the 'Support for Academic Journals' programme (contract no. 331/WCN/2019/1).
Publisher: Wydawnictwo UMCS

has been given up, but the history of literature still deals with texts by representatives of *one* ethnos that inhabit *one* territory.

Keywords: history of literature, old Belarusian literature, multilingualism, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, national narratives

Abstrakt

Historia literatury odzwierciedla system światopoglądowy swoich czasów, dlatego jest niezmiennie aktualizowana. Dotyczy to także historii literatury starobiałoruskiej. Zarówno w krótkich szkicach, jak i szczegółowych przeglądach literackich, powstałych od odwilży do ery Aleksandra Łukaszenki (1956–2010), odnajdujemy zadziwiająco różne rekonstrukcje twórczości literackiej. W artykule przeanalizowano kilkanaście książek napisanych w języku białoruskim, rosyjskim i angielskim, przedstawiono ich periodyzację oraz rolę, jaką przy ich powstaniu odegrała spuścizna literacka okresu Rusi Kijowskiej. Celem badania było omówienie wielojęzycznego charakteru starobiałoruskiego dziedzictwa literackiego. Jako obiekt analizy autor obrał teksty wschodniosłowiańskie, (staro)cerkiewnosłowiańskie, nowołacińskie, jak również należące do literatury białoruskiej utwory polskojęzyczne. Chociaż w latach postradzieckich studia starobiałoruskie uważano za innowacyjne, nawet najbardziej aktualne syntezy zawierają luki badawcze. W literaturze przedmiotu o istnieniu tekstów w języku litewskim i twórczości literackiej mniejszości etniczno-kulturowych prawie w ogóle się nie wspomina. Zrezygnowano z idei wspólnego języka, ale historia literatury wciąż zajmuje się tekstami przedstawicieli jednego etnosu zamieszkującego jedno terytorium.

Słowa kluczowe: historia literatury, dawna literatura białoruska, wielojęzyczność, Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie, narracje narodowe

Анатацыя

Гісторыя літаратуры адлюстроўвае светапогляд і досвед свайго часу і таму пастаянна перапісваецца. Гэта датычыць і гісторыі старабеларускай літаратуры. Кароткія агляды, як і грунтоўныя даследванні, створаныя ў перыяд паміж адлігай і эпохай Лукашэнкі (1956–2010), утрымліваюць надзіва розныя карціны літаратурнага мінулага. У артыкуле разглядаецца шэраг прац на беларускай, рускай і англійскай мовах, прасочваюцца найбольш істотныя змены: у падыходзе да перыядызацыі альбо ў разуменні ролі літаратуры Кіеўскай Русі. Аднак найбольш прыкметным з'яўляецца паступовае прызнанне шматмоўнасці літаратурнай спадчыны. У даследаваннях пачынаюць разглядацца тэксты не толькі на ўсходнеславянскіх мовах, але і на (стара)царкоўнаславянскай, адбываецца адкрыццё неалацінскіх аўтараў і, нарэшце, рэабілітацыя польскай мовы як мовы беларускай літаратуры. Нягледзячы на тое, што даследаванні старажытнай Беларусі ў постсавецкія гады мелі інавацыйны характар і шмат што пераасэнсавана, белыя плямы ёсць нават у найноўшых працах. Амаль не згадваецца пра існаванне тэкстаў на літоўскай мове і літаратурную творчасць этнічных меншасцей. Ад ідэі адной агульнай мовы адмовіліся, але гісторыя літаратуры ўсё яшчэ займаецца тэкстамі прадстаўнікоў аднаго этнасу, якія насяляюць адну тэрыторыю.

Ключавыя словы: гісторыя літаратуры, старабеларуская літаратура, полілінгвізм, Вялікае Княства Літоўскае, нацыянальныя наратывы

A punch line by Uladzìmìr Karatkevìč, as referred to by Lewis (Lewis, 2019a, pp. 120–127), is an excellent illustration of the subject of the present study. In his novel *Hrystos pryzâmliŭsâ ŭ Garodnì* (Christ Landed in Hrodna), the father of the Belarusian historical novel subjected the 16th-century setting to a comprehensive Belarusification (Lewis, 2019a, pp. 121–122). The motto at the beginning of the first chapter, however, reveals this strategy of the national overwriting of a multi-ethnic and multilingual past. The novel refers to a *„Кроніка Белай Русі...” каноніка жмойскага Мацея Стрыкоўскага* (‘Chronicle of the White Rus′…’ of the Samogitian Canon Macej Stryjkoŭskì) as the source of this quotation. Yet the actual book that Stryjkoŭskì (or Maciej Stryjkowski)[1] published in Königsberg in 1582 was entitled *Kronika polska, litewska, żmudzka i wszystkiej Rusi* (Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitian, and all Rus′). And, above all else, it was written in Polish. The motto – a fictitious one according to Lewis (Lewis, 2019a, p. 122) – seems to cut a segment out of the scope of the genuine chronicle, as indicated by the triple dots, and renames it in the national terminology of the 20th century. This (self-) parody exacerbates the core problem of Old Belarusian studies. The national literary history consistently refers to the notion of Belarus, which, compared to terms such as *Lithuania* or *Ruthenia / Russia / Rus′* along with their corresponding derivatives, played an at-best subordinate role prior to the 19th century. Additionally, language functions as a common denominator only to a limited extent since numerous texts of value for the history of literature and culture (such as Stryjkowski’s actual chronicle) were often written or printed in Polish, Latin, and Church Slavonic. The overviews of literary history, therefore, search for solutions to the virtually insoluble problem of compiling a literary history of the earlier centuries that would concern *Belarusian* works exclusively[2]. Furthermore, political and social discourses lead to considerable differences between the different syntheses, which can be observed in comparison. ‘Every literary history is a child of its time’, as a colleague from Minsk summarised sententiously.

The methodological approach to *history* as a construction, dictated by the respective *present,* has become a major subject of cultural studies under the key concept of ‘memory’ or ‘memory studies’ (a thematically related example: Lewis 2019b and the collective volume to which it belongs). Constructions of *literary*

[1] As far as names of authors or texts are concerned, this article generally uses the variants employed in the respective overview study. In addition to these (not always consistent) variants that are similar to modern Belarusian, I provide Latin, Polish, Russian, or Lithuanian variants in brackets for the sake of facilitated identification. The transliteration from Cyrillic follows the ISO 9 standard as selected by the journal. Quotes are given in the original alphabet.

[2] This issue remains relevant with regard to the literature of the 19th century. See Nekrašèvìč-Karotkaâ (Nekrašèvìč-Karotkaâ, 2017).

history, however, have been examined less often. In Slavonic studies, there was some research on the revisions of the literary canon upon the collapse of the communist system, but this concerned primarily the literature of the 20th century (in Russian studies e.g. Grübel, 2012; Hodgson, Shelton and Smith, 2017; overview of research: Rutz, 2013). The older literature hardly came into view. This article will examine the turning points in the conceptions of Old Belarusian literature, from the Thaw to the Lukašènka era. Choosing syntheses of the history of (Old) Belarusian literature as material for analysis, I assembled a corpus of similar works in which the differences are most obvious.

Critical analyses of such fundamental introductions and companions are rarely found. The majority of studies refers to them in the overview of the existing research at the most. Over the recent years, Sârgej Kavalëŭ has dealt more intensively with the history of Old Belarusian Studies and with concepts of literary history in general (e.g. Kawalou, 2009 (in polish) and Kavalëŭ, 2010, pp. 5–17 (in Belarusian)). His investigation of the status of the current manuals and textbooks for schools and universities (Kavalëŭ, 2016) comes very close to the question discussed in the present article, yet with a different objective and choice of materials. Certainly, the current article bears witness to some extent of my research interests in multilingualism and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). However, the question which concepts and details have changed as well as the reasons for these modifications has taken precedence over the legitimation of my own research agenda, leading to a subsequent step of self-reflection: the current multilingual narrative or ideas of a transcultural and entangled history are only children of their time as well.

The analysis focuses on the following key questions:

1. What is the subject of literary history and is this issue raised at all? (Kavalëŭ, 2016, p. 247) stresses the terminological differentiation between *belaruskaâ lìtaratura* (literature in Belarusian) and *lìtaratura Belarusì* (literature of Belarus), which proves extremely helpful but has not yet become generally accepted.

2. What principles underlie the division of literature history into particular epochs?

3. Are works not written in the national language also taken into account?

4. What information is provided as to the written languages, especially Church Slavonic and the so-called Old Belarusian?[3] To what extent is the language (*Sprachigkeit*) of texts addressed and / or illustrated?

5. How do the syntheses model the relationship towards other ethnic groups and their literatures?

The corpus comprises eleven books listed chronologically in the bibliography. It is, however, not an exhaustive list. The first study that appeared after the overviews compiled in the 1920s, namely M. K. Dabrynìn's literary history from the Stalin era

[3] I use the terminology employed in the overview literature, though I consider the term Old Belarusian as well as projecting the notion of Belarus on the past problematic.

(*Belaruskaâ lìtaratura: staražytny peryâd*, Minsk 1952), was unfortunately not available in German libraries. There may be other university textbooks distributed locally. School books were not taken into account. In addition to the syntheses printed in the Belarusian Soviet Republic and in post-Soviet Belarus, I also included Arthur McMillin's *History of Byelorussian* (sic!) *Literature* from 1977. Until today, it is the most current overview accessible to a reader without knowledge of Slavonic languages. McMillin offers a valuable contrast to the Soviet Belarusian research. While he relies in general on the literary history published by the Academy of Sciences of the BSSR in 1968 (p. 334), several vital points of his work are structured along the synthesis of Garèckì from the 1920s ('the best general survey', p. 9). My original idea was to also include the first syntheses by Garèckì, Karskì (Vol. III, 2 of *Belarusy*) and Ânčuk, but I dismissed it eventually due to the conceptual differences between the various editions of Garèckì's *Gìstoryâ belaruskae lìtaratury*. For instance, the 4th edition of the work, published in Moscow and Leningrad, deliberately avoids the term Belarusian for older literature[4]. The contemporary edition (Garèckì, 1992) follows the 'debelarusified' version of 1924 and does not comment on this highly significant difference in respect to the editions of 1921 and 1926, which I consulted for comparison. This topic clearly requires a detailed study.

Although many aspects have changed over the period examined here, it is astonishing that the core of authors of this most authoritative literary canon remains virtually unchanged over decades. Vâčaslaŭ Čamâryckì, who was the main editor of the most recent literary history published by the Academy of Science, contributed to the syntheses published in 1968, 1977, 1985 ([4]1998) and 2006 ([2]2007). He authored *all* chapters regarding the 14th–16th centuries as well as the chapters on the literature of Rus′ and translation literature since 1977. Alâksandr Koršunaŭ, in turn, wrote the chapters on the Reformation and the denominational polemics of the 16th–17th centuries) between 1968 and 1985 (respectively 1998, in 4th ed.). From 1977 to 2006, Adam Mal′dzìs wrote on the Enlightenment and since 1985 ([4]1998) also on the Baroque. The university textbook by Ìgar Klìmaŭ (2010) stands out as highly innovative against this rather conservative background. It may have less authority, distribution, and thus impact than the collective monographs published by the Academy of Sciences, yet Klìmaŭ asks fundamental questions and advocates alternative arguments that are worth considering.

[4] Comparison of two examples: on the left – Garèckì (1992/1924); on the right – Garèckì (1926). Italicised by MR.

„Мова прывезеных к нам славяна-балгарскіх кніжак была тады блізка да мовы *крывічоў*, быўшых асновою *нашае* нацыі" (p. 95).	„(…] да мовы *славянскіх* пляменьняў, увайшоўшых у склад *беларускае* нацыі" (p. 46).
„І літоўскія князі сталі карыстацца ў сваіх канцылярскіх справах *нашаю* кніжнаю моваю (…]" (p. 100).	„(…] *беларускаю* кніжнаю моваю" (p. 50).

