

BO ZAR

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BELARUS 4.33 A SUN CITY OF DREAMS POINT ZERO
performative reading / multimedia

Based on the novel *Minsk. A Sun City of Dreams* by Artur Klinau

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The city has no name proper, and no history of its own. The history of any city is the history of endless birth, maturing, ruining, renewals, struggles for city ownership, its loss or its abandonment. Many wars — from the West or from the East — ruin it into dust, and then it arises again and again, accumulating its memory (explicitly or inconspicuously for in a stranger's eye).

A ruined city — A ruined identity

The history of my city is endlessly anonymous — a similar story in other city. I stumble upon its 'ruins' or feel its pain points, even as I wonder around alleys of a foreign city, thousands of kilometers away from home. I hear its voice everywhere, even without closing my eyes. I fear this — am I as abstract as it is?

I walk the city leaving behind a trail of anonymous texts.

The city has no name proper, and no history of its own. The peculiarity of my city is only in the fact that I was born here.

PROLOGUE

...The greater part of the City is built upon a high hill, which rises from an extensive plain.

...The great ruler among them is a priest whom they call by the name Hoh, though we should call him Metaphysic. He is head over all, in temporal and spiritual matters, and all business and lawsuits are settled by him, as the supreme authority.

...Three princes of equal power — viz., Pon, Sin, and Mor — assist him, and these in our tongue we should call Power, Wisdom, and Love.

Tommaso Campanella
The City of the Sun

In the sixteenth century, Thomas More wrote a book about the society of happiness, a wonderful island of social harmony, which he called Utopia, Latin for *a place that does not exist*. A century later, Italian monk Tommaso Campanella produced his philosophical work on an ideal society in City of the Sun. Out of prison in Spain, with his fingers, broken or stiff with cold, letter by letter, he crafted his project on how to achieve happiness and called for a fair world. When could a desire to build the City of Bliss be greater than at the time of a never-ending un-Happiness? When could the wish for Justice be bigger than during extreme in-Justice?

No nation that suffers in-Justice and un-Happiness would be devoid of the dream to establish the City of Bliss. However, those attempting its construction should know in advance that they will fail, as they are erecting the City that cannot exist. The Society of Happiness is just a sweet dream, a sunny city full of visions, the land of the intelligible Sun that is not real.

Utopia can never become a reality. It is an illusion that Utopia can become real. If the world is not as it is, but the way we see it, we can conceive God, and God will be real. If in a joint effort we think the Society of Happiness, it will be there. Utopia could become a reality. For this, one needs to build a grand stage setting, a terrific backdrop for the Society of Bliss. And then make everyone believe that it is real. Those, who do not want to believe it, should disappear. Then those, who are afraid to disappear, will keep silent. And the majority will believe it. It will sincerely, wholeheartedly believe it, so that the next generation will wake up in a blissful country. Utopia, the Ghost Island, is possible, if the Dream overgrows Reality.

Ego me non fallo! (Eng. I will not be disappointed!) I had this dream! I was born in the Sun City of Dreams that was comprised of two – the Society of Bliss, which was trusted to exist, and the City itself. The first City melted away, whereas the second one remained as a monument to those, who aspire to the impossible, a grand scenography for a romantic, sublime theatre play called Happiness. Utopia became a Reality. The island, which could not exist, was there! And there are two witnesses to it, the Sun City – and me.

PART ONE THE BIRTH

CHAPTER I: A BOY

I was born in the Sun City.
The first thing I remember about it is a huge
concrete slab, which I am trying to climb at.
I am mounting this cold grey lump,
clinging to it with my hands, feet, teeth, and finally,
when I am on top of it, in front of me grows one more
identical concrete slab.
I climb it, and from its top see the next one,
and then the next one, one more, yet another one...
This concrete pyramid that I am trying to conquer
is just the stairs between the first and the second floor of our
block of flats on Lomonosov Street. And I am on my way up
to visit my friend. More precisely, I am crawling up
as I am yet not able to walk. That's why each step seems like a massive
plate that is higher than me; the stairs turn into a huge
stone pyramid. Subsequent events
and most days that followed escaped my memory.
The screen is again filled with white and black lines, dashes and dots.
But this concrete slab remained my first memory
and the image of the City. Simple but mysterious
as the black square by Kazimir Malevich.

