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## **Chyngyz Aytmatov's Point of View about Cultural, Social, Economic and Communication Reasons of the Crisis of the World Literature**

**Mykola Vaskiv<sup>1</sup>, Olha Bykova<sup>2</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The article examines the problem of the complete decline of morality and culture under the pressure of mass consumption on the example of the work of the Kyrgyz writer Chyngyz Aytmatov. *"The Brand of Cassandra"* and *"When the Mountains Fall (The Eternal Bride)"* are Aytmatov's last two novels. They were written after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and they were thoroughly analyzed in the article. The plot of the novel *"The Brand of Cassandra"* (1994) is based on the author's thoughts on the world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of the bipolar confrontation between superpowers and their satellites. Aytmatov had comprehended the real issues of responsibility of each person for the crimes and sinfulness of the world philosophically deeply, becoming global in this work. In the novel *"When the Mountains Fall (The Eternal Bride)"* (2006), the writer, on the example of the life of snow leopard Jaabars and journalist Arsen Samanchin, reflects on the problems of complete loss of spirituality, destruction of moral landmarks, their reduction to material goods in the wild market to Central Asia. The object of the characteristic of the article also became the journalistic heritage of Ch. Aytmatov of the Soviet period, the innovation of which was that the author emphasized the real and inevitable threats to consumption and the dominance of mass culture in both capitalist and socialist society. It is noted that the Kyrgyz writer focused important attention in his work on the problems of moving *"serious"* literature to the periphery of the reader's attention, the reluctance of the vast majority of individuals to address important issues of human existence, spiritual life. The main emphasis was placed on the fact that Ch. Aytmatov was deeply concerned with the dehumanization of society, subtly felt the crisis in which humanity found itself, concerned more with the accumulation of material goods than spiritual development.

**Keywords:** Aytmatov, Novel, Culture, World Literature, Dehumanization, Consumption.

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1 Prof., D.Sc. (Philology), Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Kyiv, Ukraine. E-mail: myvaskiv@ukr.net

2 Associate Prof., Ph.D. (Social Communications), Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Kyiv, Ukraine. E-mail: sonce01\_84@ukr.net

## Introduction

The third day of the III International Issyk-Kul Forum “Chyngyz Aytmatov and Challenges of Present Day” (October 4–7, 2018, Bishkek – Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan) was planned as a continuation of the serious conversation about the most painful issues of the time (even the name of the Forum indicated that) as it happened at the legendary first Forum in 1986 but in the new environment, more than three decades later. Nevertheless, most of the reports were reduced to official eulogies, focusing on their own acquaintance with the classic writer of Kyrgyz and world literature. The prominent Kazakh artist and thinker Olzhas Suleimenov tried to turn the course of the conference to the spirit and tension of the first Forum, which was set by its organizer Chyngyz Aytmatov. However, everything got back to track very quickly. In behind-the-scenes conversations, the famous Kyrgyz playwright described the general atmosphere of the Third Forum as follows: “Everyone assures about Aitmatov greatness, but nobody explains what his greatness is”.

Among many global problems, O. Suleimenov also stated that modern world literature, as well as art in general, is in crisis. A similar opinion was expressed by one of the organizers of the III International Issyk-Kul Forum, Osmonakun Ibraimov: “Soviet literature in general and Kyrgyz literature in particular were gradually entering a long phase of crisis” (Ibraimov, 2019, p. 234). This issue did not receive further discussion, although it gave many arguments “for” and “against”, regarding the work of Chyngyz Aytmatov in particular. Even if we assume that after 1990 the writer has not got to the top of his work, he continued to write high-value literary texts. Why the same writer, the same works were incredibly popular among readers and professionals in the USSR and all around the world until the late 1980’s and moved to the brink of oblivion in the XXI century, during the Ch. Aytmatov’s life and after his death. Perhaps the essence of the problem is not so much in the crisis of literature, but in the crisis of the reader, various national communities, and the world community in general? Perhaps readers and society are not able, do not have the need and desire to perceive art as a serious spiritual and aesthetic activity, limited to entertaining, playful, performance, outrageous functions? It was quite appropriate to ask these questions both in the context of the III Forum dedicated to the figure of Chyngyz Aytmatov, and in the context of cultural, intellectual and social development of mankind.

