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## UKRAINIAN NATIONAL STORY IN THE MIRROR OF HISTORICAL FICTION: FOLLOWING THE TRANSFORMATIONS

*This article studies the national narrative in the post-War Ukrainian historical novels. The phenomenon of the unified national story is discussed in a liaison with the changes in the discourse of history in the Soviet Union. The article draws a connection between the perception of history, historical fiction, and the national narrative in Ukraine. In that perspective, it examines the story from the late Stalinist years to the present time and demonstrates gradual correlating transformations in historical fiction and national narrative.*

**Keywords:** historical novel, national narrative, post-War fiction, Socialist Realism, post-Independence fiction, Ukraine.

### Introduction

The idea of this article derives from the problem with the classification of Ukrainian historical novels that was not able to describe the recent modifications of the genre. This concerns the texts of Valery Shevchuk, Yuriy Vynnychuk, Oksana Zabuzhko and also the novels of alternative history of Vasyl Kozheliianko and Oleksandr Irvanets that do not fit into the taxonomy of classical historical fiction. However, they still describe the past of Ukraine. In this article, I suggest that the concept of the national narrative can serve as a basis for a new classification of Ukrainian historical novels. Extracted from novels, they reflect changes in ideological direction of texts and also affect their form. I propose to analyse a large period of time, over fifty years, in order to follow the modifications of the genre and extract the national narrative from the texts. As Socialist Realist historical novels normally start the classification of Ukrainian historical fiction, I also choose them as a zero point in the analysis of the national narrative. However, contrary to the traditional classifications of the genre, the systematisation based on the national narrative demonstrates the double nature of the post-Socialist Realism texts. On the one hand, they reject the Communist paradigm of art, but on the other hand, they inherit essential features from the Socialist Realist narrative.

### National Narrative and Historical Fiction: the Ukrainian Context

From today's point of view, transformations in the domain of Ukrainian historical fiction are prominent. Over the last fifty years, this genre progressed considerably towards the liberation in

form and content. Since the 1950s, Ukrainian historical novels experienced the stylistics of Socialist Realism; a strong modernist stream; and the elements of postmodern culture. Under this influence, historical fiction acquired different forms and embraced a vast topical range, some elements of which were banned in Soviet Ukraine. Naturally, after the declaration of Independence, such elements broke through and diversified the field of historical novels, which immediately expanded the limits of the genre. As a result, one can encounter historical texts of Pavlo Zahrebelny and Oles Honchar along with the novels of Valery Shevchuk, Yuriy Vynnychuk, and Oksana Zabuzhko. However, since I examine the most recent trends in historical fiction, such diversity is considered not a problem, but a consequence of a multidirectional literary process. Not least due to this large variety, the field is rich with questions that are worthy of proper investigation. Here are only a few of them. Why do certain topics continue to circulate in historical fiction and why do the old ones cease to do so? Why do new topics acquire a particular form and why are the old ones restricted to certain formal solutions? Approaching these problematic points will shape a more important perspective and a general pattern of the Ukrainian historical novel in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Literature on this topic is both vast and ambiguous. The studies published before 1991 cast ideologically distorted light on the problem of historical novels. Even the most sophisticated of them, like Ilnytsky's *Liudyna v istorii* (The human in history) [8], ignore certain novels and, thus, constrict the analysis. Moreover, recent novels of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are seldom considered as historical novels and, therefore, are excluded from the paradigm of historical fiction.

Previously, scholars used a diverse instrumentation of literary theory to classify historical fiction. For example, in one of the recent dissertations on historical novels, the author proposes to categorize the texts according to the temporal classification of literary movements – from Realism to Postmodernism. Another researcher simply classifies texts according to the personalities of novelists. While the second principle is merely ineffective, the first oversimplifies the matter and ignores the specifics of the Ukrainian literary process. As a result, both authors fail to recognise the Ukrainian historical novels' ideological component, which is the object of this article. To clear up this situation, this study proposes to find a concept that would be capable of describing the development of historical fiction. To do that, the article will turn to the ideological foundation of the novels.

### **National Narrative**

Numerous studies show the connection of national narrative and political discourse of nation. More specifically, they put the narrative both in a broad context of the nation and narrow limits of various specific discourses. Thus, James Wertsch examines how the Russian national story affects all spheres of public life, from international politics to literature and mass media [18]. As for the Ukrainian narrative, Volodymyr Kulyk analyses national narrative in the media [13], and Karina Korostelina demonstrates differences of regional Ukrainian stories [12].