CHAPTER II A MAP

The Ideal City of the Great Utopia should come into being not in Minsk, of course, but on the main altar of the communist empire, in Moscow. It is Moscow and only Moscow that was supposed to embody the Sun City. Minsk was built as a prelude, elegant and monumental gates to the real Sun City.

But Moscow did not kill the body of the old city. Demiurge's hand stopped short to make this sacrifice; Marduk's victim would have become not just the City, but the body of his childhood...

It was not a random whim of history that the Sun City was embodied in Minsk. The City, which grew out of a cemetery on the banks of the Niamiha River that once was filled with blood, became a place for cities to die. In this spot, several Minsk Cities emerged and were buried in oblivion. At different times, this city was Catholic, Orthodox, Eastern-rite Catholic, Jewish, baroque, provincial, Soviet, imperial. And after each of the deaths the city resurrected not to continue the previous tradition, but as a new place, with different aesthetics, lifestyle, mythology, and religion of its inhabitants. Only the dust of the next cultural layer was left behind.

Could there be a better place for the Sun City, a Utopia Island which doesn't exist, than a country that doesn't exist and is populated with nations which don't exist, in a city that is not there? Could the Sun City materialise in a perfectly ghostly place? (The Sun City could only emerge on the site of a ghost town.) In every other case, actual physical presence of any other city would have rejected it, confront and strangle it; or perish itself. That's what happened to the main project of the Sun City.

There are fragments of the Sun City in almost every post-Soviet, post-communist city, but Minsk itself was the entrance to the Ideal City. The prelude to the Sun City was destined to become the only embodiment – and the City itself..

CHAPTER III

LIMBO

In rail transport, track gauge is the spacing of the rails on a railway track and is measured between the inner faces of the load-bearing rails.

The standard gauge (also Stephenson gauge after George Stephenson, International gauge or normal gauge) is a widely used railway track gauge. Approximately 60% of lines in the world are this gauge (see the list of countries that use the standard gauge). Except for Russia, Uzbekistan, and Finland, all high-speed lines are this gauge.

The distance between the inside edges of the rails is defined to be 1,435 mm.

Belarus as a post-Russian Empire country as well as a post-Soviet country has a Russian gauge, railways with a railway track gauge of 1520 mm (4 ft 11 27/32 in). The primary region where Russian gauge is used is the former Soviet Union (CIS states, Baltic states and Georgia), Mongolia and Finland, with about 225,000 km (140,000 mi) of track. Russian gauge is the second most common gauge in the world, after 1,435 mm (4 ft 8 1/2 in) standard gauge.

Every train from East to West and vice versa followed through Belarus should change the wheels according the track gauge of the region. There is a special technical department on the Belarusian border where the procedure is done. It takes about 2 hours.
via open source

If you travel to Minsk from Europe by train, long before you reach the Square of the Gates of the Sun City, you have to pass through the limbo – the first Gates on the border to the Land of Bliss. When entering its already former territory, the bogies of all trains had to change the gauge...

“Don’t stand under the boom, danger of death.” I always thought that this image does not go together with the solemn moment of entering the Land of Bliss. It would make sense to replace it with something dramatic. Perhaps, the funniest would be a poster saying “Welcome to Hell!” But on a serious note...

PART TWO

A CITY

Let’s introduce the city! It’s the Railway Station Square. It’s 6 am according Moscow time zone.

Good morning, Minsk!

There is youth here around. Flowers, avenues, streets. The city is starting his new day. There are a lot of people on the streets. It’s a time to go working. There is a new district of workers not far from the factory. Some time ago there was just a forest. But now there are streets and wide avenues.

CHAPTER IV

BORDERS OF THE SUN CITY

The Guards of the City returned to their places only recently. When I was a kid, they were atop the towers. But I clearly remember how they used to frighten us with their presence as we wandered aimlessly in the dusty corners of the Sun City. Some of them lay fallen on their side, underneath huge arches that connected the square with the manor park which stretched on the other side of the towers.

Above these soot-covered arches, there were medallions from crude iron; they depicted reliefs of trains with large five-pointed star in the centre. The train has always been a symbol of the Land of Bliss. In many films of my childhood, it is huge and darts ahead, to a brighter future, filling the whole screen, and a red star casts light to the fore.

Earlier, there was a life-size metal train with passenger coaches for kids; it stood in the park behind the tower. But we didn't play often there. It was more for grown-ups to hang out with their big bottles. This place was all buried under a carpet of litter: cigarette butts and bottle corks.