## Methods

The research methodology used by the authors is based on an integrated approach, which allowed reviewing all aspects and interactions that affected the process under study. The main methods used for the theoretical study were: general scientific methods of selection and systematization of the material, methods of theoretical generalization of results. A comparative analysis and a bibliographic and descriptive method were used to understand the historiography and source of the research. Observation method was used to collect primary empirical data. Such methods of research as descriptive, linguocultural, systematic, and classification were used. In our study, we used typological, and sociocultural methods, as well as the method of holistic analysis of an artwork.

## Discussion

The problems of moving “serious” literature to the periphery of the reader’s attention, society’s reluctance to address important issues of human existence and spiritual life by each person had started to trouble the Kyrgyz writer long time ago. They were especially acute in his last two novels – “*The Brand of Cassandra*” (1994) and “*When the Mountains Fall (The Eternal Bride)*” (2006). The first of them, in which the writer tries to comprehend the world after the collapse of the USSR and the transformation of the bipolar confrontation between superpowers and their satellites, could be defined by genre as a fantasy and anti-utopian novel. Nevertheless, Chyngyz Aytmatov was

concerned about the real issues of responsibility of each person for the crimes and sinfulness of the whole world, which had been becoming global in nature and growing deeper and wider. The writer comprehends these questions also globally in a philosophical way.

A monk, Philotheus, discovers special rays that can detect the “Brand of Cassandra” on the foreheads of pregnant women. It is a sign given by embryos, signaling their unwillingness to be born in this world because they know about its villainy, they know either about their doom for suffering or about them committing crimes or causing other people suffering in the future. Mankind was shocked by this discovery. It meant that after all, everyone had to solve the problem of what to do with such an embryo. “And what will you tell me to do, people? What should I do? Kill the fetus because it is afraid of life? Does it mean that my fate, my life, and I do not suit? Or should I prepare a paradise on earth for the child? But how? I would be glad to do that! But how can I fix the world? Or should I hang myself?”(Aytmatov, 2007, p. 119). Here comes the desire for the problem to be solved by someone else, “responsible”, or to ignore it at all.

An average person does not like to ask oneself thorny questions. “The tragedy is that we avoid, in every possible way evade from the recognition of the reasons that prompt Cassandro-embryos to abandon the struggle for existence” (Aytmatov, 2007, p. 140). This also applies to the specific situation with the Cassandra brand and has a general timeless nature: “selfishness and self-interest are initially inherent and almost biological properties of human nature” (Aytmatov, 2007, p. 113). However, the twentieth century had some peculiarities.

“Responsible” political leaders, realizing the essence of human nature, have been using it, parasitizing on it. Oliver Ordok while running for president of the United States, believed that “my leading, conceptual idea comes from the eternal problem – how to arrange life for tomorrow for one and all. It is clear, of course, that everyone is eager for oneself for a change for better and does not think so much about the way of doing this expecting immediate heaven fruits” (Aytmatov, 2007, p. 73). This obsession of politicians on the welfare of the electorate is currently realized by the philosopher, futurologist Robert Bork, whose prototype was Alvin Toffler: “For the mass consciousness, the relevance of the candidate’s program matters most of all. And the charisma of the person” (Aytmatov, 2007, p. 69). The danger is that in the eyes of the general public current politicians are endowed with charisma (often called populists), but not thinkers who care about the future of their nation and all the humanity.

Material and spiritual massification, consumption of material and virtual products, becoming the meaning of life, deprive the desire and ability to worry about the pressing problems of life – not only social but also personal, in all spheres. And this has been well mastered by media and politicians. “The media and electoral technology are going away from the problem behind choice because it’s complicated” since a human now is accustomed to have a need of “Simpler objects, the translation of which will be facilitated” (Pocheptsov, 2008, p. 349). These are already general things for modern communicative studies, but in 1994 the fiction revelations of Chyngyz Aytmatov, especially for post-Soviet area, but also for all world public were the threatening revelations and considerable warning, Cassandra’d warning, which nobody wanted to listen to (maybe that is the origin both of the name of the rays discovered by Philotheus and the title of the Kyrgyz writer’s novel, isn’t it?).