National narratives predefine the perception of certain politicised aspects of life. For instance, they involve and elaborate the past so that it could fit the narrative's direction. As a result, the past follows strictly defined tracks of the story. A past like that is visible from any corner of the human spirit. Connected to the present, it exemplifies individual and collective behaviour, which means that the recipients of the narrative support it and exist in its tight frameworks. It also means that if some elements fail to commit to such stories, participants of the community excise them as foreign and reject them. On the other hand, if the 'foreign' voice sounds loud and coherent enough, it can be separated in a 'minority' narrative. Clearly, this is the case of Ukrainian national narrative.

### **Ukrainian National Story: The Narrative in Transformation**

The nature of unbalanced narratives, similar to Ukrainian, is described in the studies of Homi

Bhabha. He analyses their structure and origin and finds them ambiguous – that is, highly stable but flexible at the same time. In two constituent streams, the 'pedagogical' and the 'performative' (Bhabha's terms), the former stabilises and maintains, whereas the latter introduces innovations into a stable story. While the pedagogical provides the narrative with a certain continuity, the latter constantly introduces new elements to maintain the narrative's validity. Many extra- and intra literary reasons may exist for national narrative to become a part of fiction. It can fall prey to propaganda. But there is an opposite variant, as Bhabha claims: the narrative can represent a platform for minorities to set up their own mature and independent community, and I suggest that this is the case of Ukrainian narrative.

In reality, this apocalyptic vision is not as terrifying as described. It should be comforting to realise that Ukrainian nation follows the steps of every collective that is willing to maintain its continuity. It longs to construct its own narrative, which has a mythical nature, but it still cannot be drawn too far from reality without losing credibility [16, p. 202]. That is why even under the Soviet rule, one cannot speak of Ukrainian narrative's "pure fabrication" [1, p. 178]. It means that the society gets involved in the reconstruction of the past, and its drive is only partially forced. Using George Kateb's words, it can be said that community members feel a psychological urge to give aesthetical explanations to sociological and political phenomena. Therefore, community members, the Ukrainians in this case, inevitably engage into a convention to share the narrative [1, p. 19]. Kateb also argues that "[t]he most inclusive social aestheticism holds that the more a society's form, as it is, can be grasped as a single narrative or as a novel or a play or a painting, the better; when it can't, it has to be transformed by political methods, as ruthless, as they have to be" [10, p. 16, 17].

Thus the periods of political transformations in Ukraine required adjusted national narratives.

Ukraine has undergone four stages of such transformations and their implementations. First, it was the adjustment to the general Soviet narrative with its cult of personality and the idea of collective goodness. The second stage came with more liberal interpretation of history. At that time, both ideological and aesthetical restrictions of historical fiction were moderated. Yet the texts were still following the conjuncture and obeying the rules. However, in the third type, this tendency was broken, and the texts had lead the national narrative into a different direction. This crucial change mapped a narrative of a new type and established

the Ukrainian story. More than ten year after 1991, it grew into the fourth and the last type of the national narrative. Reflected in the respective historical novels, these narratives defined the attitudes of population. In the following part of this article, I will show that the astonishing succession of the narratives demonstrate their high stability along with the transformational capacity. It will become obvious that Soviet-Ukrainian narrative and its expanded versions bequeathed some of its elements (motifs) to the story of a new nation. I will also demonstrate the differences and similarities of Ukrainian national story. Stable and varied components of national narrative in Ukrainian historical novels are discussed in the novels of Petro Panch, Pavlo Zahrebelny, Volodymyr Malyk, Valery Shevchuk, Yuriy Vynnychuk, and Oksana Zabuzhko.

### **In principio erat Verbum. Socialist Realism and Ukrainian National Narrative: An Ideological Amalgam**

At the beginning of the Soviet era, Mikhail Pokrovsky, a Soviet historian and functionary, described history as “politics projected into the past” [4, p. 17]. This famous line reflects the development of history-related disciplines in the Soviet Union for many decades. Though Pokrovsky himself, his students and followers were banned and physically annihilated, the general direction of historical discourse in the USSR ironically followed his slogan. In these circumstances, history was a mirror, where the Soviets saw only themselves. This overall intention resulted in Russian chauvinism, and the rejection of Ukrainian history as ‘bourgeois nationalism’ was part of its parcel [15, p. 40]. Thus the publication of numerous novels on Ukrainian history is at least surprising.

Few authors were able to write and publish historical novels during and after the War. It was more urgent to document and assess the damage of war. However, when the first shock of the losses began to be absorbed, history returned to claim its former position. Along with the war epos, the same writers were engaged in publishing historical fiction. In the late 1940s-early 1950s, the production of historical novels started with Natan Rybak’s *Pereiaslavska rada* (The Pereiaslav council 1948–1953) and *Nalyvaiko* (1953), which were followed by Ivan Le’s *Khmelnysky* (1957–1965); Petro Panch’s *Homonila Ukraina* (Ukraine Was Humming 1954); Semen Skliarenko’s *Sviatoslav* (1957) and *Volodymyr* (1963); Yuriy Mushketyk’s *Haydamaky* (1954) and *Semen Palii* (1954); and others.