PART THREE

THE SUN CITY

CHAPTER V

THE SUN CITY

(Artur Klinau's guide tour)

You can see the luxurious facade

and now we'll see how these palaces look inside.

Originally, the backs of the palaces were not even plastered.

This plaster dates back to a later period.

Usually it was just a brick wall.

That is, actually, the Sun City is a city made of really flat palaces.

Because, as I've already said, it was built as a triumphal road leading to the altar,

thus only the things which the traveler who was following this triumphal road could see were important.

The best people of the Sun City were living in these palaces.

The proletarians lived in other houses and other districts.

We have not talked about the gods of the Sun City.

Because certainly the country of happiness could not exist without its cult system.

Christian, Muslim and other gods were certainly deposed.

But in the land of happiness there were their own gods,

a sort of a bicameral gods' parliament.

One chamber was made of the so-called god-heroes.

It had its own hierarchy.

The highest post was taken by such gods as Lenin, Stalin, Karl Marx, Engels.

Then there were minor god-heroes,
such as Kirov, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg.

And the second chamber consisted of the so-called demiurges,
or impersonal gods.

It also had its own hierarchy.

Of course, the Great Communist was at the top of the hierarchy,

then there was the Great Worker, the Great Peasant Woman,

then the Great Steelman, the Great Komsomol Member,
the Great Partisan, the Great Soldier, and so on.

For example, in this square, somewhere there a grandiose statue of Stalin used to stand.

On this pediment of the Palace of Trade Unions
there is an authentic group of gods-demiurges.

The composition is certainly crowned with the Great Communist
with a boy and a dove in his hands.

Well, then there goes the Great Builder, Great Violinist, and so on.

In general, this square is called the Metaphysician's Square.

What we have seen today is just a small part of the Sun City.

The Sun City continues and extends for many kilometers.

We had no time to see everything,

but at least I have tried to tell you about some basic principles of the Sun City.

Keeping them in mind, you can walk around the Sun City
and interpret it on your own.

Of course, the Sun City is a monument.

I would define it as a monument to European and world culture,

because the idea of communism was a great European idea.

The Sun City is a monument to this idea and its utopian nature.

It is a luxurious scenography of an unstaged play.

Or maybe even staged, but in the aesthetics of the theater of the absurd,

which, nevertheless, does not belittle its cultural and historical value.

Therefore, I think we must somehow try to preserve this city as a monument of the European and world culture.

Thank you for your attention!

CHAPTER VI A SQUARE

The presidential election was held in Belarus on 19 December 2010.

Of the ten candidates, incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko was declared the winner by the Central Election Commission with 79.67% of the votes. A large protest rally was organized the evening after the election day at Kastychnickaja Square in the center of downtown Minsk. This square had historically been the site of large protests, such as the violent suppression of the Jeans Revolution that took place after the disputed 2006 presidential election... However, riot police had cordoned off the square before the event, and people instead gathered at the nearby Niezaliežnasci Square. Up to 700 opposition activists, including 7 presidential candidates, were arrested in the post election crackdown. At least 25 journalists were arrested...

(via open sources)

As a child, I found the huge open spaces of the Sun City apprehensive. Not that I was afraid of them, but a strange feeling of anxiety wafted through them. The reason might have been the perception of a particular little man. If your horizon line is not at least at the height of one meter seventy, things that seem normal to an adult, will feel menacing to the small you.

So you are just six, and you stand under the blazing sun in this empty vastness; this City always had an unbearably hot sun and the nearest shade that could protect you was not ten steps away, but several times more, so the feeling of anxiety was inevitable.

You realise that your body is a tiny useless unit in this vast space under the baby blue sky that hosts all kinds of strangely deformed Apollos, Venuses, Amurs, giant horse's heads, flutings, antique vases; all of them floating slowly, in a royal style.

Every now and then, when the sun, the clouds and the place, where you were standing, were in the same line, the square was covered by a massive shadow. You could see it appear first on the walls of the buildings in the distance, at the other end of the square, move downwards and slowly approach you, making ochre asphalt look grey. In a second, you were blanketed by it. It was when the heat disappeared; it was easier to breathe. But a moment later, the sun returned in the same way as the shadow appeared, and you were again trapped under the blazing sun in the bottomless blue sky.