At some moments, journalistic dialogues and monologues in the novel converge with textbooks on the theory of mass communication. Bork and the writer have uncertain hopes that humanity is experiencing only a short period of the humanitarian crisis, after which enlightenment will come again. “The masses are herd, element, or hooves, but it is also a bulwark of public life. The human material on which life is built and sustained. There is one paradoxical feature in the structure

of being, I would say, in the dialectic of life is eternal tragedy: the thinker opens the laws of society, and society anathematizes it for this, and subsequently takes these discoveries into service. Enlightenment comes through negation” (Aytmatov, 2007, p. 136). However, such hopes become illusory later.

Robert Bork, together with Philotheus, tries to reach the consciousness of contemporaries: “my task is to prove to people that, avoiding the truth about the signs of Cassandra, they are cowardly drive the problem deeper, aggravate their trouble” (Aytmatov, 2007, p. 154). He realizes that “The scientist cannot and should not, just in order not to deprive you of emotional comfort, hide the results of his scientific research from the society” (Aytmatov, 2007, p. 212). And here follows the main difference between modernity and the previous times: if earlier humanity was fighting for the commonwealth, now it has reached it in the developed countries. However, material comfort does not encourage the creation of its spiritual equivalent. On the contrary, comfort creates a cult of material consumption, which does not want to make any concessions to the mental tortures, even if they are called to take care of the preservation of their own human nature, their own and their children’s future.

The events of the novel take place mainly in the United States and Russia. However, the broadcast of protests against the discovery of Philotheus covered almost all countries of the world, various religious and professional communities, up to the rally of prostitutes. For the sake of their own current well-being and peace, the crowd kills Robert Bork. The monk Philotheus, realizing his own defeat, the inability to break the total rejection of the vast majority of citizens, and hence the leadership of the states, goes into outer space.

Consumption is perceived as the greatest threat to further development, even the existence of mankind, not only by Chyngyz Aytmatov. “Modern Western society, self-proclaimed “democratic”, is built on the control of modernity. It is here that the society of consumption arose, and the maximum result is achieved precisely in material terms, which, incidentally, no society could achieve” (Pocheptsov, 2008, p. 246). The cultural and humanitarian development of society does not establish balance, equilibrium or even a counterbalance to material well-being. Moreover, it often adapts to it (it is not a coincidence that the Western world gave the birth to the philosophy of pragmatism and turned it into one of the main ones in modern public opinion) dehumanizing communities.

We must pay tribute to Ch. Aytmatov, his foresight, who saw the global danger in such a development long before the end of the twentieth century, although “The Brand of Cassandra” was probably the first novel where he highlighted this problem. In journalistic articles, speeches, and interviews, the writer first spoke about this in the 1970s. He diagnoses the cult of consumption, which leads to the degeneration of the spiritual life. At this stage, the writer is optimistic that fiction, art can restore the lost balance. “While a consumer society destroys moral standards, replacing them with the motto of permissiveness, progressive literature is characterized by the desire to form in a person a genuine humanistic morality. This is the main task of literature and art” (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 44). This is 1973. There is a desire to convince that this is a problem of Western society first of all, while the “progressive” literature (evidently, Soviet one) is developing, apparently, in the “progressive” society.

“Just the stereotype is easily and simply replaceable. And their massive transformation by audiovisual and other technical means causes indifference and makes people believe that all of it is normal. That’s scaring and destructive in standardizing the spirit, in cultural low-quality goods of any genre and type. But we did not immediately realize that technological progress does not mean the same degree of moral progress. As a result, a person appears as a consumption machine, and culture receives only consumer value the very first task of literature is the contribution to improving the

moral climate on the planet, which is now as important as caring for the natural environment, without that a normal, healthy life cannot exist" (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 170-171). That is 1977. At that time, the average Soviet citizen had no idea about the theory of mass communication. As we can see, Aytmatov had mastered its terminology, developments, and what is the most important, warnings about the future of the world.

Such and similar thoughts will continue to overwhelm the writer's publications. "The scientific and technological revolution has revealed our moral lag. Mankind in moral terms does not keep pace with the achievements that it creates with the help of its mind and its hands. There is a gap. In our cosmic age everything is developing unusually fast. It would seem that there should no longer be crimes, self-interest, feelings of malice or revenge. People must feel like gods. But in fact, in many countries of the world, the number of criminal offenses is growing, a decline in morals is observed. That is the reason of great concern" (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 256). For some time, in a hidden form, Chyngyz Aytmatov associated the dehumanization of society with the Western civilization, "we are the witnesses of the development of a "mass", or a market culture, which is used by certain political forces to distract people from vital life problems" (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 248). However, the realization of the global nature of the spiritual degradation of mankind comes in the next decade.