These texts were particularly appreciated by the Party functionaries because of their unambiguous representation of the present in historical masks. In the Cossacks’ novels of Le, Panch, and Mushketyk, Bohdan Khmelnytsky personifies all the traits of the positive sovereign. He presents an up-to-date idea of Ukraine and Russia’s union; meanwhile, being of noble origin, he does not remind the reader of the feudal system: Khmelnytsky, as Stalin, stands above class prejudice [19, p. 135]. The same is true of the Kyivan Rus<sup>1</sup> novels of Skliarenko, where Kyivan princes personify the image of a ‘good tsar’ who oppose ‘bad feudals’ and support ‘simple people’.

Under such conditions, the national narrative in these novels acquires interesting forms. The scheme is repeated in almost all texts and, vacillating from good to bad, develops as a sinusoid. Ukrainian national narrative, having experienced rises and falls, collapses, merging with a Russian narrative. At the beginning, it acknowledges all the positive traits of the people: their diligence and kindness, loyalty and compassionate nature, their courage and bravery. Supported by the evidence of substantial historical continuity, these traits signify the core of Ukrainian identity and the start of the narrative. Next, the narrative enters the first turning point, where the positive traits and legacy are compromised by foreign interference. In the Cossack fiction, it is always from Polish barons; in the medieval reconstructions it is Byzantium, the Cumans, and so on. But the narrative centres on a worse evil than external pressure. This type of the story blames the Ukrainians for internal friction. Out of this, the narrative builds a powerful second motif of internal quarrels that tears up the nation and the country. In the Socialist Realist historical novels, this component of the narrative is based mostly on the class struggle of feudals and peasants. Due to barons’ intrigues, the good ‘tsar’ loses control over the country, as in Panch’s *Ukraine Was Humming*, or even is killed, as in Skliarenko’s *Sviatoslav*. Important battles are lost; former friends betray each other and become enemies. So is portrayed Adam Kysil, a famous colonel of the Cossack army, who ends up on the Polish side. Despite all obstacles, the wise sovereign does not give up his struggle, in despair he is forced to ask for help.

Help comes from the East. After exchanges of embassies, the Orthodox tsar, Oleksii Mykhailovych (Alexis of Russia, 1629–1676), sends food and weapons to Hetman Khmelnytsky. A conventional attitude towards this resolution is condensed in a

<sup>1</sup> Here and further in the text, the author uses Ukrainian transliteration of geographical names.

touching scene of the Muscovy ambassador's, Hryhory Unkovsky's, arrival. According to Petro Panch, the Russian receives warm greetings from Bohdan Khmelnytsky who humbles the colonels, daring to disrespect His Excellency: "You brought great joy, dear Ambassador, to Zaporizhian Cossacks and all our people. You said that His Grace the Tsar does not withhold accepting us under his reign. This will never be violated: thinking about reuniting with Russia day and night, neither I nor the Cossacks Army had ever sworn allegiance to the new king of Rzeczpospolita and will never do so!" [17] <sup>2</sup>. This positive description of the Russian Ambassador contrasts the image Adam Kysil <sup>3</sup> and other 'pro-Polish' colonels. From here it becomes obvious that the legation is a blessing for the Ukrainians. In general, it is described as a salvation to starving peasants whom the Tsar sends grain. Again, Oleksii Mykhailovych appears a saviour of the common people, which puts him above the class struggle. Moreover, in the novel, Petro Panch portrays him as similar to a saint: "His young fair face with big transparent eyes reminded one of a finely tuned icon" [17, p. 459]. This role of a wise sovereign equates the Tsar and Khmelnytsky in the novel.

However, the consistent logic of the narrative is violated throughout the novel. Firstly, the reader finds an ideological lag: amidst the purely atheistic intentions, Petro Panch motivates his heroes by religious stimulus. He states that Ukraine and Poland cannot form a union because of the Poles' Catholicism. Instead, the main reason to reunite with Muscovy is its Orthodox Christianity. Secondly, Panch inserts distinct biblical allusions in the text. Thus, he writes, "Old Jonah was sitting at the bar, counting fish" [17, p. 66]. This reference to the Old Testament apostle softens the emasculated language of the text. So do cautiously used 'formalistic' devices. For example, this alliteration is sharp against the finely formulated but dry and neutral fabric of the text: "Prylii pryynis povnu polu polunytys i prylyg sobi bilia kozakiv (Prylii brought a flapfull of strawberries and lay down near the Cossacks)" [17, p. 57]. Artistic details that escaped the attention of a careful censor bring a special taste to the rigid text and the commanded narrative. However, whether intentional or not, these inconsistencies demonstrate a highly artificial nature of the text.