1. Belarusian Particularity vs. East Slavonic Community

While the examined Soviet Belarusian syntheses ignore the question of their subject area and assume there be a consensus, McMillin explains in his brief introduction what he has and has not included in his history of Belarusian literature:

> A word on selection may be appropriate: works from the earliest period were selected *according to linguistic and geographic criteria*; from the fifteenth century onwards *only works in Byelorussian, or linguistically mixed but with a strong Byelorussian element*, have been included (McMillin, 1977, p. 10; italicised by MR).

The language criterion excludes all authors from the 15th century onwards who wrote in Latin, Polish, Russian, and Church Slavonic. The geographical restriction for the earlier works has a particular objective, as disclosed in the following quote:

> The present study, principally *for reasons of space*, departs from *the usual practice* of treating all early East Slav literature as the heritage of all three countries concerned and deals directly only with works that arose in the *ethnically Byelorussian territory* (McMillin, 1977, p. 13; italicised by MR).

McMillin stresses the Belarusian particularity and thus, in the middle of the Cold War, implicitly distances himself from the Soviet narrative of inclusion that supposes an East Slavonic ('All-Russian') unity. The lack of space as an excuse as well as the affirmative formulation 'usual practice' that McMillin uses are, however, irritating: would he really have preferred to cover the common literary heritage? By distinguishing the subject area from the common literature of Rus′, McMillin follows Garèckì's history of Belarusian literature from 1920 and the subsequent years. As the country had gained independence in 1918, Garèckì projected cultural autonomy and linguistic difference on the earlier centuries (e.g. Garèckì, 1992, pp. 95–96).

By contrast, the Soviet syntheses emphasise the original cultural unity of all Eastern Slavs, starting with Vol′skì's publications from 1956 and 1958. Vol′skì begins by contending that the literature of Kyivan Rus′ was the root of all three brother nations ('трох братніх народаў', Vol′skì, 1956, p. 5; 1958, p. 7) and that the state, language and literature were common to all of them (1956, pp. 20–21; 1958, p. 12 etc.). Some of the works which were created in Kyiv and represent this Eastern Slavonic community are combined, however, with north-western counterparts, representing a proto-Belarusian particularity. Such pairs are, for instance, the Ostromir Gospels and the Turaŭ Gospels (1956, p. 7; 1958, p. 17), or Ìlaryën's (Ilarion's) *Sermon on Law and Grace* and the homiletics of Kiryl of Turaŭ (1956, pp. 10–11; 1958, pp. 24–25). Vol′skì devotes much space to the *Tale of Igor's Campaign* (1956, pp. 14–18; 1958, pp. 34–54), that is referred to as common heritage of the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians ('агульный здабытак рускага, украінскага і беларускага народаў, агульная іх

спадчына' 1956, p. 14; 1958, p. 34). Vol′skì's following chapter on Belarusian literature in times of the GDL emphasises the continuity of the cultural connection among the Eastern Slavs. Texts that deviate from this assumption are discredited. For instance, the subchapter regarding the three Lithuanian Statutes contains a general criticism of the Belarusian bourgeois nationalists ('Беларускія буржуазныя нацыялісты, спрабуючы фальсіфікаваць гісторыю (…)' Vol′skì, 1956, pp. 27–28) who, according to Vol′skì, falsely presented the 16th century as the Golden Age. This critique is probably directed against Garèckì, who entitled his chapter on the 16th century *Zalataâ para*[5]. The polemical argument used therein, whereby the nationalist enemies opposed the past and the present against each other in order to separate the Belarusians from the great Russian nation (1956, p. 28: 'адарваць беларускі народ ад вялікага рускага народа'), remains sound and applicable today, albeit already with an reverse, positive evaluation. This passage is missing from Vol′skì's more extensive monograph (1958, p. 82), which indicates that the Statutes in the meantime had been upgraded to an element of Belarusian cultural heritage.

In the 1950s, the role of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy, respectively the Tsardom of Russia was portrayed very positively. According to Vol′skì, Muscovy's politics of 'gathering the territories of Rus'' allegedly aroused a deep desire for reunification in the Belarusians and Ukrainians (1956, p. 28, 33; 1958, p. 83, similar to 96). In the war between Muscovy and *Poland* in 1654/55, the Belarusian population welcomed the Russian armies and reportedly surrendered their cities without a fight. This, along with the so-called struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence (1648–1654), is regarded as an example of Russian-Belarusian-Ukrainian military cooperation (1956, p. 42f.; 1958, p. 117). Vol′skì concludes his overview (1956, p. 57; 1958, p. 163) with an impassionate appreciation of Russian hegemony: 'У зацятай барацьбе за сваё гістарычнае існаванне беларускі народ заўсёды знаходзіў маральную падтрымку і нязменную дапамогу з боку свайго старэйшага брата, вялікага рускага народа'[6].

The topos of the brother nations and the shared culture can be also found in the academic syntheses of 1968 and 1977 (e.g. Barysenka et al. 1968, p. 6; Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 14). The corresponding chapter is no longer called *The literature of Kyivan Rus′* but of *Ancient Rus′* (Bel.: *Lìtaratura Staražytnaj Rusì*, Rus.: *Literatura drevnej Rusi*). This reinforces the narrative of unity and levels the regional differences in literary development. However, *Kyivvan Rus′* is still used as a synonym.

Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998/1985), Lojka (2001) and Čamârvckì et al. ([2]2007/2006) devote extensive book chapters to the literature of Rus′, yet they tend to present this period as a prelude to the actual Belarusian literary history. Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, p. 53)

[5] This designation of the epoch, given in the editions of 1921 and 1926, is not adopted in the table of contents of the reprint (Garèckì, 1992, pp. 477–478), but it can be found as a heading in the actual text (Garèckì, 1992, p. 103).

[6] 'In the fierce struggle for its historical existence, the Belarusian people have always found moral support and constant help on the side of their older brother, the great Russian people'.

open the second epoch with a subchapter on the origin of genuinely Belarusian literature (*Stanaŭlenne belaruskaj lìtaratury*). Lojka (2001) entitles the large chapter devoted to Rus′ *Peradgìstoryâ. Vytokì* (Prehistory. Origins). In Čamâryckì et al. (²2007), the epoch now identified as the Middle Ages is less radically divided into the sub-chapters *rannâe* and *poznâe sârèdnâvečča*. Klìmaŭ (2010) also refers to the literature of Rus′ as the early Middle Ages and dedicates a special sub-chapter (1.7) to the first literary artefacts from Belarus, emphasising the division into 'common' and 'own' texts.

In the new millennium, the first epoch of Rus′ literary history is still relevant and regarded as a cultural formation common to all Eastern Slavs. Yet the declarations of an 'All-Russian' unity as well as pro-Russian statements are far less frequent. Russian (Muscovite) policy is viewed from the victim's perspective, especially in Čamâryckì et al. (²2007), where the description of the conquest of Polotsk in 1563 focuses on the looting and destruction of the cultural and spiritual capital (p. 383) and the wars of the Rzeczpospolita *with Moscow* and Poland with Sweden (1654–1667) are called a demographic disaster (p. 494). However, only Majhrovìč's synthesis from 1980 does not include a chapter on Kyivan Rus′[7]. This is an intriguing exception from the rule, though it is difficult to understand if it was a conceptual decision, as Majhrovìč does not provide any justification and the topos of Rus′ as the cradle of the three East Slavonic nations as such remains (Majhrovìč, 1980, p. 4).

2. Periodisation: Connection to Europe

The subdivision of literary history is equally important with regard to Soviet meta-narratives[8]. McMillin arranges chapters according to genre and outstanding writers. Garèckì originally used an organic model, discrediting the 10th–12th centuries as rule of Church Slavonic (*carkoŭna-slavânščyna*) and the 13th–14th centuries as (time of preparation (*padgatavaŭčaâ para*). The Golden Age (16th century) is followed by the gathering (*shod*) of the 17th century and decay (*zanâpad*) in the 18th century[9].

Vol′skì's overviews from 1956 and 1958 are based on political formations and use signal words referring to the idea of class struggle (though not regarding the Rus′ period):

> I. Літаратура Кіеўскай Русі
>
> II. Літаратура перыяду ўмацавання феадалізма і знаходжання Беларусі ў складзе літоўскага княства

[7] According to the preface, the manuscript was completed in 1962, but has been updated since then (Majhrovìč 1980, p. 14). However, it is unclear whether the author had revised his book *fundamentally* before he died in 1981.

[8] Kavalëŭ observes certain oddities appearing in the syntheses currently used in teaching (2016, p. 249–252).

[9] Also in the second edition (Garèckì 1921). Some headings change in the later editions.

III. Беларуская літаратура ў перыяд барацьбы беларускага народа супраць улады польских магнатаў[10].

The collective syntheses of 1968, 1977 and 1985 ([4]1998) no longer contain signs of class conflict in their headings. These were replaced by neutral designations, referring to specific centuries (cf. table 1).

	Ahrymenka and Larčanka (1968)	Barysenka, Berkau, Pšyrkoŭ and Čamârvckì (1968)	Borisenko, Pširkov and Čemerickij (1977)	Lazaruk and Semânovìč (1985/[4]1998)
1	Літаратура Кіеўскай Русі (з XI да сярэдзіны XIII ст.) Literature of Kyivan Rus′ (11th–middle of 13th century)	Літаратура Старажытнай Русі Literature of Old Rus′	Литература древней Руси Literature of Old Rus′	Літаратура Старажытнай Русі Literature of Old Rus′
2	Літаратура сярэдзіны XIII–пачатку XVI ст. …middle of the 13th to the beginning of the 14th century	Літаратура XIV–**першай палавіны** XVI ст. … 15th–**first half** of the 16th century	Литература XIV–**начала** XVI в. … 14th–**beginning** of the 16th century	Літаратура XIV–**пачатку** XVI ст. … 14th–**beginning** of the 16th century
3	Літаратура XVI ст. …16th century Літаратура канца XVI – першай паловы XVII ст. …end of the 16th – first half of the 17th century	Літаратура **другой палавіны XVI**–першай палавіны XVII ст. … **second half of the 16th** – first half of the 17th century	Литература **XVI–первой половины** XVII в. … **16th – first half of the 17th** century	Літаратура **XVI–першай паловы** XVII ст. … **16th–first half of the 17th** century
4	Літаратура другой паловы XVII–XVIII ст. … second half of the 17th–18th century	Перакладная літаратура XV–XVII ст. Translation literature 15th–17th century	Переводная литература XV–XVII вв. Translation literature 15th–17th century	Перакладная літаратура XV–XVII ст. Translation literature 15th–17th century

[10] 'I. Literature of the Kyivan Rus'.
II. Literature of the period of the strengthening of feudalism and of Belarus being part of the Lithuanian princedom.
III. Belarusian literature in the period of the struggle of the Belarusian people against the might of the Polish magnates'.

5	Перакладная літаратура старажытнай Беларусі	Літаратура другой палавіны XVII–XVIII ст.	Литература второй половины XVII–XVIII в.	Літаратура другой палавіны XVII–XVIII ст.
	Translation literature from Old Belarus	…. second half of the 17th–18th century	…second half of the 17th–18th century	… second half of the 17th–18th century

Table: Subdivision in literary epochs

The Baroque and Enlightenment are established epoch names in the history of European literature and art. They appear in Borisenko et al. (1977) in the titles of sub-chapters of the fifth literary period. This also applies to Lazaruk and Semânovìč (1985/[4]1998), who employ the 'western' terms Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque in the introductory remarks. However, these designations collide with the traditional periodization with the help of centuries (e.g. the period '16th to mid – 17th century' contains Renaissance and early Baroque, cf. Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, p. 18)).

The late introduction of the term Renaissance into the syntheses is probably due to the fact that Russian literature did not complete this development stage and Belarusian studies complied with this model for a long time. In Barysenka et al. (1968, e.g. p. 140), Borisenko et al. (1977, e.g. pp. 92–93), as well as Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, pp. 85–86, 91), 'Renaissance' appears only in the text. A corpus of works and authors which could constitute a Belarusian *Adradžènne* was, in fact, established relatively late. The Latin-speaking poets (discussed later in the article) eventually tipped the scales.