It turns out that consumption is no less a threat to Soviet society than to Western society. "The fact is that raising the living standards of the people has its own dialectical negative aspects. We turned out to be insufficiently prepared in the social, moral and cultural sense in the face of a sharp increase in material capabilities, which resulted in a disease of consumerism among certain segments of the population. And as a consequence of this – a leak of spirituality, a weakening of ideology, a spirit of acquisition against the background of the notorious "I give you, you give me" and other ailments of philistinism, including looting, speculation and bribery" (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 178). "As for the problem of consumerism, it has a lot of aspects. Of course, we cannot be neutral with the greed of the tradesman. This does not mean that we are calling for asceticism. Those who produce material wealth have the right to use it. But where is the border beyond which the disease of thingism begins? What a discipline must discuss such questions at the spiritual level? I do not want to raise literature above all the others, but such specific problems are completely subject to its specific means" (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 252). And again here are the optimistic hopes that literature should and can provide the necessary impulse for the development of society.

The desire of a Soviet citizen to be materially satisfied, according to the writer, is justified by the fact that a Soviet citizen, unlike the Western one, did not have the proper well-being and really high-quality things. "I am sure that a person, from unnecessary troubles, is better prepared for a meeting with genuine culture than a person who is pulled over by everyday life. We will not do things better and faster – would our culture benefit from this or art would be exalted? No such thing. We can speak as much as we like and, in general, it is correct that our values are imbued with the spirit of humanism, that we have a wonderful ideological art but people, unfortunately, have a completely different in their mind and simply cannot get these words. And I don't have the determination to throw a stone at those who are called everymen. Do not despise what is called the external aspects of life. For example, even in classical music the quality of the record, packaging, everything matters" (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 333–334). But the result of dehumanization, albeit for various reasons, in Soviet society is the same as in Western one.

We must pay tribute to the courage of Ch. Aytmatov, who stated a significant lag in the material well-being of the average citizen of the USSR, the lack of everyday things in the right quantity and quality. This was said at the time when the entire state propaganda machine was convincing us that Western society was degrading and rotting and that the socialist camp was moving "by seven miles" toward a bright future. The writer also wrote that Soviet life was helpless before the

onset of Western material quality consumer goods, as well as a mass cultural product. “To compete with Western mass culture is a deliberately lost case. Even if we take into account that mass culture, in general, is the same everywhere, here and there” (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 334). “Take, let’s say, what is called the Americanization of everyday life: all these burgers... the same meal for everyone in the shortest possible time – the culture of the service, etc. All this somehow affects the situation in art. That is, I mean, it gives rise to certain expectations, affects the perception of spiritual (or supposedly spiritual) food. I think, I am afraid to think that if we open the gateways of American film production, we’ll have to shut ours down. Here I am a strong supporter of barriers. Otherwise, they will sweep away it because in this sphere we are even more defenseless than Western Europe. Literature is also partially related. Start to translate all sorts of comics now, so what will happen? Will we find a sufficient strength of resistance in ourselves? Not sure. We can hear a lot that our reader has grown and that is probably true. But I am not sure, oh, no, not sure at all that for the most part we have developed immunity to fakes. The interest in all kinds of low-quality consumer goods is too great. And if it is executed expertly, with full knowledge of the matter – and here the Americans are beyond competition – then this only increases its popularity. Therefore, I seriously start to worry about the future of real literature. Americanization begins with the fact that people are given everything that they need in everyday life in abundance. Mass culture is built on the same principles. Superbly made, colorful wrap. Advertising, posters and so on – even if you don’t want it, you’ll still buy it. For now, we don’t know how to do all of it” (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 331–333).