When the police broke up the protest demonstration against falsification of the election results, some people went to the Catholic Church on the square thought that the police won't beat them near the church. But it didn't work and the people were beaten.

that transform slowly, the time of the formation of Birkenkopf is acceleration. At its genesis there was in fact an extraordinary event; the rapid and violent destruction of the city towards the end of Second World War. Birkenkopf has become a privileged observatory of the history of Stuttgart.

The maternity of the city becomes the main character of a story of the past, contributing to definition of possible connections between the history of the city and its urban archaeology.

The urban history – the history of Stuttgart in this specific case – is in fact inscribed into the material of which it is made.

CHAPTER VIII THE BORDERS OF THE SUN CITY

As a child, I did not like the Sun City. Even though our first apartment on Lomonosov Street was geographically part of it, but sentimentality it was already on its outskirts, where Minsk started to be quite different...

I rarely visited proletarian suburbs of the Sun City. Usually, my mother and I passed it on our way to visit granny's grave in the vast Chy Zhouka cemetery. This giant necropolis began right where the suburbs ended and stretched through kilometres of fields of golden rye on the very edge of the City. The trip to it was not a short one, and took half a day, or so it seemed to me. I didn't like this trip as it went through districts that to my eyes looked depressing, especially if the sun was shining, and they were filled with harsh, malicious shadows. A cloudy day would hide them under grey flannel that warmed them up, but left them just sad peripheries, with their air of hopelessness and unexpected charm.

We started off at Starazhouka in the morning, took a tram at the other side of the poultry market. It was the third stop after the terminals, and the tram was usually empty. I sat down by window at the right-hand side to watch people who were getting on. Doors used to shut with a bang, and we embarked on our not so short trip to necropolis...

...The field stretching far into the horizon and somewhere there touching the skies that had pieces of not yet melted candyfloss that moved in slow motion.

CHAPTER IX NIAMIHA

As a child I loved Niamiha. It was the centre of old Minsk, its body and soul, the riverbed that accommodated origins of the old suburbs in the north, west and east. At the southern end, Niamiha bordered on the City, which stretched over it the part of the Prospect from the Square of Wisdom by the Palace of Security till the parks.

Once it was Niamiha River, which in Lithuanian means *insomnia* or *the one that does not sleep*. The City sprang up from the Insomnia-the-River, but at the times of the Empire it hid itself underground, and turned into underground waters. By that time it was dry with grief, from an 800-century old curse of its bloody shores. Therefore, it was confined to the pipes and directed underneath the City. District called Niamiha grew on the banks of Insomnia...

Niamiha marvellously smelled of chimney smoke that poured out of its old quarters. It was impossible not to love this odour. For thousands of years, it is had been in our blood as a memory of warmth and tranquillity of the primeval fire. Niamiha was charged with this sweet reminder of the primordial hearth. It was felt when approaching; it penetrated the whole of me as I followed Niamiha's crooked streets.

CHAPTER X NIAMIHA-II

In our City, everything changed momentarily. When there was an old house in the wasteland, and a new one was to be built, it was not erected next to it; the old house was demolished and its place was taken by a new one.

Niamiha was being dismantled for a long time. At first, it was turned into one big stage setting, a huge ruin, in which film crews from all over Soviet Union made war films. Again, shells exploded, fires blazed, tanks with swastikas and red stars drove around. Finally, it was time for the excavators.

I felt sorry for this district that breathed warmth and comfort of ordinary human lives. It took me a while to grasp why they were doing it. Why monstrous machines hit the walls of my childhood with a large multi-ton suspension. Why my small beautiful world was being destroyed together with its old house with clever bookcases, odious overnight nursery, small bakeries with the smell of warm bread, old Kurds who sat in wooden booths. I could not understand why they were killing the body of the old town, as it was Niamiha that constituted the body of the ancient Minsk. Without it, it burst out into fragments of shattered suburbs; fell apart, reappeared as a ghost.

Many said later, it was a logical continuation of what the Empire had been doing for a long time. But I tend to believe that the Sun City demanded more space. As long as Niamiha was alive, it was not the only one in this city. Niamiha was its long-time competitor and rival. While it lived, the City could not simply descend into the world of sweet dreams, because it was the Sun City of Dreams, and Niamiha was the Insomnia, the one that never sleeps. It awakened the City, kept it on the trot. Niamiha was a sleepless night, and the City was a sunny day. Sooner or later the latter had to strangle the former.