The ground for the Belarusian Renaissance was prepared by an inconspicuous shift of an epoch boundary in the academic syntheses (cf. table 1, emphasis by bold types). In Barysenka et al. (1968), the second major epoch covers the 14th, 15th *and first half of the 16th century*. The last sub-chapters address the requirements for Humanism in Belarus ('перадумовы гуманізму на Беларусі') and Francysk Skaryna (Francisk Skorina) as phenomena at the very end of a cultural period. In Borisenko et al. (1977), the second major epoch extends only *to the beginning of the 16th century* and ends with chronicles as typical genres of medieval literature. Humanism and Francysk Skaryna were thus moved to the third epoch, marking the beginning of a new era.

Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007) and Klìmaŭ (2010) renounce the Soviet division into centuries and subdivide literary history into (early and late) Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque[11]. Currently, Belarusian Studies favour a pan-European model that focuses on artistic developments.

[11] Lojka (2001) employs the same terms but is unable to establish a factually correct and conceptually coherent connection.

3. The Advance of Multilingualism

The most important change, however, has been observed as to the understanding of what belongs to Belarus' own literary history. The idea of a multilingual canon has been gaining in importance, thus sparking the shift from the history of *Belarusian literature* towards the *literature of Belarus* (*lìtaratura Belarusì*).

In the 1950s, Vol′skì writes a clearly monolingual history of Belarusian literature, as he concentrates on the development of literature in (Old) Belarusian and the struggle for the nation's own language. However, not all texts discussed therein were written in an Eastern Slavic vernacular. According to the monograph of 1958, the first written language used in the area was Church Slavonic (ChSl) and the majority of the early texts were written in it (Vol′skì 1958, pp. 13–14; fragment missing in 1956). ChSl was also the language of major book projects of the 16th century, e.g. Skaryna's *Псалтыр*' (Psalter) and *Апостал* (Apostol) (Vol′skì 1956, p. 30; Vol′skì 1958, p. 85) or the *Учительное Евангелие* (Didactic Gospels), funded by Rygor Hadkevič (Grzegorz Chodkiewicz) (1956, p. 35; 1958, p. 98). As far as other languages are concerned, Vol′skì mentions that Symon (Szymon) Budny *also* published in Latin and Polish (1956, p. 36; 1958, p. 102) and Andrèj Rymša (Andrzej Rymsza) *also* composed Polish verses (1956, p. 39; 1958, p. 109). We read that the anti-Uniate text *Апокрысіс* (a Greek term, meaning 'answer') was allegedly translated from Polish into Belarusian; *Катэхізіс* (Catechism) by Scâpan (Stefan) Zìzanìj was printed both in Belarusian and Polish, as was *Гармонія* (Harmony) by Ìpacì Pacej (Hipacy Pociej) (1956, pp. 45–46; 1958, p. 125, 130). The information on *Фрынос* (Threnos, i.e. *Lament*) by Melecìj[12] Smatrycki (Meletij Smotrickij) in Vol′skì's publications is rather ambiguous, as Vol′skì's earlier sketch (1956, p. 47) claims that this anti-Uniate work was printed in Belarusian and Polish, but the later monograph (1958, p. 134) says: 'дайшла на польскай мове'[13], favouring the non-national language. The same overall picture, i.e. a large proportion of ChSl texts along with several texts in Latin and Polish, can be found in the collective academic syntheses – Barysenka et al. (1968), Borisenko et al. (1977) – and in Ahrymenka and Larčanka (1968).

In Majhrovìč (1980), there are very few references to the issue at hand. Since he excludes the entire literature of Rus′, there are no works in Old Church Slavonic mentioned whatsoever. The book pursues a rather patriotic-national literary ideal:

> Ужо першыя беларускія пісьменнікі, паслядоўна прытрымліваючыся старажытнарускай патрыятычнай традыцыі, імкнуліся ў меру здольнасцей сваіх пісаць на выпрацаванай імі літаратурнай мове, блізкай да простанароднай гаворкі. І гэта тады, калі суседняя

[12] The form *Mâlecìj* is more common.

[13] 'has been handed down in Polish'.

> Польшча ва ўсіх сферах дзяржаўнага і літаратурнага жыцця скрозь «квітнела лацінаю» (…)[14] (Majhrovič 1980, p. 94).

However, publishing his book in 1980, he did make an exception for the emerging classic Mìkola Gusoŭskì (Nicolaus Hussovianus) and his Latin-language *Carmen de bisonte*, as will be described below.

In some of the syntheses, multilingualism manifests itself implicitly by means of the grapheme systems used to reproduce titles or quotations. Therefore, I will render the titles given by Vol′skì as quotes and reproduced them in the Cyrillic spelling he suggested, i.e. in most cases similar to modern Belarusian. There is one exception in the 16th-century; *Учительное Евангелие* (Didactic Gospels) is rendered in a different variant of Cyrillic. As to the titles from the Rus′ period, these deviations from the rule have a systematic character. Belarusified title variants are given for texts that can be classified as vernacular, e.g. *Слова аб палку Ігаравым* (Tale of Igor's Campaign) (Vol′skì 1956, pp. 6, 14–18) or *Жыццё Алексея, чалавека божыя* (Life of the Blessed Aleksei) (p. 9). The other titles are spelt differently, using the grapheme inventory of modern Russian. These are, apparently, texts in (Old) Church Slavonic, such as *Остромирово Евангелие* (Ostromir Gospels) (p. 7), *Патерик* (Paterikon), *Сказаніе* (sic) *и страсть и похвала святую мученику Бориса и Глеба* (Legend and Martyrdom and Praise of the Saintly Martyr Boris and Gleb) (p. 8), *Повесть временных лет* (in English: *Primary Chronicle*) and many more (p. 13). Vol′skì's monograph follows the same system, while the corrections introduced in it are quite insightful, as the name of the law codification *Русская правда* (Vol′skì 1956, p. 5) is corrected to vernacular *Русская праўда* (1958, p. 12); *Остромирово Евангелие* (1956, p. 7) is replaced with Belarusified *Астраміpава Евангелле* (1958, p. 17). The language quality of texts is marked in a similar way in the academic synthesis of 1968, where different variants of the Cyrillic alphabets are employed. Again, the systematic character of this distinction by means of orthography is not discussed.

In the Russian-language academic literary history by Borisenko et al. (1977), all titles are spelt in Russian Cyrillic or translated, thus eliminating a differentiation between ChSl and Eastern Slavic vernaculars. Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998), as well as Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007), standardise the spelling they use towards modern Belarusian. In most cases, therefore, it is impossible for an uninformed reader to determine the language or language variety in which a given text was written, especially in the chapter devoted to Rus′.

With regard to languages using Latin script, Barysenka et al. (1968, pp. 242, 270-271, 282, 286–287, 295, 311, 313, 366–367, 373) include some Polish or Latin

[14] 'Already the first Belarusian writers, constantly following the Old Russian patriotic tradition, tried their best to write in the literary language created by them, which was close to the oral language of the common folk. And this at a time, when the neighbouring Poland in all spheres of the state and literary life "flourished with Latin" (…]'.

titles and quotations. In Ahrymenka and Larčanka, such examples are rare (1968, pp. 94, 126, 153). The literary history of 1977 favours monolingual standardisation and renders everything in Russian, but there is one interesting exception. A single footnote (Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 279) indicates that *Belarusian-language* texts from the 17th to 18th centuries were partly written in Latin script. This biscriptuality is marked in the given quotations through the use of the Russian alphabet for texts which were originally Cyrillic and the Belarusian alphabet (!) for those in *łacinka*. Additionally, page 280 features a Latin-Belarusian macaronic poem. In Lazaruk and Semânovič ([4]1998), the Latin script emphasises the title of *Carmen de statura feritate ac venatione bisontis* (p. 143) as well as the humanistic pseudonym 'Vitellius' of Erazm Ciołek (p. 146), whereas quotations are provided only in translations (pp. 145, 154–155 etc.). The Polish alphabet is used as an exception in the chapter on Simâon Polackì (Simeon Polockij) (p. 280 ff.). In Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007), the use of Latin and Polish languages is equally inconsistent. The majority of titles and quotes is translated, whereas the chapter on Hussovianus contains (selective) quotes from the Latin original (pp. 310, 316, 324). Klìmaŭ (2010) alone takes a systematic approach: both Latin and Polish titles, as well as individual terms, are *always* rendered in their original language.

It can be inferred from all literary histories that several written languages were used in the area now called Belarus. But what about explicit statements? Despite standardised language and alphabet, Borisenko et al. (1977) indicates that the canon is multilingual. The chapter on religious and polemical literature claims that Orthodox Church members would write primarily in ChSl, Polish or Latin, yet these texts belong to Belarusian literature nevertheless (p. 148; the same passage in Belarusian can be found in Lazaruk and Semânovìč [4]1998, p. 209). The chapter on poetry asserts that there were some poets who wrote poetry in both Belarusian and Polish or even in Polish only (Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 220). Similar information can be found in the chapter on translation literature of the 15th–17th centuries, which argues that texts written in 'Old Slavonic' (i.e. ChSl), Latin, Polish etc. are not to be regarded as part of Belarusian literature, *with the exception of those written by local authors* ('за исключениме произведений местных авторов', p. 234). In a reverse conclusion, therefore, such texts do belong to Belarusian literature.

The chapters on the later centuries of the older literary history prove to be of particular conceptual importance. The academic synthesis of 1968 devoted mere 20 pages to the period covering the second half of the 17th and the 18th century. There is little that can be discussed, as the Belarusian language was excluded from the sphere of literature ('прымусовае звужэнне сферы ўжывання', Barysenka et al. 1968, p. 411). What remains are anonymous texts (pp. 416–421), as well as school dramas and nativity plays (*batlejka*) (pp. 421–432). Ahrymenka and Larčanka (1968, p. 9) suggest at least in the introduction that several works were written in other languages on the territory of today's Belarus during the time in question that are, indeed, part of Belarusian literature. However, the authors do not go further than this. In the academic synthesis by Borisenko et al. (1977), the chapter devoted to the second half of the 17th

and the 18th century spans already over 50 pages (pp. 259–312) and the references to other written languages are more abundant. The authors explain that the baroque book market was dominated by religious literature in Latin, Polish and ChSl; secular books were expensive and not published in Belarusian (p. 263). Within the style hierarchy, Belarusian was only to be found on the middle and lower levels (p. 268) – texts of highbrow genres were written in other languages. Latin, Polish and ChSl also dominate the school drama (p. 275). In the second half of the 18th century, texts were printed in various languages (p. 295). Chapter author Mal′dzìs aptly concludes this whole issue in the following passage, to which Kavalëŭ (see above, introduction) probably referred. Mal′dzìs namely draws a distinction between a mono- and a multilingual concept of literature:

> Часто идеи Просвещения наиболее отчетливо выражались не *в собственно белорусской литературе*, а *в литературе Белоруссии*, многоязычной по своему характеру. Белорусские произведения занимали в ней далеко не ведущее место. Литературными, письменными языками Белоруссии тогда были польский, русский, латинский, старославянский, французский языки и только в незначительной степени старый и новый белорусский[15] (Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 299, italicised by MR; cf. p. 301).

In a very similar way, Mal′dzìs differentiates between the multilingual literature of Belarus (*šmatmoŭnaâ lìtaratura Belarusì*) and Belarusian literature proper (*ŭlasna belaruskaâ lìtaratura*) in his contribution to Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, p. 338).