It is hard to say, whether Ch. Aytmatov was acquainted at that moment with works of representatives of the Frankfurt school. Taking into account the facts that the writer was good at the bases of theory of mass communication and the Soviet authorities were favour to Frankfurt school because its study leaned on Marx’s postulates, there is a great probability of it. Representatives of the Frankfurt School believed that “the process of mass production of goods, services and ideas assisted the establishment of capitalism with its commitment to technological rationalism, consumption, short-term pleasures and the myth of “classless” society”, and mass culture played not last role in it: “Universal, commercialized mass culture was considered one of the important means that society used for achieving a monopoly of capital” (McQuail, 2010, p. 100). If the views of Ch. Aytmatov in the 1970s and the views of the “Frankfurt” were similar, his innovation in the 1980s was that he not only attributed the Western world with the consumption and dominance of mass culture, which leveled “high” culture, but also saw real and inevitable threats to these disasters in a socialist society, the name we used to call the USSR and its satellites.

The writer was giving a great importance to literature, art in the formation of man and society, and apparently, it was the result of a general, total ideological Soviet-party system, which had spent a lot of effort and money for its establishing. “The system was based on words because the internal structure was an idiocracy – a structure driven by the ideas. But the verbal order changed and it immediately collapsed. Everything including military spends, oil prices falling, the inefficiency of the socialist economic system, and the impotence of a cumbersome party-state were important. But the basis of the System was the Word” (Kolesnikov, 2007, p. 179). Only after the collapse of the USSR, Chyngyz Aytmatov realized that fiction, like culture in general, became powerless in the face of consumerism and mass culture.

However, even before that, the writer saw with the same insight that the most powerful channel for the assertion of these phenomena is the mass media, especially television (perhaps he knew then the postulates of Herbert Marshall McLuhan’s theory?). “As a result of the dissemination of the media, lightweight creations as the most “transportable” for the mass media, and especially for television, are widely distributed, hence something like an opinion is created around them” (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 238-239). Exactly the mass media and television, according to “The Brand of

Cassandra”, become a means of manipulation in the politicians’ hands. The writer reproduces the technology and even technical equipment of the TV show in detail, namely meetings of the US presidential candidate with voters, preparation and holding of a teleconference with Philotheus in space, with cities around the world (at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, direct teleconference was still an unusual and very active form of interactive information and manipulation of the mass consciousness).

Before the collapse of the USSR, Ch. Aytmatov was an optimist and hoped that culture would be able to return society to the active spiritual life of every citizen. It seemed to him that this should be fully facilitated by the high level of education of the communities. Therefore, the writer raises the question of not opposing the omnipotence of the media, but to use their opportunities in the creation and development of personality in each person. “Mental life is no longer the privilege of the elite, but an inalienable possession of all peoples. This is undoubtedly the outstanding revolutionary achievement of the twentieth century. I mean the widespread cult of stereotypes, the standardization of mental life, caused to a large extent by the heyday of modern media, and especially television. It’s not about limiting these funds; on the contrary, using the achievements of scientific and technological progress in every way, it is necessary to give mental life the features of high creative thinking” (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 261–262). If we talk about mental life, Ch. Aytmatov again got into the main nerve of the problem, but it did not work for the second part of his thesis, because intellectual activity, which is increasingly becoming highly paid, pushing to the periphery the cost of production, has led to the replacement of material mass values to virtual but still mass values.

“The Brand of Cassandra” is already a very pessimistic work about the possibility of revival of spiritual and cultural life, and its future prospects. There are only faint hopes, as already noted, that once again humanity will find out a way to do that. We may have a hope for such a few young people as Anthony Junger. But the feeling of hopelessness on a universal scale dominates, correlating with the tendencies of modern mass media and culturological scientific theory, which are intensified with the globalization processes. “Basically a negative attitude towards globalization is in the field of culture. The low level of mass culture and the loss of cultural diversity, followed by the loss of a sense of identity and continuity, cause rejection of many observers. In fact, mass culture and its values are dominant for most people. Its reign is often imperceptible. It comes not only with the pop singers singing, but also with endless TV-series, news streams formed by transnational media corporations, new types of attractions” (Ivanov, 2010, p. 101). Total pessimism as a continuation of the just expressed thesis is reproduced in the last novel of the writer “When the mountains fall (The Eternal Bride)”.