In spite of these occasional outbreaks, the narrative ends quite conventionally: Ukraine

'reunites' with Velykorosia ('Great Russia'), which underlines the failure of the Ukrainian narrative. As one of the personages (a legendary Cossack *otaman*, Maksym Kryvonis) formulates it, "the Ukrainian people will go to waste for nothing without Velykorosia's power" [17, p. 51]. Demonstrating the gravitation of Ukraine and Velykorosia, Panch recreates the political model of the Soviet Union and places it in a different temporal dimension. His intention is quite clear, as he would like readers to believe that the mutual affection of two countries existed a long time ago. In fact, their people always longed for reunion. A narrative like this justifies the existence of the super-state and legitimises it by appealing to legendary leaders of the Ukrainian people. The future of Ukrainians is clearly tied to the Russians. Yet, further versions of the national story are not unambiguous.

### **The Cult Is Dead. Long Live the Cult? The Novels of the 1960s and the Narrative's Transformational Capacity**

The next group of historical novels is quite vast. Historical novels of this type occupied the literary space to the extent when their impact could be compared only to the War novels. The texts Oles Honchar, Pavlo Zahrebelny, Volodymyr Malyk, Zynaida Tulub, Raisa Ivanchenko and others are notable for the increased interpretational capacity and space that followed the great revision of history in the USSR.

In the 1960s–1970s, the Cult of Personality has been criticised twice by the highest Soviet authorities. First, Mykyta Khrushchev denounced Stalin's tyranny and switched the attention of Soviet historiographers to Lenin [15, p. 47, 48]. Then, after being ousted from power, Khrushchev himself had fallen prey to his liberating directives and was criticised for his "subjectivism and voluntarism" [15, p. 46].

This change had a crucial impact on historical fiction. As a result, historical novels escaped the conceptual cage of the Cult. In the later Ukrainian novels, the images of princes, hetmans and other sovereigns already have multiple dimensions. They are more human, with holographic reflections of negative and positive traits, which reflect various attempts to reassess the national past. However, it is hard to say that these personages are less engaged in the discourse of imperialism. Though textual rhetoric became more diverse, the overall direction remained the same. That is, imperial narrative acquired more whimsical forms that hid colonial intentions in the labyrinth of human relationships.

<sup>2</sup> Here and further in this article, Ukrainian texts are translated by Anna Vitruk.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Sysyn published a major study on Adam Kysil and his age. See Frank E. Sysyn, *Between Poland and the Ukraine. The Dilemma of Adam Kysil, 1600–1653* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Despite numerous modifications in rhetoric, the general strategy of national narrative did not change much. The texts of the 1960s – early 1970s consist of almost the same set of motifs: rich cultural (historical) legacy/acknowledgement of unique personal qualities of the Ukrainian people; wise and caring sovereign; deceitful barons who ruin the hopes of the Ukrainians; failure of the Ukrainian state. However, it can be seen that the last motif of the Socialist Realist novels dissolved under new circumstances. There is no more emphasis on the reunification of Ukraine and Russia, and the narrative ends with the general motif of failure.

This pattern is used in most of the late Khrushchev and early Brezhnev era novels. Thus, Pavlo Zahrebelny praised the founder of Moscow, Yuriy Dovhoruky, and accused local princes in his novel *Smert u Kyievi* (Death in Kyiv 1973). This text represents a period when novelists retreat from the sovereign-centred structure of novels; instead, they put a collective or its prominent representative in the heart of the conflict. Thus, Zahrebelny uses this device in the novel *Dyvo* (The Wonder 1968), where he describes the life of a young genial artist, Syvook, who built the St. Sofia Cathedral in Kyiv. In contrast, Prince Yaroslav the Wise appears cruel, sunk in intrigues, and struggling for power. The heroes are so distinctly assigned positive and negative roles according to their class affiliation that the reader can be sure that no protagonist could belong to the upper class in these novels.