While the idea of multilingualism in Borisenko et al. (1977) and Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998) becomes distinctive only in the last chapters, both Lojka (Lojka, 2001, pp. 5–6) and Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007) tackle the question whether texts in other languages belong to (Old) Belarusian literature in a more prominent place, namely in the introduction. It will probably be soon forgotten that Lojka paid lip service to *polìlìnguìzm,* but the most recent academic literary history is definitely a milestone defining a new consensus on this topic. The collective volume by Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007, p. 14) asserts that Belarusian literature was multilingual until the very end of the 19th century. Moreover, the chapter on the Baroque features the revolutionary statement that language was not a dominant element of the ethnic-national identity up to that point. It was rather the denominational affiliation that was the critical factor (p. 499). In the chapters on Renaissance and Baroque, multilingualism is systematically taken into account. For instance, there are statistical data on the languages of printed books (p. 275), and in the chapter on poetry (pp. 425–471), the overview of verse

[15] 'The ideas of the Enlightenment were expressed often most clearly not *in properly Belorusian literature*, but in the *literature from/of Belarus*, which is multilingual by nature. Belarusian works occupy by far not the leading position. The literary, written languages of Belarus were then Polish, Russian, Latin, Old Slavonic, French and only to an unimportant degree Old and Modern Belarusian'.

texts in Belarusian is followed by corresponding syntheses for Latin and Polish. More importantly, there are separate chapters on authors writing exclusively in Latin or Polish as well as multilingual ones.

Klìmaŭ (Klìmaŭ, 2010), however, the idea of multilingual literature comes to the fore most clearly. Several sub-chapters name a language in their title: Church Slavonic (2.3.), Neo-Latin (3.2.) and Polish-language literature (3.3.). Klìmaŭ compares the Belarusian case with other literary histories for the very first time, pointing out that the coexistence of written languages is generally typical for Slavic cultures (p. 207). In the introduction, he asks for the criteria for determining the subject scope of the Old Belarusian literature instead of professing solutions right away:

> (…) літаратуру з якіх тэрыторый (…) (сучаснай Беларусі ці з этнічна беларускіх зямель) адносіць да беларускай?
>
> (…) творы на якой мове адносіць да беларускай літаратуры?[16] (p. 5; answers: p. 80)

Such questions open up a welcome new vein of further scholarly research and discussion.

4. Inner Slavonic Competition: Church Slavonic and Vernacular Language(s)

The first written language of the Eastern Slavs was Church Slavonic (ChSl). The term *carkoŭnaslavânskaâ mova* is used in almost all publications referred to in this analysis – with the exception of Vol′skì's synthesis of 1956. Vol′ski's chapter does mention pieces of church literature ('творы царкоўнай літаратуры', pp. 5; 12), church books ('царкоўны(я) кніг(і)', p. 7) or elements of church writing ('элементы царкоўнай кніжнасці', p. 12) in the chapter on Rus′, but never acknowledges the existence of a specific language. The introductory notes completely disregard the Slav Missionaries Cyril & Methodios as well as the southern Slavonic origin of the translation language they introduced (in comparison with 1958, pp. 12–15, we see that the chapter *Perapìska knìg* was omitted). It seems, therefore, as if texts had been written in an East Slavonic language from the very beginning. This (censorship) omission was, as already mentioned, remedied in 1958: Vol'skì explains that Old Church Slavonic aka Old Bulgarian (1958, pp. 13–14) was a language adopted from the Southern Slavia and used for writing (in fact: copying) the first (religious) books.

[16] '(…] literature from which territories (…] (contemporary Belarus or from ethnically Belarusian lands) should be considered as Belarusian?
(…] texts in which language should be considered as Belarusian literature?'

In the following collective syntheses, the terminology shifts slightly. The terms Old Church Slavonic and Church Slavonic are used interchangeably with Slavonic (*slavânskaâ*; Barysenka et al. 1968, pp. 57, 65, 69) or Old Slavonic language (*staraslavânskaâ mova*; Lazaruk und Semânovìč [4]1998, pp. 23–24, 26). The latter corresponds to the usual term in corresponding Soviet Russian studies, *staroslavânskij âzyk*, which appears also in the Russian-language synthesis (Borisenko et al. 1977, pp. 18, 49–50, 106, 145). In the chapter on Rus′, Čamâryckì et al. ([2] 2007) favours the term 'Old Slavonic' (pp. 19, 21, 57), but use 'ChSl' in the later chapters (pp. 152, 159–163 etc.).

Barysenka et al. (1968, p. 57) seem rather ambiguous in explaining that the books *translated into the Slavonic language* came to Rus′ from Bulgaria. Borisenko et al. (1977, p. 18) and similarly Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4] 1998 pp. 23–24; 26) are more precise. The language was taken from the Bulgarians; being similar to the language used by East Slavs, it was easily adopted and 'Russified' ('русифицировался'). Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, pp. 23–24; 26) offer a similar narrative. Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007) add that the idiom created on the basis of the Thessaloniki dialect (p. 19) was used not only in Eastern Slavia but also in the Balkans, Bohemia, and Moravia (p. 21). Moreover, ChSl had numerous regional variations (p. 24; on the Belarusian 'redaction': p. 163). While the term Old Slavonic highlights the closeness and relatedness within the language family, Klìmaŭ (2010) employs the notion Church Slavonic exclusively, thus stressing the distinction of this language and ultimately of the entire literature of Rus′ (see below). In his opinion, it was a relatively artificial sacred language ('дастаткова штучна(я) сакральна(я) мов(а)' (p. 22) used by various peoples, first by the Western and Southern and *then* by the Eastern Slavs. Majhrovìč (1980, p. 20), who completely excludes the Rus′ period from his work, refers to the Old Slavonic or Old Bulgarian language as a foreign one, taught in monastic schools.

In principle, the idea of a linguistic development moving away from the Old (Church) Slavonic towards the supposedly correct endpoint of the Belarusian literary history – which would be the dominance of the national language – lies at the core of the reviewed syntheses. However, this wishful narrative is only partially true. Although the term Church Slavonic is not introduced by Vol′skì (1956), as described above, there are numerous traces of it to be found in the chapters on Belarusian literature existing within the GDL: ChSl influences in a *Lithuanian chronicle* (p. 22), ChSl peculiarities of the language used by Skaryna (p. 32) as well as his two printed books written in ChSl[17] (p. 30), the (still) ChSl religious literature at the time of Câpìnskì (p. 38) etc. At certain points of conceptual importance, (censorship) gaps open up: the reader may learn that

[17] It is still regarded as controversial in the Belarusian syntheses whether there are only two books in ChSl and into which language Skaryna translated the Bible. According to Čamjarycki et al. (2007, p. 290), it is the first East Slavonic Bible in the vernacular, but Klìmaŭ (2010, p. 112) maintains that it is merely an adaptation of a fundamentally ChSl text for East Slavonic readers. (Research tends to support the latter.)

Laŭrencì (Lavrentij) Zìzanìj wrote a Church Slavonic-Belarusian lexicon, but the fact that his *Grammatìka slovenska* (Slavonic Grammar) deals with the paradigms of ChSl language is missing (p. 47). Even Melecìj (Mâlecìj) Smatrycki's grammar, which was the fundamental coursebook in Belarus and Ukraine for a long time (p. 50), is short of a note that it was used to learn Church Slavonic.

In the chapter on Rus′, Vol′skì's monograph explains that phonetic-morphological elements from the spoken language permeated ChSl, which suggests a gradual disappearance of the language altogether (1958, p. 14; missing in the 1956 version). The publication says nothing on the language of individual texts, with the exception of the *Tale of Igor's Campaign*. According to Vol′skì, the epic was written in the old All-Russian literary language (1958, p. 52: *staražytnaâ agul'naruskaâ lìtaraturnaâ mova;* missing in the 1956 version). It is not clear whether this information extends to all texts. An attentive reader can conclude from the graphemic differences discussed above the opposite – that two Slavonic idioms coexisted. Once again, the longevity of the ChSl, which obviously still dominated at the beginning of the 16th century, is confusing and contradicts the wishful narrative:

> Да часоў Скарыны і Цяпінскага беларуская народная мова ўжо выпрацавалася, але як літаратурная мова кніжнага пісьменства яшчэ не ўжывалася. Яна культывавалася толькі як мова дзяржаўнай канцылярыі, мова дзяржаўных актаў і дакументаў. Мовай духоўнага пісьменства заставалася ўсё яшчэ ў асноўноўным царкоўнаславянская мова, у якую ўсё больш і больш пранікалі элементы жывой беларускай народнай мовы[18] (Vol′skì 1956, p. 38; Vol′skì 1958, p. 108).

The fact that the use of ChSl was advocated by the brotherhood movement and pro-Orthodox writers since the end of the 16th century is omitted. According to Vol′skì, the brotherhoods defended their mother tongue and culture ('родную мову і культур'"; 1958, p. 119; the topic is missing in 1956, p. 43)[19].

The relationship between the idioms is not really evident either in the next academic synthesis examined here. It remains unclear what exactly was the language of the translated literature in the territory of medieval Rus′ (Barysenka et al. 1968, pp. 64–65) and, more importantly of the original literature written there (p. 71). The subsequent chapter is devoted to the literature of the 14th century up to the first half of the 16th century and juxtaposes ChSl and Old Belarusian. The latter was the language of the chancellery (*aktavaâ mova*), which became the official state language

[18] 'By the times of Skaryna and Câpìnskì, the Belarusian vernacular language had already developed, but was not used as literary language of book writing. It functioned only as language of the state chancellery, language of state acts and documents. The language of religious writing still remained mainly Church Slavonic, into which more and more elements of the living Belarusian vernacular language penetrated'.

[19] While the information given by Vol'ski remains ambiguous, Lojka (2001, p. 153) explicitly and incorrectly describes the language for which the brotherhoods fought as Old Belarusian.

(*agul'nadzâržaŭnaâ mova*) under the rule of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (pp. 104, 107 et al.). It is obvious that ChSl did not disappear. In contrast to the overviews written in the 1950s, the synthesis from 1968 explicitly claims that the anti-Uniate Orthodox resistance of the late 16th and 17th centuries leaned, erroneously, on the ChSl: ‘дзеячы брацкага руху моцна трымаліся за старую кніжную царкоўнаславянскую мову і тым самым перашкаджалі працэсу дэмакратызацыі літаратурнай мовы’[20] (Barysenka et al. 1968, p. 207). By contrast, representatives of the Uniate Church favoured the vernacular, which attracted supporters (p. 324; also Lazaruk and Semânovìč [4]1998, p. 228 (missing in 1985, p. 213)). The concept of a linear development from ChSl to Belarusian thus turns into a synchronous juxtaposition of competing idioms.

The 1977 synthesis in Russian explicitly recognises the functional bilingualism in Rus′. Almost all of the ecclesiastical and religious literature was created in Old Church Slavonic (in Russian redaction), written mostly by clergy. In secular and above all administrative writings, a literary version of the vernacular of the Eastern Slavs was used (Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 18). This concept probably refers to the diglossia model established for Russian literary history since the mid-1970s by Boris Uspenskij. According to this Russian-language academic synthesis, the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania greatly extended the area where, in contrast to ChSl, the local variety of the common East Slavonic language was used (‘так называемый “руский” в его местном варианте’, Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 49) – the language which later developed into Belarusian and Ukrainian. This idiom made substantial advances in all spheres of life, including the ecclesiastical and religious literature (pp. 49–50). As far as the genealogy of the East Slavonic languages is concerned, the authors put forward a model where Ruthenian (‘так называемый “руский”’) constitutes an intermediate stage between the vernacular language of Rus′ (designated in the syntheses as Old Russian, *drevnerusskij jazyk*), and Belarusian and Ukrainian. However, despite this theoretical framework, the traditional term (Old) Belarusian language is used in the rest of the book.

Similarly to Barysenka et al. (1968), the Russian-language synthesis of 1977 also explains that the anti-Uniate brotherhoods and patriotic magnates (‘видные представители патриотически настроенной магнатской знати’; Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 145) tried to educate ‘the masses’ with the help of ChSl. This choice of language is presented as an inherently wrong endeavour. Multilingualism is seen as a problem because it makes it difficult to define a Belarusian canon and to distinguish it from other literatures:

> Пренебрежение братств живым языком простого народа вело к тому, что произведения белорусской и украинской письменности того времени издавались преимущественно на польском, церковнославянском и даже на латинском языках. Это обстоятельство

[20] ‘the activists of the brotherhood movement strongly clung to the old bookish Church Slavonic and thus hindered the process of democratisation of the literary language”.