The very title of the novel is indicative. The phrase “when the mountains fall” among the Kyrgyz is associated with an extraordinary catastrophe, the complete destruction of the established worldview, the conventional worldview. For the protagonist, journalist Arsen Samanchin, the herald of perestroika, “the mountains fell” for the first time when he realized the collapse of previous ideas. (“Another personal retribution for the so-called socialist realism” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 53). Traditionally for the post-Soviet period, Ch. Aytmatov formulates conceptual thoughts through semi-journalistic dialogues and internal monologues of characters, first of all Arsen as his own alter ego, to the detriment of the artistic and aesthetic imagery of the work. Such monologues and dialogues become as if a continuation of the articles of the writer of the Soviet period.

The next failure is the betrayal of his beloved woman. She betrayed him but also her own talent and vocation. The opera singer Aidana, with whom Arsen was going to stage the opera “The Eternal Bride” on national motives, chooses a very lucrative path of pop singer, and her “chosen” becomes a mini-oligarch who becomes a producer of her musical and financial success. “Pop is

triumphant. We have an era of pop” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 53). The final collapse is the realization that consumption, market, pop, complete loss of morality has permeated the whole of Kyrgyz society.

“Few people understand that, having got rid of socialist arbitrariness, we have stuck to the market. And the market, if someone does not get along with it, – kills” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 122). In the novel “When the mountains fall” it kills literally. The atrophy of morality and spirituality covers not only the inhabitants of the big city, but also reaches the most remote mountain auls. In search of earnings, people use any means. In a semi-legal way, the inhabitants of a mountain aul organize hunting, first of all, Red Book leopards, for that they were well paid. Arsen’s former classmates decide to take hostages, Arab sheikhs, and get a big ransom for them. For this reason, they do not stop at the threat of killing not only wealthy sheikhs, but everybody on their way, including fellow villagers and friends. First of all, such a threat is addressed to Arsen. In order not to endanger anyone, Samanchin draws the fire upon himself while hunting leopards. He dies sacrificing himself for the sake of others, including the murderers, his classmates, but it does not make any special catharsis in their souls.

Against this background of the primitive, barbaric market, the problems of spiritual decline and the dominance of kitsch consumerism are moving to the periphery. Namely, they become almost the first and main steps on the way to the destruction of moral guidelines, reducing them to a material commodity. “Mass culture walked the world, rolling over and over again its commercial ocean waves. And he came up with a neologism to denote mass culture, which global media was always talking about, that is a wholesale culture, by analogy with the wholesale store” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 63–64). Material and virtual consumption, vanity, and greed are openly declared as the basis of individual existence. Here is Aidana, “shrugging her shoulders, turned into a business paradise. Who wouldn’t like to go to heaven?” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 55). The individual experience of the singer receives an ironic generalization: “Who does not want to get as much as possible, earn, and even become famous – in general, how to lose such a show talent?!” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 90).

“High” art as a support and a symbol of spirituality is completely degrading. “What abyss should we throw the problem of the modern opera house to, which is degrading right now, where talents inevitably flow from and we can hold back nothing? Traditional repertoire theater will either survive or not. This is both a national and a global problem” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 55). One of the leading factors and promoters of the decadence of art and culture, as Arsen Samanchin (and with him – the author), are the media: “Oh, poor, poor press! It was fighting, fighting against the slavery of the word for totalitarianism but the same press has become a slave to the market. And all of it is to push classical values to the sidelines, to benefit, that has grown like a tsunami of football stadiums” (Aytmatov, 2018, p. 56).

The end of the novel remains open. The epilogue raises the unsolvable question: how to prevent anyone from being killed even in a war? The answer cost Arsen his life. However, it is unclear whether even a terrible sacrifice, the death of a person – can change something in the classmates’ fate. It is clearly unable to stop the progress of the predatory market and pop culture.

The American futurist Alvin Toffler and his wife Heidi were among the participants of the First Issyk-Kul Forum in 1986. Chyngyz Aytmatov had a good relationship with the American writer for many years. Toffler’s ideas had a significant impact not only on Ch. Aytmatov, but also on Mikhail Gorbachev. The USSR President and the American futurist spent three days together. Toffler’s concept of “third wave” should have been a consolation for the Kyrgyz writer and his concern about the complete decline of morality and culture under the pressure of mass consumption.

The American singled out three stages of human civilization: agricultural, industrial and informational (Toffler, 1991). According to Toffler, the “third wave” is characterized by



demassification, which “develops in contrast to mass communications, when each consumer of information will receive a purely individualized product” (Pocheptsov, 2008, p. 80). Thus, the mass media, the relative modern cheapness of their products provide an opportunity to obtain their information, preserve cultural identity and for those who seek not to consume ready-made pseudo-meanings, but to produce their own meanings, remains a supporter of culture itself, not its mass variety, or as they shyly name it “popular culture”.