The same is true for Volodymyr Malyk's tetralogy *Taiemny posol* (The Secret Ambassador 1968–1977). Here, the main character, Arsen Zvenyhora, is portrayed as one of the first mythical 'super-heroes' in Ukrainian literature. He is not like all previous conventional personages of Socialist Realism. Though Arsen is exaggeratedly positive, his dignity and courage do not look artificial. Malyk presents him as an almighty leader and generous friend, a loyal lover and vassal. In general, he is an archetypal knight of the first historical novels. Naturally, Arsen's image eclipses the figures of princes and kings, the representatives of the upper class, who appear greedy and deceitful. In general, compared to the previous type of historical fiction, the novels of Malyk and Zahrebelny reject the idea of a 'good tsar'. Their obscure motivation can be two-fold: either they were extremely disappointed with the Cult or they have just been following the general current in revisions of history. In relation to this thought, it is worth noting Malyk's later novel *Horyt svicha* (The candle is burning, 1992) that describes the life of the community and ignores the

upper class in general. It depicts the Mongol-Tatar invasion into the territory of Eastern Ukraine and the siege of Kyiv. As is well-known, the Mongols were stopped in the Rus' forests and steppes, but not by the forces of princes. Instead, all credit for that goes to strong Ukrainian communities that were able to unite under the threat of invasion. Mykhailo, the prince of Kyiv, fled, and sotnyk Dmytro had to take care of defence. Malyk argues that the lack of accord in the actions of elites and the people led to tragic consequences. "Baty's force is not big, though it is big enough, but it was the princes' quarrels, lack of wisdom, and ambitions that split the mighty country into separate principedoms, domains, and fiefs, which did not allow a stand together against the terrible enemy and led to calamity" [14, p. 119].

Analysing *The candle is burning*, I have moved to the next type of national narrative that developed in the early pre- and post-Independence era. Indeed, this development was not obvious. In this remarkable group of texts, the narrative itself has not changed much since the Socialist Realist times. Though these novels naturally avoid the former declarative rhetoric, they preserve the general paradigm and tone of narrative. Here Yuriy Mushketyk, the author of *Haydamaky* (1957) and *Yasa* (1970–1974), switches to nationalistic topics and writes patriotically charged novels *Hetmansky skarb* (The treasure of the hetman 1993) and *Ostannii hetman* (The last hetman, 2010). The same is applicable to many 'transitional' authors: Volodymyr Malyk, Pavlo Zahrebelny and many others. Though these novels choose up-to-date topics, they still preserve an established scheme of the narrative.

A good example of the 'new topic – old narrative' incoherence provide Roman Ivanychuk's novels, which were also not readily published, similarly to Valery Shevchuk's texts. Censors and literary functionaries criticised his famous novel *Mallows* (Mallows, 1968) as well as *Cherlene vyny* (Dark-red wine 1979), *Manuskrypt z vulytsi Ruskoj* (Manuscript from Ruska Street, 1979). *Zhuravlyny kryk* (The spindle cry) was written in 1968 and published twenty years later because of the censorship [11]. And yet these texts are built according to the old narrative scheme. Both *Mallows* and *Orda* (The horde) end, picturing the nation's misery and despair. For all the misfortunes, Ivanychuk blames traitors – Ukrainians who chose to serve the enemy. This motif, constantly repeated, coincided with the one in the Socialist Realist historical novels. The only difference, the nationalistic mood, could not change the general tendency.

### Mysticism and National Narrative in Valery Shevchuk's Novels

In the 1980s, the tendency was to 'sovereignize' national history by detaching it from the USSR [9, p. 9]. Naturally, literary intelligentsia supported this patriotic move and produced texts that emphasised national traumas and national heroes. This process embraced most of the perestroika and post-Independence years and constituted a serious challenge. Nationalised history, according to Georgiy Kasianov, used "archaic cognitive and classifying apparatus," oriented on "satisfying ideological demand," and closed up in "intellectual hermeticism" [9, p. 22]. Affected by this movement, historical fiction readily incorporated it. In the 1980s, authors emphasised "the nation's struggle for survival with internal and external enemies" [9, p. 20]. In the 1990s, numerous novels touched previously forbidden topics on the Holodomor of 1932–1933 and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Those intellectuals whose nationalising effort seemed weak were criticised by their own fellows.

However, another group of texts that functioned at the same time had a different intention. While the novels of Malyk still contained the remains of Soviet rhetoric, the new branch of the genre presented a special type of national narrative. This new national story rose precisely in a community of the new intelligentsia that differed from the Soviet intellectual elites at the time. While the regime produced various kinds of loyal intellectuals, the group of writers, artists, actors, scientists and so on opposed them. Their cohort was not supported by any economic or political platform, as Antonio Gramsci suggested [5, p. 7, 8]. Nevertheless, the Soviet intellectual tradition did not dare to displace the national intellectual tradition that provided a dais for them. At the same time, the voice of truly Ukrainian intellectuals required a different type of national narrative, which could embrace a more specific national past. In their fertile surroundings, a new type of national narrative was born.