> в значительной степени усложняет, а порой и затрудняет определить тот круг литературных памятников, которые безоговорочно можно рассматривать как явление белорусской культуры. Поэтому не случайно многие из таких иноязычных памятников (...) оказались приобщенными по признаку их языкового оформления к польской литературе[21] (Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 148; analogous to Lazaruk and Semânovič [4]1998, p. 209).

The idea of diglossia was also adopted by Lazaruk and Semânovič ([4]1998, p. 24): ChSl in Common Eastern Slavonic redaction (‘рускаі рэдакцi’) was meant for ecclesiastic, religious texts, whereas an adapted, literary variant of the oral vernacular language was used for secular administrative texts. This conceptual framework for the literature of Rus′, however, still does not come into effect in the book as a whole. For instance, the administrative documents in vernacular language are not addressed. A well-known example would be the so-called *Rus′ Justice* mentioned above, or Novgorod birch bark documents. The subsequent chapter reiterates the linguistic duality for the 14th–16th centuries, with the emphasis shifting in the opposite direction: ‘З XIV–XV ст. у перыяд фарміравання беларускай народнасці і беларускай мовы літаратурнай мовай на Беларусі стала старабеларуская[22] (p. 57).

As far as the relationship between sacral and vernacular language(s) is concerned, Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007) do not mention the idea of diglossia. In fact, Uspenskij’s concept has been criticised over the recent years, but what would be a better alternative? With regard to the language situation in the late Middle Ages (i.e. the period of the independent GDL), there is a casual remark that ChSl and Old Belarusian coexisted (p. 152). Shortly afterwards, the study mentions a multitude of style variants, ranging from pure Old Slavonic (i.e. ChSl) to the vernacular (p. 160). Yet this stimulating idea, which probably goes back to Viktor Živov, is not implemented in the individual chapters.

By claiming that the literature of Rus′ (11th–13th century) actually existed in ChSl, the linguist Igar Klìmaŭ (2010, pp. 4–5) provocatively cuts the Gordic knot. There is no mention of a common vernacular language of the East Slavonic brother nations, in which at least some important texts would have been produced. Klìmaŭ is also the only one to challenge the authenticity of the so-called *Tale of Igor’s Campaign* (pp. 62–75, especially p. 72). He states that literature coexisted in both religious and vernacular language only in the (late) medieval GDL. The written language used in

[21] ‘Due to the brotherhoods’ neglect of the living language of the simple folk, texts belonging to the Belarusian and Ukrainian literature of that time were published mainly in Polish, Church Slavonic, and even Latin. This circumstance complicates, and sometimes makes it extremely difficult to determine the range of pieces of literature that can be unconditionally considered as a phenomenon of Belarusian culture. It is no coincidence that many of these texts in other language (…] have been included into Polish literature according to the language design’.

[22] ‘Since the 14th–15th century, during the period of the formation of the Belarusian people and the Belarusian language, Old Belarusian became the literary language in Belarus’.

chancellaries was only marginally influenced by ChSl; it was based on comparable legal and administrative texts of Rus′ (p. 79). This, in turn, raises the question whether it is legitimate that Klìmaŭ has excluded the utilitarian, non-literary writings of Rus′ from his synthesis (cf. p. 29) for the sake of a clearer thesis.

Klìmaŭ dares to advance another question. Although the book complies with the terminological habits in Belarusian studies as it refers to the Old Belarusian language, the author advocates the idea of a common written language of Belarusians-and-Ukrainians, existing in a variety of spoken dialects, as well as a common literature:

> У дадатак, старабеларуская мова была наддыялектнай мовай, яна абслугоўвала як беларускія, так і ўкраінскія рэгіёны і была аднолькава зразумелай як на Беларусі, так і на Украіне. Таму ўзнікае пытанне і наконт адмежавання старабеларускай літаратуры ад стараўкраінскай. Паколькі да Люблінскай уніі 1569г. большасць украінскіх зямель знаходзіліся ў складзе ВКЛ (…), то і пісьменства было агульным для Беларусі і Украіны, яно развівалася на супольнай мове. Літаратурныя творы на гэтой мове бесперашкодна распаўсюджваліся з Беларусі на Украіну (і наадварот), перапісваліся і чыталіся ў розных цэнтрах; такую ж няўрымслівасць выяўлялі і некаторыя аўтары, якія вандравалі з поўдня на поўнач (і наадварот). Але і пасля Люблінскай уніі, у выніку якой усе ўкраінскія землі былі залучаны ў склад Польшчы, гэтая сітуацыя адметна не змянілася[23] (Klìmaŭ, 2010, p. 80).

What Klìmaŭ means by this common supra-dialectal idiom is the Ruthenian language of international Slavonic studies. Whether this concept will be able to gain acceptance in the Belarusian (and Ukrainian) scientific community and establish a terminological equivalent is an exciting question. Is a history of Old Belarusian literature possible without the concept of an *Old Belarusian language*?

5. The Discovery of the Latin Heritage

On closer inspection, the ‘other language’ that is furthest from the Slavonic substratum is the least problematic and fits most smoothly into the existing narratives. According to Kavalëŭ (2009, p. 84), the idea of a *multilingual* literature in Belarus began with the neo-Latin poets. They are an integral part of the Belarusian canon today.

[23] ‘In addition, the Old Belarusian language was a supra-dialectal language, it was used in both Belarusian and Ukrainian regions and was equally understood in both Belarus and Ukraine. Therefore, the question of the separation of Old Belarusian from Old Ukrainian literature arises. As the majority of the Ukrainian lands was part of the GDL until the Union of Lublin in 1569 […], the literature was also common for Belarus and Ukraine, it developed in a common language. The pieces of literature in this language spread freely from Belarus to Ukraine (and vice versa), they were copied and read in different centres; the same mobility was shown by some authors who travelled from south to north (and vice versa). But even after the Lublin Union, as a result of which all Ukrainian lands were incorporated into Poland, this situation did not change significantly’.

This is completely different from what one may read in Vol′skì's studies of 1956 and 1958. There is nothing more than the hint that Symon Budny's treaties were *also published* in Latin (1956, p. 36; 1958, p. 102). The subsequent decades mark a gradual discovery and integration of Belarus' own neo-Latin writers. Ahrymenka and Larčanka (1968) recommend that texts written in Latin (or Polish) should not be excluded, yet they do not address any of such pieces of literature themselves. The academic synthesis from the same year is more detailed. The subchapter on the poetry from the second half of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century states that Latin was widespread in the Belarusian and Ukrainian territory and was used by Symon Budny (Szymon Budny), Ìgnacìj Ìâŭlevìč (Ignacij Ievlevič), Sìmâon Polackì (Simeon Polockij), Feafan Prakapovìč (Feofan Prokopovič) and others (Barysenka et al. 1968, p. 354). There were even poets who wrote only in Latin (p. 354), including first and foremost 'Ян з Вісліцы' (Ioannes Vislicensis) and 'Мікола з Гусова' Nicolaus Hussovianus), who are discussed briefly on approximately one page (pp. 354–355). The information that proves to be of particular conceptual relevance is that the very first verses in Belarus were written in Latin (p. 354).

The academic synthesis of 1977 written in Russian already devotes four pages to Hussovianus and his *Carmen de bisonte* (Borisenko et al. 1977, pp. 87–92). Hussovianus is also mentioned in the introduction, on the first page of the study (p. 5), as well as listed next to the absolute classics Skaryna and Budny (p. 7). In Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, pp. 142–175), the neo-Latin poet is counted among the six major writers, each of whom is presented in a separate chapter. The chapter on syllabic (sic!) poetry mentions in addition to Hussovianus, *Bellum Pruthenum* by Vislicensis (one page, pp. 270–271) and Latin verses by Budny (p. 272). Polish influences seem to have been of no importance, despite the syllabic model being undoubtedly imported from Poland and not adopted directly from (quantitative!) Latin poetry. The status of Hussovianus by the end of the 1970s is reflected in the fact that Majhrovìč (1980, pp. 122–126) includes him in his book as the *only* non-Belarusian-language author discussed in detail and even in a separate chapter. Majhrovìč does, however, perceive this case as a deviation from the original monolingual concept, given the assertion that the text, although not written in the native language, is Belarusian nevertheless due to its very nature (p. 123).

As one would expect, the presence of neo-Latin writing is much stronger in the multilingual academic literature history of 2006/2007. In addition to a very extensive chapter on Hussovianus (Čamâryckì et al.[2] 2007, pp. 309–357), there is one devoted to Salamon Rysìnskì (Solomon Rysinius), the most important neo-Latin writer of the Belarusian Baroque (pp. 642–657).[24] The chapter on Renaissance poetry briefly introduces such poets as Pëtr Raìzìj (the Spaniard Petrus Royzius), Ân Mylìj (Ioannes Mylius von Liebenrode), Bazylì Giâcynt (Basilius Hyacinthus), Symon (Szymon) Budny, Francìšak Gradoŭskì (Franciscus Gradovius), Âan Radvan (Ioannes Radvanus),

[24] Ioannes Vislicensis is mentioned briefly (p. 269–271), while Lojka (2001, pp. 225–236.) describes him in a whole separate chapter. For the contentious question of the place of birth and ethnic origin, see Kavalëŭ (2010, p. 52–73).

Âan Kazakovìč (Kozakowicz), Gal′âš Pel′grymoŭskì (Elias Pilgrimovius) (pp. 437–455). The broad spread of Latin resulted from Jesuit activities upon the establishment of an academy in Vilnius in 1579 (pp. 277, 445). Apparently, it was relatively normal to write in Latin, as seen from the diary of Erasmus Vitellius from the beginning of the 16th century (p. 683), the memoirs of Al′bryht Stanìslav Radziìvìl (Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł) in the 17th century (p. 724), and the first Jesuit school dramas staged in Vilnius (p. 758). Finally, Klìmaŭ (2010, pp. 131–154) condenses all information in an individual sub-chapter devoted to neo-Latin literature. This overview also considers material not taken into account in the other syntheses, namely works written abroad or by foreigners (Guagnini's *Sarmatiae Europeae Descriptio*; Adam Schroether's *De fluvio Memela Lithunaniae*; pp. 132–133) as well as the political publicists of the second half of the 16th century (Mihalon Lìtvìn (Litwin), Andrèj Volan (Andrzej Wolan), pp. 150–153).

6. The Ee-evaluation of Polish

The extension of the canon to Latin texts described above is part of a more comprehensive revision of relations with neighbouring nations and cultures. This re-evaluation is the most apparent with regard to the Polish-Belarusian entanglements. In the 1950–60s, the picture is rather bleak, and the historical reality sometimes seems to be superimposed with the experiences of the 19th century. Vol′skì describes the 16th and 17th centuries as an age when Belarus was being exploited by the Polish and Polonised Belarusian nobility. Since 1386, he claims, the Polish magnates had been making efforts to Polonise and transform the GDL into a periphery of Poland ('ў польскую ўскраіну', Vol′skì 1956, p. 28; Vol′skì 1958, p. 83). In 1697, the *Polish* (sic!) Sejm prohibited printing books in Belarusian and using this language in state affairs. All Belarusian printing plants as well as schools were closed as a result. Polish became the language of administration, jurisdiction and schools, while Belarusian survived in the villages only (1956, p. 54; 1958, pp. 157–158). The Catholic Church is said to have served as the most important tool of Polonisation (1956, p. 28; 1958, p. 83). Vol′skì expresses scathing criticism of the Jesuits and their schools:

> Уся сістэма навучання ў езуіцкіх школах была накіравана на тое, каб са сваіх выхаванцаў падрыхтаваць людзей, фанатычна адданых каталіцкай рэлігіі і польскай дзяржаве. […] Юнакі, праваслаўныя па рэлігіі і беларусы па нацыянальнасці, якія вучыліся ў гэтых школах, зневажалі сваю родную мову і народ, з якога вышлі[25] (Vol′skì 1956, p. 34; 1958, pp. 96–97).