«On the Niamiha, the sheaves are laid out with heads; on the barn-floor they spread out life; they winnow the soul from the body. Blood-stained banks of Niamiha were sown with banes».

Insomnia turned into underground waters of the Earth; the river of death, which carried souls of those perished in countless wars. Niamiha River dried up after eight centuries of blood-stained banks. It was guided into the pipes and placed underground. But Niamiha-the-City remained on the surface; and after one hundred years, it followed the river and went underground. Its space was taken by a thoroughfare, and within a few years, a metro station appeared on almost the same place where the bloody banks were; it was also called Niamiha. A few years later, there was a terrible sacrifice at this station. The underground river claimed lives of some five dozen teenagers. The circumstances of this sacrifice seem even more horrifying when you start to learn about the mystical events accompanying it.

Do you know which tragedy struck Minsk in 1999?

Interview 1

In Nemiga there must have happened a tragedy, on May, 31 or something, people were running to hide from the rain during some event, and then they started to step on one another, well something of this kind.

And because of this many people died in the underground passage.

Nobody could control the crowd, and people just did not think about others, they simply tried to save themselves.

Interview 2

To be honest, I have no clue.
I was 7 years old.

Interview 3

In Niamiha? People died after being trampled by others.
There was a beer festival, if I'm not mistaken,
it started to rain, everyone ran towards the subway
and trampled each other.

Interview 4

They must have been something.
But what? Something important must have happened.

Interview 5

They must have been a beer festival or something like that.
Because of the rain everyone rushed to the subway
and a lot of people died in the stampede.

Interview 6

I can't answer this question.

Interview 7

People died. Why?
As I was told, they were having fun near the church.
Since my mother is a believer, she told me that the god had punished them.
There was a flood, well, rain and hail, everyone rushed in panic.
Generally speaking, it was all their fault.

Interview 8

Beer Festival. And it began to rain heavily.
People started hiding from the rain.
Niamiha was flooded and while coming down the stairs they were slipping
and falling down, and all that.
I do not know, maybe the coating in the metro was wrong,
that granite was too slippery.
Generally speaking, Niamiha is often flooded in that area,
one should have thought of adding some rubber stripes to the steps,
or of somehow expanding the entrance.

Interview 9

There was a festival there, and people got trampled, right?
It rained and the people rushed into the subway.
People got trampled. People got trampled by other people.

Interview 10

Well, I did. And what happened? I do not know.

Interview 11

It's in Nemiga.
There was a beer festival there.
Well, people died there, lots of them.
How exactly did this happen? Pandemonium, that is, it began to rain
and everyone ran towards the subway.
Our militia did not consider all the consequences that might occur.

On the Niamiha, the sheaves are laid out with heads; on the barn-floor they spread out life; they winnow the soul from the body. Blood-stained banks of Niamiha were sown with bane. The Curse of the bloody shores reappeared. Waters of the river were spilled over the same place and dragged the children of this City away, but this time under the ground, as for many years Niamiha is an underground river.

Bloody banks of the underground river, bloody banks of the Insomnia...

CHAPTER XI

FATHER

I lived with my mum and grandmother; and when I asked where my dad was, my mother somehow always replied: "He was killed in the war, and drowned in the river." She uttered these words in a hurry, as if it was a memorized and well-rehearsed phrase. I always wanted to find the river, where my father died. Every time we passed through a bridge, I would ask "Is this the river where my dad drowned?"

I remember well my first meeting with the father. We met at Niamiha, near the place where my mum worked. He looked very handsome in his elegant suit; he gave me a set of expensive brushes for painting. After that, we met frequently.

I was proud of my father.

What's typical about childhood is that if it is happy, it's based on goodness. It's based on impressions that the child remembers as something extremely good. Mother, father, grandma, grandpa... A playing yard, the friends from those times... And the memory is somehow independent from the perspective that I have today.

And yet, indeed, when we look from today's perspective, for instance, at my own childhood, I can say that I lived in a society, among people who were tempted by utopias.

But this is only from the perspective of knowing the fact that the times when I was a child were a utopia. I mean, speaking about myself as a child, I wouldn't be able to say that as a child I perceived that world as already formed in a utopian way.

From the perspective we have today, we can see that it was a very clumsy and crudely made utopia. But tell me which society and when has not lived in a utopia?

