

For the “Global 1960s” in Literature: American, French, and Ukrainian Contexts

Yuliia Kulish

National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

Abstract

This article offers an innovative perspective on the literary landscapes of the 1960s in France, Ukraine, and the USA serving as exemplars of a global literary project that views literary works as heterotopias that, while being distinct, collectively constitute a cohesive whole. Using a comparative approach, complemented with distant reading techniques, the study examines how these literary realms are interconnected, revealing shared aesthetic foundations guided by an overarching law. This law, rooted in Theodor Adorno's concept of negativity, becomes evident in intercultural movements and consequential shifts in literary form, content, and canon. While not the primary focus of analysis, other unifying elements in this global literary panorama include dissent as defined by Jacques Rancière, and a Sartrean-infused interpretation of existentialism. The article suggests that this global phenomenon may have emerged due to the confluence of two factors: the seismic global impact of events like WWII and the evolving postmodern trajectory of the era.

Key Words: 1960s, global literature, comparative literature, negative dialectics, American literature, French literature, Ukrainian literature, dissent, existentialism.

Introduction

Globality is only traceable in retrospect: we may determine common tendencies unifying detached phenomena by evaluating them from a certain historical, hence discursive distance. This distance indeed grants us necessary equity in our verdicts. However, when it comes to literature, time may appear quite deceiving as the objectivity of research dealing with globality depends on not only our analytical tools, but also our ability to immerse, to relate to the timeframe in question. In this context, the 1960s seem to be completely apt for testing the hypothesis of global literary scene: nowadays, we witness the revival of the key features of the period, such as social outbreaks, cultural revolutions, and the ethos of collectivity. Also, the literary world seems to be returning to modernist tendencies lost at the end of the 1960s. Moreover, the umbrella term “global 1960s” was long-time supported and studied by numerous researchers.¹ In their works, this hyperonym refers less to the geographical coverage of spaces but rather to the processes of redefining institutional, social, and cultural networks. Yet, while global revolutionary movements have been extensively discussed in the fields of sociology and history, the literary manifestation of the global 1960s has received

1 Such as Eric Zolov, Martin Klimke, Jeremy Varon, Gerard DeGroot, Jeremi Suri, Karen Dubinsky, and more.

relatively less scholarly attention.² In an attempt to address this shortage, this article explores the connection between American, French, and Ukrainian literary realms of the 1960s. Assessing these cases poses a challenge due to their seemingly disparate discursive contexts and the varied conditions in which they evolved. While the cultural landscape in the United States portrays disillusionment with the postwar values and protests against tradition, France gravitates towards left-wing politics and the avant-garde movement. In contrast, Ukraine enters a new era of censorship amid the thawing political climate. However, we believe that these seemingly distinct literary contexts can be interconnected when viewed through the lens of *global literature*.

The concept of “global” literature challenges the traditional categories of “world” and “national” literature. While the “world” literature initially referred to canonical works and later expanded to include widely circulated texts,³ “global” literature is a dynamic concept driven by analytical processes. Sieghild Bogumil points out that global literature means “the result of the comparative method, which considers works of literature as heterotopias that at the same time form a whole.”⁴ In other words, globality in literature means that “national” literature does not exist in isolation, but continually interacts with the broader literary space, intertwining with it and shaping it. In a certain way, “global” literature resonates with “general” literature, which Henry Heymann Remak defines as that which is devoted to “phenomena in many countries that constitute an organic unity” and in which “national works of literature only demonstrate examples of universal tendencies.”⁵ Vilashini Cooppan adds that the emergence of transnational, transregional, global literature will help rethink the past literary tradition,⁶ which in itself is one of the basic tasks of modern literary criticism. Moreover, Edward Said in his notable article “Globalizing Literary Study” claims that “autonomous aesthetic reality exists”⁷; that is, there *are* general aesthetic principles that form particular literary cases. Said ambiguously adds, perhaps inviting to reflection, that the exact way this reality exists concerning historical, political, and social structures is difficult to determine.

2 However, it is important to highlight the inclusiveness of the journal *The Global Sixties*, which centers on the far-reaching examination of the transformative influence of this decade in our history. This focus encompasses a diverse array of essays, including those focusing on literary criticism.

3 David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 6.

4 Sieghild Bogumil, “Comparative Literature, Globalization, and Heterotopia,” *Neohelicon* 28 (2001): 52.

5 Henry Heymann Remak, “Literaturna komparatyvistyka: yiyi vysnazhennia ta funktsii” [“Literary Comparative Studies: its Definition and Functions”], in Dmytro Nalyvaiko, *Suchasna literaturna komparatyvistyka: stratehii i metody* [Contemporary Literary Comparative Studies: Strategies and Methods] (Kyiv: Vudavnychyi dim “Kyievo-Mohylianska Academia,” 2009), 54.

6 Vilashini Cooppan, “World Literature and Global Theory: Comparative Literature for the New Millennium,” *Symplokē* 9, no. 1/2 (2001): 15–43.