This kind of historical novel is represented mostly by the texts of Valery Shevchuk. In his writing, he not only resiled from the old rhetoric of sociological history, but also introduced a completely new pattern of narrative. Unfortunately, his revisionist initiatives coincided with revanchist moods of the Soviet authorities, which in the early 1970s resumed a "witch-hunt against a new type of intelligentsia" [15, p. 218]. As a result, Shevchuk's novels *Na poli smyrennomu* (On a humble field, 1982) and *Try lystky za viknom* (Three leaves in the

window, 1983) were published a decade after they had been written, when liberal conditions of perestroika allowed this to be done.

At the time, the writers were given a chance to approach Ukrainian history differently. If the previous kind of historical novels political history took the first positions, in the new type of historical fiction, culture moved to the fore. What made his texts so controversial is their complete attention to the national past. Both novels are set in Baroque, one of the most prolific epochs in Ukrainian culture. Implicitly the reader would know that this epoch is also known for its liberation struggle, but on the surface of the texts, Shevchuk disregards political history. If texts approached political history, metaphor and metonymy concealed these moves. For example, in the *Three Leaves*, the author presents three centuries in Ukrainian history, where he describes primarily cultural phenomena: the style of life, philosophical maxims, key concepts and archetypes of the time. However, a closer analysis reveals a political message in the novel.

In three chapters of the text, Shevchuk consistently implements the strategy of estrangement. He carefully constructs each of them and inhabits them with the appropriate hero. In a time of historical turbulence, these typical personalities embody their respective historical time and display its most prominent features. Ilyya Turchynovsky is a vagabond scholar (Ukrainian goliard) who travels from town to town searching for the answers to his numerous philosophical questions. The second chapter is a detective story, where Petro Turchynovsky, a court clerk, investigates a murder case. In the third chapter, a provincial schoolteacher, Kyriyak Satanovsky, documents the sins of his friends and foes in the *Black Book*.

The personages of the novel acquire a great symbolical meaning. Opposing Turchynovsky-senior and Satanovsky, Valery Shevchuk compares two historical epochs and political regimes: a liberal Cossack state and the Russian Empire. He demonstrates how the power of the latter devours both the individual and the collective. He shows that in Satanovsky's stuffy provincial town, no creative spirit or noble heart can survive. For that purpose, Shevchuk kills his misfortunate character but leaves Satanovsky's "Black Book" safe from the fire.

At first thought, Shevchuk's novel suppresses the national narrative, which functions deep inside the textual canvas. Indeed, *Three Leaves* dissimulate the previous type of narrative, but instead they produce a new and improved one. Its skeleton is considerably modified compared to the earlier

Soviet versions. In the narrative, the careful reader can still allocate the motifs of rich culture (expressed by Illya Turchynovsky), gradual decay (the story of Petro Turchynovsky and Kyriyak Satanovsky), and the final failure (Satanovsky's death). However, as far as the narrative is centred on culture, it does not end abruptly, proposing a finite number of choices. Instead, it fixates on critique of power and detects its locations over historical epochs. Examining the text for the changes from positive to negative, the reader may notice them on the verge of epochs. Thus, Illya is freer than Petro; Petro in his turn is more happy and self-concerned than Kyriyak, whose subjection reaches the apogee. Being trapped in the imperial system of governance, all three personages suffer from such subjection. Together, their stories form Shevchuk's version of Ukrainian national narrative, that is, a history of subjection, though which Shevchuk explains the failure on a national scale.

Though the national narrative suffers a fiasco, *Three Leaves in the Window* does not end the narrative abruptly. It continues the tradition with Satanovsky's "Black Book" that survives the fire. While the fire has mercy upon Satanovsky's gossipy pictures of provincial vanity, it destroys the writings of Illya and Petro Turchynovskys that had some value for Ukrainian culture. Thus, the cultural and historical heritage of Ukraine disappears in the metaphorical fire of subjection to imperial power. It is undoubtedly a failure and a loss, which, however, lacks "lacrimogenesis" [6, p. 665] of the 1980s–1990s novels, where Ukraine appears as an "innocent victim of other nations in a litany of valiantly heroic but ultimately tragic (previous) struggles for national independence" [6, p. 665]. It does not root the troubles of Ukraine in the outspoken black-and-white world of allies and enemies, whom Shevchuk does not indicate directly. Instead, he merely points at the problem of subjection, discussing it from multiple points of view. And political subjection of Ukraine does not seem to be of his, Shevchuk's, primary concern. Instead, he falls into humanistic pathos and demonstrates the individual's capacity to obey, which progresses in time and reaches the eclipse in positivistic thinking with its predefined paths for human spirit.

Shevchuk does not seem to propose any solution to the problem. In *Three Leaves*, the readers are left with an unknown problem: they are forced to think of a national failure not as the enemy's fault. Neither class struggle nor the imperial power were to be blamed for the defeat. Instead, Shevchuk does not release Ukrainian intellectuals from responsibility.