[25] 'The whole system of teaching in the Jesuit schools aimed at the transformation of its pupils into people fanatically devoted to the Catholic religion and the Polish state. […] The young men, Orthodox by religion and Belarusians by nationality, who graduated from these schools, despised their native language and the people they came from'.

On the other side there are the heroic brotherhoods who organised their own schools (1956, p. 43; 1958, p. 119). This narrative is constructed on the double basis of the struggle for national independence and class warfare of the people against the Belarusian and Polish nobility (1956, p. 42; 1958, p. 115). Of course, the Belarusian (and the Ukrainian) people stood together as one to fight for their culture (1956, p. 28; 1958, pp. 83–84).

In the interpretation of the 1950s, suppression only inflamed the desire of the population to ally and unite themselves with Moscow (e.g. Vol'skì 1956 pp. 28–29, 33; 1958, pp. 83, 95–96). The paragraphs regarding the conquest of Polotsk in 1563 even imply that the local population not only welcomed but even actively supported the Muscovite troops (1956, p. 33; 1958, p. 96). Vol′skì closes the war topic with the poignant appreciation of the Russian 'older brother', already quoted above (Section 1). The collective synthesis of 1956 begins the next chapter by claiming that the union of Belarus and Russia in 1795 ('уз'яднанне Беларусі с Расіяй у 1795 г.'), i.e. the third partition of the *Rzeczpospolita*, brought significant progress (Vol′skì 1956, p. 58).[26] All these negative points overshadow the occasional indications that Belarusian authors sometimes wrote in Polish.

Little has changed in respect of the assessment in Barysenka et al. (1968). The neighbour's cultural influence is reduced to the use of the negative keywords *palanizacyâ i katalizacyâ* (e.g., pp. 143, 171). The fact that the aristocracy assumed Polish customs is considered as denationalization and polonisation (p. 194), whereas the Jesuit preachers are referred to as an a militant army of religious fanatics ('ваяўніча настроеная армія рэлігійных фанатыкаў', p. 198). Compared to Vol′skì, there are selective corrections which alleviate the situation at some points. There is, for instance, no mention of a general *ban on printing* in Belarusian, but rather a *decrease in the number of books* (p. 411). The Polish Sejm's *ban on* Belarusian in *all* areas has turned into the *replacing* of the language in the field of *state* affairs. The regulation of *the Sejm* (supposedly the common Sejm[27]) whereby the scribes should use Polish language only accelerated this process. The chapter on translated literature explores a more positive aspect of the issue. Among the different source literatures of translations, the Polish one seems to have been the most important (p. 384). The book introduction, however, portrays this differently. Here, the participation of Belarusian literature in the Renaissance, Humanism, and Reformation movements is not connected with Poland at all (p. 6). A few pages later, the introduction mentions the South Slavonic, Polish and Czech *communication* of texts from *international* literature (p. 10). According to this information, Polish culture does not appear to have played a central role.

[26] Cf. the explanation in Borisenko et al. (1977, p. 289 f.): It was Marx and Engels who already pointed out that the area had not been populated by Poles, unlike the part occupied by Prussia and Austria.

[27] In the introduction (p. 7), however, we read about Polish Sejms.

Borisenko et al. (1977) present a similar equilibrium of negative and positive judgements pertaining to the issue of Polish influences. Referring to the period upon the Union of Lublin, the introduction describes a radical shift from religious tolerance towards militant (Catholic) fanaticism supported by the central government, 'потому что оно полностью соответствовало агрессивным планам и намерениям польских феодалов в отношении белорусского, украинского и литовского народов'[28] (p. 7). Yet the collective monograph also addresses a positive dimension of mutual contacts. The Poles come last in the list of nations, after the Lithuanians, but they are mentioned (p. 9). This juxtaposition of negatives *and* positives continues in the subsequent chapters. On the one hand, the authors fume against the premeditated Polonisation, the Catholic aggression, and the Jesuits (e.g. Borisenko et al. 1977 pp. 142–144, 262–263). On the other hand, the chapter on the foundations of humanism stresses particularly close relationships between the two nations and admits that Poland imparted many cultural achievements on Belarus (p. 82).

In addition to this gradual and sometimes contradictory shift in the evaluation of the Polish influence, the voluminous collective academic syntheses have also seen an increase in the number of Polish-language texts they mention. Barysenka et al. (1968) name the following: the so-called *Brest Bible* from 1563 (p. 212), several works by Symon Budny (pp. 213, 219), books printed by the Mamonìčs (p. 242), publications on the Brest Synod (p. 295), and works by Mâlecìj Smatryckì (Meletij Smotrickij) (p. 311). Lâoncì (Leontij) Karpovìč wrote exclusively in Polish (p. 325), Simâon Polacki (Simeon Polockij) several poems (pp. 366–367, 373–376). Since some of the titles are reproduced in their original language, the presence of Polish becomes tangible (see above, Section 3). Similar examples can be found in Borisenko et al. (1977), yet always translated and rendered in Cyrillic, as already discussed. One paragraph states (correctly) that the *majority of* the Reformation literature was written in Polish and that Câpìnskì's and Budny's translations were only exceptions (p. 127). Polish was also preferred in the Orthodox and Uniate polemics (pp. 148, 176)[29]. At the micro-level, some authors gain more distinct Polish traits. Symon Budny was born in a village in Mazovia, which was then part of the Kingdom of Poland, he had studied in Cracow and abroad before he came to Vilnius (p. 135). Mâlecìj Smatryckì wrote about 20 works during his time in Vilnius, most of them in Polish (p. 180). The chapter on translated literature explains that many texts were translated from Latin into Polish not in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland, but in Vilnius and Belarusian cities ("в Вильно и в белорусских городах", p. 258).

Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998 pp. 59–60) interpret, on the one hand, the Union of Lublin as the exact moment when the Polonisation and denationalisation began. On the

[28] 'as this completely corresponded the aggressive plans and intentions of the Polish feudals in respect to the Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian peoples'.

[29] Both Barysenka et al. (1968) and Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998) argue that the Uniates used the vernacular language; see section 4 above.

other hand, another chapter argues that the Union brought the *szlachta* of the GDL political equality and improved their position vis-à-vis the magnates (p. 205). The role of Poland as a mediator of culture is mentioned again as an indisputable positive aspect (Lazaruk and Semânovìč [4] 1998, p. 92). Even the image of the Jesuits has become friendlier: the focus is now on the fact that they established a network of schools that offered everybody free education. Among the teachers were well-trained theologians, talented preachers and writers despite the fact that they were all loyal to the Vatican and fought for Catholicism with all their might (p. 205; on p. 206 a sentence critical of the Jesuits was erased, cf. [1]1985, p. 190). The opinions gathered here, along with the subsequent praise of the Orthodox brotherhoods as centres of patriotic resistance, prove to be contradictory. The reason for that might be that the chapter on the Counter-Reformation in Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, pp. 205–289, respectively in the 1st edition) as well as in Borisenko et al. (1977 pp. 142–232) and Barysenka et al. (1968, pp. 193–343, especially 268–343) all stem from the same author, Alâksandr Koršunaŭ. Narratives from different decades overlay each other, and despite individual assessments being adapted to the new socio-political circumstances and corrected, the text as a whole was not revisited, nor did its author contribute something actually novel. The comparison of the versions shows that the anti-Polish fragments have been often moderated or deleted, as some examples mentioned in this article illustrated. Other fragments have been expanded, e.g. along with the Polish-Catholic threat there is also mention of the wars between Muscovy and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the *Rzeczpospolita* (Lazaruk and Semânovìč[4] 1998, pp. 227–228; missing in [1]1985, p. 213). In respect to literary history, Polish-language authors and texts have not yet obtained such recognition as neo-Latin writers and literature, given the fact they are completely missing from the sub-chapter on poetry (see above, Section 5). An exception is the chapter on Simâon Polackì, which sometimes acknowledges the existence of Polish-language poems in his early work in parentheses (p. 279) or renders titles in the Polish original (pp. 280–283).

In Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007), Poland and the Polish culture are given a revised, largely positive image. The introductory chapter on the late Middle Ages, for example, describes the cultural boom in Poland, followed by an influx of texts to Belarus, read in the original by the more educated readers (pp. 195–196). In the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century, up to 46% of the books printed in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were Polish (p. 275). It is argued without any negative implication that Polish was more important in the 1550–1560s on the territory of Belarus and Lithuania than in Poland, where Latin played the dominant role. Polish became the *lingua franca of* the Rzeczpospolita after 1569. Even schools run by Orthodox brotherhoods taught ChSL, Latin *and Polish* (pp. 277–279).

As far as the Jesuits are concerned, their battle against the 'heretics' is put between inverted commas and thus comes under only mild criticism while otherwise the positive aspects of their cultural activities are emphasised (Čamâryckì et al.[2] 2007, p. 383). The expansion of the Polish language is positively integrated into the general opening towards the West:

> Характэрная для культурнай прасторы Рэчы Паспалітай вестэрнізацыя культуры выявілася тут (in Belarus; M.R.) у развіцці навуковай і літаратурнай творчасці не толькі на спецыфічнай для Заходняй Еўропы лацінскай, але і на рэгіянальнай польскай мове[30] (Čamâryckì, 2007, p. 498).

The disappearance of Old Belarusian is no longer explained in terms of repression but as a (natural) phenomenon of giving way to Polish and Latin, which prevailed in the field of education (ibid.). If the notion of Polonisation appears with a negative connotation, the next sentence, in turn, brings up Muscovy's 'all-Russian' ambitions. For Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania, as the synthesis names the area concerned, both historical choices would have meant the loss of statehood, language and culture (p. 494, cf. p. 260).

Furthermore, there are many more Polish-language authors and works discussed than in the earlier syntheses, where they were merely casually mentioned. The chapter on the poetry of the Renaissance (Čamâryckì et al.[2] 2007, pp. 455–471), considers texts in Polish separately: verse compositions from Protestant song books, a poem by Andrèj Volan, and *Proteus* by Pëtr Staenskì (Petrus Statorius). Authors who used Polish include Cypryân Bazylìk, Macej Stryjkoŭskì, as well as the polyglot Gal′âš Pel′grymoŭskì. Certain of the poets even have separate chapters, such as the multilingual Rymša/Rymsza (pp. 471–481) and Pel′hrymoŭskì/Pilgrimovius (pp. 481–492). Or Ân Pratasovič (Protasowicz) (pp. 627–642), who penned numerous volumes of poetry in Polish and Franciška Uršula Radzìvìl (Radziwiłłowna) (pp. 855–875), who wrote in two languages. Despite the conceptual relevance of multilingualism, it is not very manifest in the actual text. Titles are almost always translated into Belarusian with occasional references to the original language of the works. For example, the chapter on the so-called publicist literature (pp. 382–406) does not divulge that *Rozmowa Polaka z Litwinem* (The Conversation of a Pole with a Lithuanian) by Augustyn (Augustinus) Rotundus, Stanisław Orzechowski's *Quincunx* or the Brest Bible are in fact Polish-language texts, while *De libertate politica sive civili* (On Political and Civil Freedom) and *De principe et propriis eius virtutibus* (On the Prince and His Virtues) by Andrèj Volans were written in Latin (original titles: M.R.).

In an analogy to his chapter on Latin, Klìmaŭ collects all the Polish-language examples in one place (2010, pp. 155–182). The rise of the Polish language is viewed positively, similarly to Čamâryckì et al. ([2]2007); he notes that contemporaries considered it a prestigious and perfect language ('прэстыжная і дасканалая мова', Klìmaŭ, 2010, p. 155). Polish was important for the nobility, who strived for equal participation in politics. By the 17th century, it had become the language of educated

[30] 'The characteristic westernisation of culture, which was characteristic for the cultural space of the Rzeczpospolita, here (in Belarus; MR] took place in the emergence of scientific and literary activities not only in Latin, as characteristic for Western Europe, but also in the regional Polish language'.