The trend of the “third wave” is knowledge, its production (as well as the struggle for it), and competition as the basis for further development. So is culture immortal? It is partly true but the mass culture remains dominant. “Mass culture today creates a powerful alternative to high culture, while the last one is beginning to occupy marginal positions. High culture breaks through to the mass consciousness only by transforming it into a system of popular forms, which are acceptable and functional for now” (Pocheptsov, 2008, p. 349). But the most unfortunate thing is that the “third wave”, according to A. Toffler, has covered only a limited number of the most developed countries. Other countries, including Kyrgyzstan, have remained at the level of the “second wave”, the industrial stage of development, and the leading countries are interested in leaving them there. All the defects, material and spiritual massification, consumption turn a person into a slave and, not surprisingly, a relatively poor person.

Back in 1976, Chyngyz Aytmatov foresaw that the development of art was threatened by the atrophy of the readership, which should not only remain at a certain level of reception training, but also develop and improve along with literature and art. “Of course, it’s hard to blame readers – their formation focus is under the influence of many circumstances. Nevertheless, the further development of our literature requires certain efforts from them. From the didactic form of teaching, we move to the analytical nature of the narration to complexity. It is necessary to go deeper into human nature in order to reveal it even more without concealing all its weaknesses and contradictions” (Cit. for: Erkebayev, 2018, p. 17). “High” literature is constantly in search, prone to semantic and formal innovation. Mass literature is so popular and mass precisely because it exploits the achievements of “high” literature, which found a response, appealed to a wide range of readers. The reader, in his turn, gets used to these productive artistic achievements, tends to get aesthetic pleasure without much spiritual effort. Obviously, Ch. Aytmatov stated the general reader’s nature (perhaps in the mid-1970’s he veiledly addressed the official authorities and critics as a kind of readers), but by the end of the 1980’s the corresponding tendencies became almost total in both the Soviet and post-Soviet space, and on a global scale.

In the 1990s, Ch. Aytmatov “complained that the era of books, the era of literature is over” (Ibraimov, 2019, p. 274). A certain revival of book printing, national art, the emergence of interesting, and sometimes significant artistic, cultural phenomena in the post-Soviet space allegedly indicate that rumors of the “death of literature” are a little bit exaggerated. However, the crisis, the presence of “true” culture on the margins, the threat of its permanent presence there, probably complete extinction, remained. It is very convenient and soothing for common consumers and their guides to say that literature, art, culture are in a crisis. As if they were not able to catch some modern trends and understand the essence of accelerated transformations. However, it seems that the problem is in the crisis of the reader, the recipient of cultural heritage, the average consumer who is a passive victim of the modern social order and the omnipotent media. At the turn of the XX-XXI centuries, realizing its importance and urgency, Chyngyz Aytmatov constantly was raising this problem, because it is a threat to the future existence of mankind, and this threat is only growing, requires urgent and decisive measures for its elimination or at least partial neutralization.

In the Soviet era, in the beginning, Chyngyz Aytmatov was sure that the cult of consumption and the decline of culture, spirituality – are the shortcomings of Western, capitalist society. He also

had strong hopes that literature, other arts, culture would be able to preserve or revive human spirituality, and this is the basis of human essence, as well as the essence of human community, humanistic coexistence. Over time, the realization that Soviet society was just as, and perhaps more, affected by the corrosion of consumption, came, although he did not lose his faith in the revivalist power of culture.

### **Conclusion**

The collapse of such illusions, the statement of the complete victory of consumption and the powerlessness of culture comes to Aytmatov after the collapse of the USSR and the unalterable assertion of Western pragmatism and mass production of material and virtual product, assertion of pervasiveness of mass media, especially television. Some other hopes, *contra spem spero*, exist in the novel "The Brand of Cassandra" (1994), but the writer almost completely loses his illusions in his latest work – the novel "When the Mountains Fall (The Eternal Bride)" (2006). Although, as an incorrigible humanist, he still leaves a small gap for a ray of hope that the spiritual testament of his hero Arsen Samanchin will find readers' response, response a few readers at least.

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