He accuses both Turchynovskys and Satanovsky of insufficient resistance to subjection. Demonstrating Kyriyak Satanovsky's misery, Shevchuk underlines his "desire to survive" [3, p. 7] at any rate, "a pervasively exploiting desire" [3, p. 7] that makes the subject "the very venue of power" [3, p. 15].

Shevchuk does not offer any solution to this crisis. Instead, his later novels obscure the past and trap history in chimerical prose. *Ptakhyy z nevydymoho ostrova* (Birds from the invisible island, 1989), *Oko prirvy* (Eye of the abyss, 1996), *Sribne moloko* (Silver milk, 2002), and *Temna muzyka sosen* (The dark music of pine-trees, 2003) represent this vivid tendency. Fantastical elements deflect attention away from political history, yet they underline the overall direction of individual subjection. Using historical material, Shevchuk complexly analyses human subjection and effects of the power. With these texts, historical fiction in Ukraine makes a sharp turning, as chimerical novels demonstrated great capacity of national narrative. They separate national story from its conventional form and introduce considerable changes in the set of motifs. As a result, before the end of the 2010s, Ukrainian writers produce another kind of fiction that promotes the next type of narrative.

#### **Present Perfect and Future Continuous of National Narrative**

New narrative is vital for an establishing nation, but the new story must have a conceptually different approach to the past. Ukraine, as a newly independent nation, required a special type of national story. In the case of the Ukrainian narrative, "lacrimogenesis" should have been replaced, as it presents no constructive resolution. No perspective is seen through the dark ages of collective pain. The new type of the narrative should neither mourn nor bewail the past but connect it to the present. It should explain and clarify, and also retrace cause-effect relations between the past and the present. The closest attempt to that ideal model are represented by Oksana Zabuzhko's and Yuriy Vynnychuk's historical novels. In general, *Muzei pokynutykh sekretiv* (The museum of abandoned secrets, 2010) and *Tango smerti* (The tango of death, 2012) revise the very recent past. The first novel excavates the historical strata of the World War II and approaches contemporary time via the analysis of the 1970s. The second novel makes no obvious transition and presents the War with a direct connection to the present. Clearly, these novels are very different in their mood, intentions, and sources. They also diverge in their generic affiliation. Yet, I

analyse them as a group, based on their approach to national narrative. Specifically, both novels critically revise intertemporal relationships, rather than merely describe the past.

Zabuzhko's and Shevchuk's revisionist intentions are in tune with a general mood; they complement and elaborate Valery Shevchuk's direction of narrative. Quite the same as Shevchuk, they try to locate cultural strata that would become a starting point for the nation. Surprisingly, these novels do not turn to the 'legendary' past of Cossacks and hetmans. Nor do they operate crude nationalistic rhetoric of patriotic novels of Vasyl Shklyar (*Chornyi voron* (The black crow, 2009)) and the likes who reconstruct the UPA's activity. Though these texts have no intention to nationalise history, they make an attempt to detach the Ukrainian past from the Soviet one, which for many decades, the majority of non-Ukrainians perceived as one.

For this purpose, the texts focus on traumas that are common for both Ukraine and Russia. In this sense, World War II events constituted productive material for claiming part of the past. Vynnychuk tells the story of four friends whose fathers were killed in Bazar. It is hard to say that they are typical representatives of their respective nationalities (Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, and German), rather they embody the spirit of Lviv, their native city. Actually, their multicultural surrounding merely reflects the authentically multinational city of Lviv, where Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews "managed to develop a dense network of cultural, academic, and educational institutions" [7, p. 236]. In this city, Vynnychuk feels safe to raise the painful memories of the Holocaust. This city, he considers, is the most suitable to secure the Ukrainian identity in the middle of the last century and to recreate it in a newly independent society.

Oksana Zabuzhko, on the contrary, does not pay attention to ethnic questions. Her focus is primarily on Ukrainian nationality and its survival in times of turbulence. Numerous heroes of *The Museum* represent both Eastern and Western Ukraine, and thus Zabuzhko disposes of a question of Ukrainian unity and identity. As with most regular museums, Zabuzhko's textual memorial displays horrors of the past. In its every 'room', readers can find and examine skeletons. In the next 'room', they will encounter small artefacts of the past that will tell the story of their forefathers' survival. And as the text moves from the 1950s to the 2000s, it leaves more artefacts and less remains, and aims at one goal – to explain how we had become our current selves. As a sharp lightning, a desire to explain the origins of us illuminates Zabuzhko's novel. Her primary tasks

are to tie all the cut knots of history and to make the parallel paths cross. It is not an easy task, and Zabuzhko's heroes painfully struggle to complete their mission. Sometimes they lack material proof of the past because of burned archives or unreliable witnesses, and in that case, they simply 'recall' the past. Indeed, they are able to recollect somebody else's lives because their souls had accumulated the ancestors' experience.