Belarusians and Ukrainians. Moreover, it served the cultural exchange among the elites of the different ethno-confessional communities. Klìmaŭ's conclusion whereby there was actually *one literature* in the Polish language in the 17th century (p. 156), transgresses the national, Belarusian, frame.

7. The Attitude Towards the Titular Nation: Lithuanians and Lithuanian-Language Literature

Most of the syntheses reviewed assume a defensive position, objecting to the superiority of the Polish language and attempting to upvalue the vernacular against the ChSl propagated by the anti-Uniate intellectuals. In their struggle for safeguarding Belarusian culture, the scholars pay scarcely any attention to the fact that smaller ethnic groups, in turn, faced pressure towards assimilation on the part of the Ruthenians. There is an enormous gap in respect to the Baltic population, to whose presence the politonym *Grand Duchy of Lithuania* refers. Upon the decline of Rus′, the pagan Lithuanians expanded into the areas inhabited by East Slavonic population and adopted their written culture.

In the 1950s, Vol′skì wrote that the language of the Western Russian literature (a term adopted from the imperial terminology of the Tsarist empire) had become the official language in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This was the language spoken at court and used for writing numerous historic documents, and not Lithuanian (1956, p. 21). The later monograph includes an additional paragraph on the lower level of culture among the Lithuanians as well as their lack of a written culture (1958, pp. 59–60). Since the assimilation occurs on the part of the conquerors, neither in Vol′skì nor in the later syntheses the Lithuanian rule is presented negatively (e.g. Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 41: 'стало (…) исторической необходимостью'[31], 'имело прогрессивное значение'[32].

In Barysenka et al. (1968, p. 104), the acculturation appears more confined to the upper class. The collective monograph notes in this context that the Lithuanian Grand Dukes considered themselves rulers of all Rus′ just like their Muscovite competitors, and thus pursued the unification of all Eastern Slavic territory. In general, the book emphasises the contribution of the Belarusians to the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (e.g. pp. 102–104), probably as an attempt to counteract the contrary impression the name of the realm might give. The Grand Duchy is said to have Lithuanian-East Slavonic foundations (p. 104). This apparently politically correct statement, however, collides with claims found elsewhere in the book whereby an exclusively Belarusian character is attributed to certain texts. The chronicles, for instance, are explicitly called *Belarusian* chronicles, as they had an *all-Belarusian*

[31] 'it became a historical necessity'.

[32] 'had a progressive meaning'.

character and circulated all over *Belarus*. *Belarusian* chronicles – and not Lithuanian, Lithuanian-Russian or West Russian chronicles – is the only correct designation according to this interpretation from the 1960s, since they are literary monuments of the *Belarusian* people (Barysenka et al. 1968, pp. 109–110).[33] Given the postulated Lithuanian-East Slavonic integration, the study makes an attempt to explain why the Second Belarusian Chronicle is limited to Lithuanian history in the narrower sense. The objective was, according to the proposed interpretation, to emphasise independence from Poland and avert Muscovite claims (pp. 129–131). Multiple other points also reveal cracks in the picture of a peaceful East Slavonic-Lithuanian coexistence. The remark that the marriage of Jagajla (Jogajla, Władysław Jagiełło) and the acceptance of the Catholic faith led to unequal treatment of the Orthodox (p. 144), for example, hints at inter-denominational frictions. The question whether there were also texts in Lithuanian is not addressed. What also feels missing is a word of regret that another nation lost its language and culture, or only managed to preserve it in the village.

While the academic synthesis of 1968 Belarusifies the *Lithuanian Chronicles*, the older syntheses marginalise them altogether. Ahrymenka and Larčanka (1968) almost completely exclude these Lithuanian texts from their study. The chapter on Chronicles deals *mainly* with the so-called *Aŭramka Chronicle* and a Belarusian reworking of the Russian *Kniga o poboiŝi Mamaâ* (Book about the Battle with Mamaj) (pp. 49–57; p. 55: ‘беларуская перапрацоўка’). Both texts exemplify the common Eastern Slavonic, All-Russian dimension. Vol′skì elaborates on both texts as well, yet he also devotes a section to the Lithuanian (respectively Belarusian) chronicles and the *Barkalabava Chronicle* (1956, pp. 22–25; 1958: pp. 62–75). The situation is similar in the case of the *Lithuanian Statutes*, as Ahrymenka and Larčanka leave them out completely, while Vol′skì (1956, pp. 26–28; 1958, pp. 80–83; see above, section 1) reviews them briefly and with due critical evaluation.

In Borisenko et al. (1977, pp. 64–65), the focal point of the critical evaluation of the Lithuanian Chronicles is the legend of Palemon, which in fact constitutes a narrative of origin exclusive for the Lithuanians and challenges the Lithuanian-Eastern Slavonic coexistence. The chapter emphasises that this myth has nothing to do with real history and ethnogenesis. Compared to Barysenka et al. (1968), the Russian-language academic history of literature identifies in the legend an additional motif that indicates tensions within the power elite, namely regarding the superiority of the Lithuanian over the Belarusian-Ukrainian nobility (Borisenko et al. 1977, p. 65). On the whole, the notion of a Belarusian-Lithuanian or a Lithuanian-Slavonic character of the state and society is remarkably frequent (pp. 41, 61, 64). The synthesis explains that, due to common roots

[33] In Vol′skì (1956, p. 22-23), Vol′skì (1958, p. 62-67), Borisenko et al. (1977, p. 54, 58-59), Lazaruk and Semânovìč ([4]1998, p. 70, 74), Lojka (2001, p. 166-167) the chronicles are referred to as Belarusian-Lithuanian. McMillin (1977, p. 24 -30) uses the term Byelorussian Chronicles similarly to Barysenka et al. (1968), but considers in respect to the Second Redaction that it might belong to the Lithuanian literature sensu stricto (p. 28).

and language, the Belarusians have a lot in common with the Lithuanians, who made an important contribution to the ethnogenesis of the Belarusians (p. 42). As above, the issue of the substantial participation and share of the Belarusians appears often: Vilnius as the capital city is called the cultural centre of the Lithuanians *and* Belarusians, *half of* its inhabitants being Belarusians in the 16th century (p. 77). The Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the period of the 14th to 15th century is described as a federation of different regions, among which the *largest*, *most progressive* and *economically powerful* ones were the Belarusian and Ukrainian territories (p. 41).

To put it more bluntly, the Lithuanians are described as a backward and assimilated minority in a realm that should apparently be called the *Grand Duchy of Lithuania* in name only. In Lazaruk and Semânovìč (⁴1998, pp. 55–56), Lithuanians are almost exclusively supporting actors. The authors explain that the union was a historically necessary step for the purposes of defence rather than a Lithuanian expansion into Rus′. They also mention a Lithuanian-East Slavonic integration (pp. 58–59). The ruler is renamed the Lithuanian-Belarusian Grand Duke (pp. 71–72: Jagajla / Jogajla, 80: Mìndaoŭga/Mindaugas). In an astounding comment, the chronologically next overview by Lojka (2001, pp. 144–145) equates the Belarusians with the *Lithuani* (in his terminology: *lìtvìnì, lìtvìncì*)[34] appearing in the source texts and distinguishes the ethnic Lithuanians in a gesture of othering as Samogitians-Aukštaitijans.

> Літвой колісь называлася тэрыторыя сённяшнай Беларусі, а менавіта рэгіён Клецкаўшчыны, Ляхаўшчыны, часткова Случчыны. Насельнікамі сённяшняй Літвы былі не літвіны, ці ліцвіны, а літоўцы, жмудзіны-жэмоты, аўкшты. Літвінамі пачынаючы з XV стагоддзя сталі называць у Еўропе і Масковіі нашых продкаў, насельнікаў Беларусі, жыхароў Вялікаго княства Літоўскага[35] (Lojka, 2001, p. 144).

In a similar way, he limits the term Ruthenians to the Ukrainians. Dividing the Grand Duchy into the components *Lithuania* (= Belarus), *Samogitia* (= ethnic Lithuania), *Ruthenia* (= Ukraine), Lojka adapts the past to the political map of our days.

In contrast to this nationalist simplification, Čamâryckì et al. (²2007) suppose an ethnically heterogenous character of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This realm emerged in an area that had been shaped by contacts between Slavonic and Baltic peoples for a long time. It was populated by a mixed or a slavicised Lithuanian population. The synthesis again emphasises the Slavonic preponderance and introduces a third ethnic group to the equation, namely a mixture of Lithuanian and East Slavonic components

[34] See the criticism of Lojka in Čamjarycki et al. (²2007, p. 158): Both Belarusians *and* ethnic Lithuanians (*litovcy*) called themselves *licvini*.

[35] 'The territory of contemporary Belarus was called Lithuania, namely the regions around Kleck, Lâhavičy, partly of Sluck. The inhabitants of today's Lithuania were not the *lìtvìnì*, *lìtvìncì*, but the *lìtoŭcy*, the *žmudzìny-žèmoty* (i.e. the Samogitians, M.R.], *aŭkšty* (Aukštaitijans]. It is our ancestors, the inhabitants of Belarus and residents in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, that were referred to as *lìtvìnì* in Europe and Muscovy since the 15th century'.

(pp. 153–154). We read that in the 14th century, the Slavonic and the mixed population were larger than the purely Lithuanian one. According to the information given, in the 1470s, the territory inhabited by genuine Lithuanians did not comprise more than 10% of the Duchy, whereas the Lithuanian upper class underwent slavicisation ('аслявяньвалася', p. 155).

The cultural heterogeneity of the Grand Duchy and its non-identity with today's Belarus is pointed out more clearly than before, probably to be read against the background of Lojka's contribution discussed above:

> ВКЛ, па-першае, не ўяўляла з сябе адзінай культурна-гістарычнай зоны, падобнай да колішняй старажытнай Русі. Нельга наўпрост атаясамляць усё Княства і яго культуру з Беларуссю, а ліцьвінаў з беларусамі. Па-другое, далёка не ўсё створанае або перапісанае ў Беларусі XV – пачатку XVI ст. можна лічыць уласнабеларускім[36] (Čamâryckì et al. [2] 2007, p. 158).

The creation of a common state did not give rise to an ethnic or religious homogenisation of the population (p. 159). In the chapters on the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the GDL's two nations often come as a pair: Belarus and Lithuania, Belarusians and Lithuanians and once even poets of Lithuania and Belarus (p. 262). The boundaries between the two groups are, however, never explicitly drawn. The multilingual-multicultural concept of the book is reflected in the idea of a peaceful coexistence of the different languages. From this optimistic perspective, the adoption of Old Belarusian as the state language did not hinder the development of Lithuanian in areas populated mainly by Balts (p. 159). However, examples of such a development are extremely rare. We read only casually that Marcinas Mažvidas (Martynas Mažvydas) translated religious song texts into Lithuanian and printed the first Lithuanian-language book, a catechism, in 1547 (p. 372)[37]. There are no explicit examples of Lithuanian works in the most current synthesis by Klìmaŭ. However, in the chapter on the Polish-language literature of the Renaissance and Reformation, the statistical data regarding the languages of books printed in Vilnius over the years 1525–1599 suggests that there were, in fact, such texts (Klìmaŭ 2010, pp. 155–156). From the 324 books printed in Vilnius over the years 1525–1599, three books were in Lithuanian and one in Latgalian.

Given the noticeable gap in the other syntheses, it comes as a surprise that Majhrovič (1980, pp. 24–26) does provide some information on the Lithuanian-language literature. He expounds on the fact that the Lithuanians used to write in their

[36] 'First, the GDL was not a uniform cultural and historical zone, like the former Rus′. We must not identify the whole Duchy and its culture as Belarus and the *litvìnì* as Belarusians. Second, by far not everything written or copied in Belarus in the 15th to 16th century can be classified as Belarusian proper'.