It is a cinematic language of Italian film surrealists... The Sun City.. He describes the city urbanism in a very nice and meticulous way. He uses this visual language very beautifully. Entrance from the North, entrance from the West, from the East it's no good, and the best would be by bike, and by car in the middle of the night, when there are no people in the city, then it takes 12 minutes. It has that topography, he hands it to us on a plate, and you can "eat" that beautifully, everything is coherent. But he focuses on that... on the demiurge-like character of the leaders of that Sun City, he enumerates those demiurges.

Each authority, each period has its demiurges.
So it does not make much sense to mention only those.
We can say that from the point of view of gathering facts it does have sense.
But I would like to know what happens to this city today.
He leaves the city and leaves it behind the way he remembered it,
the way in which he described it.
And now, if someone describes this city from this perspective,
the perspective of what's happening today.
And what if some kind of capitalism happens there,
or some kind of a widely understood democracy?
What if Belarus joins the European Union?

Yes. You would have to write another...
But I'm afraid that another book would again have only one specific perspective,
that there would not be a complete whole, the history would never be complete.
Of course it never will, you can only try to close it,
but every attempt of closing the history
and looking at it from this point of view of circular history
(history repeats itself) would be very interesting.

My interest in Warsaw... the city, its life, its organism... is rather a functional interest;
like: is this OK? Can I get there? Will it take me two hours or one?
Ordinary daily routine. This is what I would focus on.
While I work on quite introverted creations, I write theatre plays...
I'm active as an actor, I run a theatre with young people, I pass on to them...
well, everybody feels a bit didactic sometimes, me too,
so I pass on knowledge specifically related to the stage, to the theatre.
So I'm not interested too much in these problems; but after reading that book I thought
that, who knows, maybe I will also dare to write about my relation with a city
sometime in the future. And whether it will be Warsaw, Cracow or Żary near Zielona Góra...It
doesn't matter which city it will be.
What matters, is to be just.
- And what is that?
- Exactly. I don't know if I would be able to be just.
I mean, to describe my city from my own point of view... this is very subjective.
And I have noticed in that book, that the subjectivity kills that book.
I don't learn much about Minsk from that book.
- No?
- No.

PART FOUR

RUINS

CHAPTER XII

THE DEATH

The Country of Happiness was slowly passing away. At first it had been sick for a while. Its soul - the people's faith - was gradually leaving it. Then the Metaphysicians began to die... Still no one knew the Country of Happiness would die, but everyone had a feeling that the catastrophe was to happen, an unclear ending. It was the beginning of the final act of the play called Happiness.

It was late autumn. Just a few days before the Country celebrated its last autumn holiday - the Revolution Day. So, people who were walking to the coffin to say goodbye, were dressed in the same grey coats. Perhaps there were other colours present, but on my TV-set screen all the

coats looked grey. The people were holding hats in their hands. Someone was weeping, others were gloomy, but all of them looked miserable. For the grey stream of coats was flowing long, endless, accompanied by the dance of little death angels hopping on the edges of the red stars.

When the coffin with the Metaphysician in it was lowered into the grave, in the city outskirts the factory chimneys started to howl. They roared in every factory of all the cities big and small. The intense inconsolable cry circled the space of that grey autumn afternoon. It flew over the hushed avenue, parks and deserted squares of the Yellow City.

The Sun City suburbs were bawling. They were giving the last farewell to the Country of Happiness.

CHAPTER XIII

MUM

If you leave the Sun City on a summer evening after a hot day, you will feel the breeze of the warm humid sea, which this City doesn't have. If it's the winter, your memory will capture steel-coloured, black-and-white frosty cleanliness of this City, a strange City, lost in its solitude, which marks the end of Europe and the beginning of the Continent that stretches to the oceans.

(Reading by Tania Arcimovich offline)

The idea that my mum could visit me in Solitude and finally for the first time (!) leave the Country of Happiness and see the world on the other side of *the wall*, came to me already during my first three months in Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. I spoke to her about this possibility and then the task was to get her urgently change the passport (its term necessary for getting a visa was expiring).

Probably it would be a long story if I started to explain why it was so important for me to have my mum finally go beyond the borders of *the Sun City*. Perhaps I realized that I had no more strength to make her realize the existence of the state of «sleep» our society had been in so far (and even sincerely believing in it). The only thing I could do for her was to show her the life beyond the borders of «the sunny» country. Just to show it to her, and then — let it be as it is. It should be an experiment, also an experiment with myself, because it was my own mother, I needed to be prepared to face a lot of questions, perhaps even to be ready for my experiment to fail, and that after the trip she might fall into an even deeper sleep ...