Excursion in *The Museum* culminates in an artistically inappropriate happy end. Main characters fall in love and the heroine expects a child, which clearly should become a symbol of a 'new beginning'. However, this rather down-to-earth resolution looks more relevant in the context of Ukrainian national narrative and sounds in tune with the "I will survive" direction. A similar aftereffect is left after the melody of Vynnychuk's *Tango*. While the motifs of a lost manuscript that can explain the whole universe, the references to Sufism and other mystical practices whimsically twist the story, the novel itself sends a message about the War to describe Ukrainian experience of German aggression. "We had it differently", Vynnychuk wants to say. "We survived it owing to a mythical tango melody".

I suppose that the pathos of survival is the apogee of the national narrative in contemporary historical novels. Taking two very different texts, Zabuzhko's and Vynnychuk's, we can make sure of the narrative's general direction – to appeal to those alive. No commemorative obsession is legitimate to explain another wave of lacrimogenesis. No sorrow can justify another wave of mourning convulsion in literature. Owing to this tendency, history accompanies national narrative in Ukrainian fiction. This article means to demonstrate both 'positive' and 'negative' consequences of such cooperation. As it happened with history, historical novels exist between the dangerous Scylla of unproductive nationalism and no less alarming Charybdis of denial of national idea. It is rather soon to predict the narrative's behaviour on the still land; however, I suppose that it will concern other aspects of life besides survival.

The first signs of that appeared in a very recent novel *Feliks Avstriia* (Felix Austria, 2014) of Sofia Andrukhovych. This new kind of historical novel emphasises Homi Bhabha's performative, rather than the pedagogical, as it focuses on "scraps, patches, and rags of daily life" [2, p. 297] to transform them into the "signs of national culture" [2, p. 297]. Andrukhovych allows her readers to take only a quick glimpse at significant personages of the Ukrainian past. Carefully concealing legendary

Ukrainians in the provincial routine of Stanislaviv, she forces the recipient to make his or her own way through it. Hitting this road, readers stumble upon fractions in the performative only to find the continuity of the pedagogical. Any small detail, like mentioning His Grace Andrei (Sheptytskyj), can lead to the solid strata of tradition. Owing to internalising the tension between the pedagogical and performative in Felix Austria, the novel for the first time in Ukrainian literature has become the only site of writing the nation.

### Conclusion

Though this article starts with references to the texts of Ivan Le and Petro Panch, the author acknowledges their marginal place in the current literary process, also realising the impact of other historical novels mentioned here. Yet this study did not aim to assess the quality of literary material. The author's goal was primarily to study the actual field of the genre, making no drawbacks and substantial exclusions. The result must have demonstrated both a broad panorama of literary process and the narrow pillar, the national narrative, that was its source.

In the end, the clear and rigid rhetoric of the late Stalinist historical novels allowed to extract the 'primary' narrative and to dissect it into motifs. Starting with this model of narrative made it easier to understand its vacillations of the 1960s. It also allowed to demonstrate the new type of narrative that emerged in opposition to positivistic intentions of Socialist Realism. With the texts of Valery Shevchuk, the national story developed a new branch. It included different set of motifs and aimed at detaching history from the Soviet past. While the old 'socialist realist' type of narrative successfully functions until now, the efforts of Shevchuk did not go in vain. Instead, they laid the foundation to other texts, like Oksana Zabuzhko's and Yuriy Vynnychuk's, that elaborated his story and adjusted it to the new political, social, and cultural tendencies in Ukraine.

Finally, the article points at the latest Ukrainian historical novel, Sofiia Andrukhovych's *Felix Austria*, which eventually gives a new form to the national story. New texts of this kind is important in Ukrainian literature. Not only they are aesthetically innovative but also they reinvent the national narrative, adjusting it to the needs of modern society.

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*Вітрук А. Я.*

### **ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО НАЦІОНАЛЬНОГО НАРАТИВУ В ІСТОРИЧНИХ РОМАНАХ**

*У статті розглянуто національний наратив у повоєнних історичних романах. Феномен єдиної національної оповіді вивчається у зв'язку з дискурсом історії в Радянському Союзі. Демонструється зв'язок між сприйняттям історії, історичною прозою і національним наративом в Україні. У цьому світлі розглянуто національну оповідь від останніх сталінських років і дотепер, демонструючи трансформації в історичній прозі, пов'язані з національним наративом.*

**Ключові слова:** історичний роман, національний наратив, повоєнна проза, соцреалізм, проза після незалежності.

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