[37] Kavalëŭ (2016, p. 252) also points out the lack of Lithuanian-language texts and the Kitabs (see below, Section 8). Kavalëŭ (2010, p. 41-52) illustrates how, for example, Mažvidas can be linked to Belarusian literary history.

own language by means of a runic alphabet in ancient times, before they adopted the Eastern Slavonic *mova ruskaâ* (unfortunately, he fails to provide any sources or references). Majhrovìč is also the only author to notice the potential negative effects of this change of language:

> Цяжка, мабыць, было маладой літоўскай пісьменнасці, якая яшчэ ў XVII ст. не мела сваёй дастаткова выпрацаванай навукова-філасофскай, юрыдычнай тэрміналогіі, сапернічаць з мовай беларускай, угрунтаванай на шматвяковых літаратурных традыцыях Кіеўскай Русі і яе сусветна вядомай культурнай спадчыне[38] (Majhrovìč 1980, p. 25).

Majhrovìč contributes some other pieces of information, such as the first book in Lithuanian, the introduction of an original alphabet and spelling by Daukša, the first dictionary, and the first grammar book.

8. Minorities and their Literatures

Lojka (2001, p. 6) and Klìmaŭ (2010) casually suggest that the mixture of ethnicities, cultures, and languages must have been even richer than was shown in the various histories of literature:

> У этнічных адносінах ВКЛ было стракатай дзяржавай, якую насялялі продкі цяперашніх літоўцаў, беларусаў, украінцаў, рускіх (на ўсходнім памежжы), не кажучы ўжо пра шматлікія меншасці: яўрэяў, татар, караімаў, цыган, армян, латгалаў і інш.[39] (Klìmaŭ 2010, p. 78).

It remains unclear, however, whether these Jews, Tatars, Karaites, Roma, Armenians, Latgalians (and Germans) left behind any literature as well.[40] There is only one exception. Klìmaŭ (2010, p. 80) notes in the context of the multi-scriptuality of Belarusian literature that sometimes not only the Latin alphabet but also the Arabic script was used to write Old Belarusian texts. Borisenko et al. also mention these Arabic-script texts, which were translations from Arabic or Turkish made by the

[38] 'It probably had been difficult for the young Lithuanian literature, which in the 17th century still did not have its sufficiently developed scholarly-philosophical and juridical terminology, to compete with the Belarusian language, based on the centuries-old literary traditions of Kyivan Rus′ and its world-famous cultural heritage'.

[39] 'Ethnically, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a diverse state inhabited by the ancestors of today's Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Russians (on the eastern border), not to mention numerous minorities: Jews, Tatars, Karaites, Gypsies, Armenians, Latgalians, and others'.

[40] See Niedźwiedź 2014.

Muslim Tatars (1977, pp. 244–245). This information can be found in Garèckì as well (1995/1924, p. 112), including a photograph of one of these *Kitab* manuscripts.

Given the ample modern Jewish literature that emerged in Eastern Europe, it would be also natural to inquire whether any documents in Hebrew or Yiddish endured, but none of the syntheses addresses this issue.

9. Summary: Lines of Future Research Development and Open Questions

The writing of the history of literature rises in several layers, like the scree of ages, above the lowest cultural stratum, and as it is obviously vulnerable to corruption and always exposed to deformations, it must be removed, though carefully and meticulously, as its achievements are significant and always include correct and reasonable results.

The words of Hans Rothe (Rothe, 2000, p. 15; Rothe, 2014/2015, p. 80) from his well-known synthesis *Was ist 'altrussische Literatur'?* (*What is 'Old Russian Literature'?*) are also true for the Old Belarusian case. My investigation ventured into a careful deconstruction of these corruption-prone narratives through comparison.

The evaluation of almost a dozen syntheses developed over the years 1956–2010 provided an insight in various narratives and topoi, which can be used as a background for positioning individual studies in the discourse and identifying the topical character of certain statements. As a result of the comparison, certain hot spots emerge which have prompted conceptual decisions with far-reaching implications or at least call for such decisions to be made. What has to be taken into consideration is the great influence of the respective socio-political discourse at any given period. The censorship pressure is impossible to ignore, at least in respect of the Soviet era. The topos of Rus′ as the common origin of the East Slavonic brother nations, for example, supported the Soviet inclusion narratives, which advanced and still advance the Russian pursuit of hegemony. It was called into question only twice during the period examined; one of these syntheses was written by a British slavist during the Cold War. While Belarus has been striving for greater independence from Russia in the new millennium, the syntheses present the common Rus′ period as gradually downgraded to a prelude to Belarusian literary history. The assessment of the relations with the Tsardom of Muscovy and the Kingdom of Poland also changes depending on the current political situation. The anti-Polish and pro-Russian stance which appeared in the 1950s does a gradual 180-degree turn.

The class-struggle narratives lost their function in the post-Soviet period but, in the words of Žanna Nekrašèvìč-Karotkaâ (Nekrašèvìč-Karotkaâ, 2017, p. 297), the ghost of communism has been replaced by the ghost of Belarusism. The idea of national literary historiography that strives to portray the people, territory, and literature as one homogenous complex has not been challenged thus far. Almost all of the syntheses examined are based on the essentialist assumption that a Belarusian ethnos, a Belarusian territory, and a Belarusian identity have always existed (instead

of following its genesis through the step-by-step delineation of different 'others'). In the new millennium, Aleg Lojka went as far as to expel the Baltic Lithuanians from a Belarusian-dominated GDL. These syntheses do not reflect on the fact that the source texts do not support national narratives, but this question resurfaces between the lines, for example discussing the Lithuanian, Belarusian, or Lithuanian-Belarusian nature of the Chronicles or what Skaryna or the Sejm meant with *ruskaâ mova*. Given that most literary histories describe the actors of the 15th and 16th centuries as Belarusians and Lithuanians (in the 17th century as Belarusians and Ukrainians[41]), it becomes apparent that the projection of the present ethnopolitical boundaries on the past is reaching its limits. However, until now, the only period with special, supra-national status in literary history is the early Middle Ages; the area in question is referred to as Old Rus′ in most syntheses and is thus not confined to Belarusian territory.

Due to the Belarusocentric perspective of *Belarusian* literary history, the question regarding the participation of other ethnic groups is dismissed. Baltic Lithuanians only play a role as long as they mix with the Eastern Slavs, assimilate culturally and share Belarusian cultural achievements. Except for one study that highlights this deficit of reflection, most authors do not regard Lithuanian achievements or Lithuanian-language texts seriously. Instead, they either naively affirm Belarusian dominance or propagate an idealistic situation of coexistence on equal footing. The literature of minorities is completely overlooked.

The fact that the emergence of the Belarusian identity is not scrutinised is caused by essentialist premises. The literary histories assume a division between Belarusians and Ukrainians, with the disintegration of Rus′ as a starting point. At the conceptual level, the term Old Belarusian as the ubiquitous designation used for the vernacular language (which, like its counterpart Old Ukrainian, cannot be found in the sources), supports and endorses the national viewpoint on the literary past. It inhibits any questions that would seek to substantiate the actual borders between languages in the existing text material. On the whole, there is a striking deficit of information about the linguistic nature of the texts (and not only their content) and the perception of distinctness of particular idioms and literatures in the various epochs.

From the perspective of Slavonic Studies abroad and, most importantly, historic research of Eastern Europe, several preconceptions found in the overview literature need to be questioned. However, the last years have seen remarkable developments in Old Belarusian Studies that prove relevant to the entire field of Slavonic Studies. The idea that the canon of Belarusian literature is not monolingual (with Latin or Church

[41] The question of conceptualising the Belarusian-Ukrainian relations is one of the most fascinating and difficult. Is it possible to separate these two literary histories in the Early Modern period (e.g. in respect of the denominational polemics in the Baroque)? A corresponding section has not been included in this article due of the usual economic considerations but also due to the fact that there are hardly any differences or developments in the syntheses reviewed in this regard. As discussed at the end of Section 4, Ìgar Klìmaŭ is the only exception.

Slavonic playing a marginal role, propelling the development of a national tradition) is, in fact, ground-breaking. Earlier syntheses tend to downplay the presence of other written languages, starting with Church Slavonic. They also leave out information which would contradict the national-language narrative. Yet the multilingualism of Old Belarusian literature is strikingly evident already in the 1950s, when one reads between the lines. It has been continuously gaining relevance and proves to be conceptually fundamental in the overviews published in 2006/2007 and 2010.

The analysed books show in detail how Latin-language authors and texts emerge as marginal phenomena before gradually moving towards a more central position and – with Hussovianus's *Carmen de bisonte* – eventually constitute a fundamental building block in establishing the Belarusian Renaissance. Having its own Renaissance is a definite proof that Belarus belongs to Europe and that its culture is distinct from Russian. Polish-speaking authors and works in Polish follow the same path into Belarusian literary history at a later point. They encountered more difficulties due to the political and cultural dominance of the historical neighbour, presented as a policy of imposing Catholicism and Polish culture and language. Although the Church Slavonic language holds a firm place in almost all literary histories as the first written language of the Eastern Slavs, there are surprisingly many material discrepancies that arise in this respect. It is often not clear which texts were written in (Old) Church Slavonic and which were written in the Eastern Slavonic vernacular, if such a marked differentiation makes any sense at all. Some individual cases, such as Skaryna's translation (?) of the Bible, are still controversial today. In the overview literature, the language of Rus′ remains another mystery. At some points, the reader learns that the vernacular replaced Church Slavonic relatively quickly, whereas other paragraphs in the same book may claim these two idioms coexisted functionally (diglossia) up to the 17th century. While the academic literature history of 2006/2007 does not address this issue, Klìmaŭ advances the thesis that the absolute majority of the early texts were written in ChSl. Texts in vernacular language, therefore, either belong in the extra-literary sphere or are the result of mere influences of oral language. It is actually urgent and necessary to question and challenge the metanarratives, taken over from Soviet times, as well as to discuss alternative opinions (e.g. Rothe, 2000; Belarusian transl.: Rote, 2014-2015) and take into account the current state of linguistic research.

Further changes are to be expected in this dynamic area of research on old Slavonic literatures. Perhaps some new voices will put an end to the invariability of authors of collective monographs and bring further ideas into the discourse. It is a burning and highly controversial question how to define the conceptual framework for literary history and to decide whether a strictly *Belarusian* literary history for the older epochs is desirable at all. Should the idea of a multilingual *lìtaratura Belarusì* be accepted, which is highly probable, texts in different languages must be considered equally in *all* periods of literary history. If syntheses of literary history were to withdraw from the concept of Belarus as a basic unit and consistently refer to historical formations such

as the literature of the Rus′ period, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the *Rzeczpospolita* etc., the canon would have to be fundamentally expanded.

The monographs of Sârgej Kavalëŭ on Renaissance literature (Kavalëŭ, 2010 and 2011) already define their subject area as poetry or literature of *the Grand Duchy of Lithuania* and the introductions highlight the coexistence and interweaving of different written languages and literatures. The analytical chapters follow in several respects the traditional Belarusian conventions,[42] yet Kavalëŭ (2009, p. 92) puts forward the idea of a literary history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to be written in international cooperation. A consistent resignation from national categories must be considered carefully, indeed. As a consequence, it could become impossible to use older literature as a basis for stabilizing Belarusian national identity – and to justify the benefits of one's research for society.

Translated into English by Anna Wośko[43]

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[42] Kavalëŭ's book on the multilingual poetry of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (2010), however, comprises more than half of the sub-chapters of the earlier monograph on the emergence of Polish-language poetry in the multilingual literature of *Belarusian* Renaissance (*Stanaŭlenne pol'skamoŭnaj paëzii ŭ polilinhvistyčnaj litaratury Belarusi ėpochi Rènesansu*,Minsk 2010), which does not feature the concept of the GDL.

[43] Authorized translation. Proof-Reading: Elsbeth van der Wilt.

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Article submission date: 28 December 2018