And she did it. We had been negotiating for almost two months. I was very worried that we had to set her arrival date for March, just before my departure to Minsk. It seemed to be such a long time, and during «this long time» anything could change. But there was no alternative: we needed to know for sure that she got the visa, then to buy the tickets: to put it short — to have enough time to prepare.

Before her arrival we often used to talk via Skype, I told her what and how to say at the embassy, when crossing the border, what to take and what not to. I remember that in the beginning when I told her that I wanted her to come to me at Stuttgart, she was laughing and then a few days later she said: «Or maybe we should not? Maybe we can let it be as it is?» Of course, I stubbornly insisted, I sorted it all out with the invitation (it was our first embarrassing moment — my mum and I have the same first and last names, by the way later it would remind of itself, too), I was thinking over the program — Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, I even bought the tickets to the Stuttgart Opera. And then when she had already presented the papers, I heard in her voice that finally she

got really excited: «Now I want it, I want it so much!» I was happy. I was happy when the visa was finally in her passport, when she said that she had bought the bus tickets. One week was left..

I will not describe in detail how we spent our time. Let my mum's photographs speak for themselves: for the first time she picked up a camera and, as a real tourist, shot everything she saw. I would only note that it was really like a sleep, but a different one, unlike the one she had in «the sunny» country. My mum was happy, she was surprised carefully observing people of different nationalities and all the things that were new for her, she asked many questions. We were talking. Time flew very quickly.

And what is the result? Life goes on: my mother is taking care of three grandchildren. The same stubbornness in her faith in the Country of Happiness. However, once I came to her and saw «Belgazeta» on the couch — one of the opposition media papers that can be freely purchased at the newsagent's. I smiled: my mother began to read «critical» press. «So what? I should know about another point of view. They certainly exaggerate a little there, but still there are some sensible things», she said with a business-like area. Last year we presented her trips to Prague via Germany and to Baltic countries. The mum was happy and she has a plan to continue.

And although seemingly nothing fundamental has changed, I think that the project «Mum» in this story is the main and the most precious result of my art residency.

The temple, that doesn't exist. The country, which is non-existent. People, who don't exist. The city, which is not there. The island, which is none. The place that does not exist. Utopia...

EPILOGUE

But it is better to enter Minsk by car late in the evening, around midnight. At this time, the Sun City is almost deserted... If I were to name a piece of music that matches this state of the Sun City best, perhaps, I wouldn't hesitate to say it's *Memorial* by Michael Nyman from Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*. If you walk, the journey from the western to the eastern boundary of the Sun City, eight kilometres long, will take you about an hour and a half. By car, you will cover this distance about as quickly as *Memorial* lasts, somewhat under twelve minutes.

I was born in the Land of Bliss. Was I happy there? I guess I was. Each person has his own Land of Bliss, that's his childhood. And it doesn't matter where you were born.

I was happy in the Utopia Land? I guess so. As long as I believed in it. We believed in this beautiful stage setting that rose between Utopia and Reality. The setting, which for the sake of Utopia hid the ugly truth of shabby Reality, but it created the illusion of materialization, of the realization of Utopia for the sake of Reality. The Society of Happiness materialized only as the aesthetics of Happiness, a grand, but plain scenography at the boundary of Utopia and Reality; there, the light of the disappearing in the fog emptiness of the Island-that-doesn't-exist breaks through the majestic colonnades.

Could the Sun City appear in a different place? Probably not. It could only grow out of scorched earth, in the space devoid of culture, and it might not be possible in the chaos of democracy. An Ideal City of Utopia must have one Author, a Great Architect, and a Conductor. The name of this Architect is Dictatorship.

The Phantom City arose on the site of ghost towns, as a backdrop for a strange and sublime romantic play. A play is about peoples' dreams, their shattered dreams, about the City of Happiness and its unattainability; a myth of Sisyphus and of Icarus, which flies to the Sun, to face death as his prize. The Land of Bliss died, but the Sun City of Dreams remained, a marvellous, aesthetic construction like no other, a grand stage setting of a utopian project called Happiness...

I was born on the bloody banks of Insomnia in the Sun City.

My children were born in the Sun City...