7 Edward Said, “Globalizing Literary Study,” *PMLA* 116 (1) (2001): 64–8.

In our case, the application of the global perspective method involves identifying how the aesthetic similarities among “national” literatures (American, French, and Ukrainian) – echoing Bogumil’s definition⁸ – create a complex system of interconnected spaces, known as “global” literature. To demonstrate this unity, we must detect shared aesthetic foundations through a comparative, distant reading approach uncovering parallelism across different literary areas. These parallels, whether in form, content, genre, or style, may serve as evidence of a shared aesthetic paradigm. In our broader research, which this article is part of, we have identified three key aesthetic foundations that underpin mentioned literary landscapes: *negativity*, as defined by Theodor Adorno; *dissent*, as clarified by Jacques Rancière; and *existentialism*, as developed by Jean-Paul Sartre. The subsequent discussion centers on the principal element, namely negativity, given its role in delineating the fundamental principle within the literary world of the 1960s.

Two important considerations must be noted. First, in a comparative investigation, one should acknowledge that literary works may not always be written with a global perspective, yet they can still reflect such a perspective.⁹ The experiential realms of the narrators are inherently distinct: the poetics of Mykola Kholodnyi’s *terykony* (slagheaps) is not readily juxtaposed with Jack Kerouac’s artistic approach to the Matterhorn Peak; however, both constituents have the capacity to contribute to the shared aesthetic milieu characterizing the 1960s. Second, it is crucial to be cautious with the common perceptions associated with a particular artistic period, its collective image, a composite portrayal constructed by media, politics, ideology, and fashion. By examining the tangible manifestations of the era, its socioeconomic dynamics, and political environment, we can avoid the pressure of the aforementioned and identify the inherent aesthetic elements that permeate the realms of life and convey the distinctive “atmosphere” of the era.

Negativity as a Pivotal Aesthetic Element of the 1960s

Negativity is that aesthetic foundation that most comprehensively delineates the ontological underpinnings and temporal milieus of the literary world in the 1960s (particularly within French, American, and Ukrainian contexts) and consequently holds significance when addressing the intricate inquiry of “global literature.” The formulation of this concept is articulated in Theodor Adorno’s seminal works, *Negative Dialectics*, published in 1966, and *Aesthetic Theory*, written during the decade of 1956–1969. Although Adorno is vague in denominating negativity, inclining rather to descriptive and metaphorical explanations of what it stands for, it is rooted into his critique of Hegelian idealism, identity thinking, and classical dialectics. Reversing all

8 Bogumil, “Comparative Literature,” 52.

9 Jean Bessière, “How to Reform Comparative Literature’s Paradigms in the Age of Globalization,” *Neohelicon* 28 (2001): 14.

the three, negative dialectics asserts that the totality of existence is a myth, and that history is not a simple process of unfolding toward a positive absolute – the way Hegel puts it – but a movement into variable openness.¹⁰ Adorno asserts that the reduction of distinct historical entities to a single signifier obscures the indivisible essence underlying conceptual constructs. When diverse entities are subsumed under this unity, the potential for interchangeability emerges, posing a threat to our fundamental conceptual coherence.¹¹ Instances that exemplify Adorno's thesis of interchangeability can be discerned within the cultural context of the 1960s. During this period, the overtly limited conception of socialist realism is decreed as the exclusive permissible artistic mode in the Socialist sphere. Simultaneously, the "American dream" is upheld as the emblem of success, while consumer society, paramount in France, is treated as the norm. Consequently, any overarching totality results in the substitution of notions, a phenomenon in itself being a dangerous but also a prophetic scenario – as we may observe now. In turn, negative dialectics emphasizes the leading role of the non-identity of concepts to objects, the impossibility of synthesis and an auspicious resolution, but rather the prevalence of an eternal process of mutual repulsion and differentiation. This aligns precisely with the endeavors undertaken by the activists of the 1960s, who were preoccupied with the preservation and institutionalization of a multifaceted array of distinctions – be they cultural or societal, ideological, or national – ultimately culminating in the recognition of individuality. Additionally, according to the principle of negative dialectics, there is no need for things to be arranged in a certain way. The essence of value resides within the realm of the unbounded and the incomplete. Awareness of this process will help to rescue non-identity "or what has been suppressed in the pursuit of totalization and reification."¹² One pragmatic way through which the concept of non-identity can be salvaged, and the significance of differentiation underscored, is via acts of protest and opposition. The vortex of demonstrations, the struggle for rights and freedoms, the expansion of artistic boundaries, and the reconsideration of presumed "limitations" emerge as prominent hallmarks of the negative disposition distinctive to the ambiance of the 1960s.

Transferring these ideas to the artistic ground, or rather, to the aesthetic one, Adorno explains *negativity* in multiple ways. First, he implies that there is a gap in reality which art has to fill in. The reality needs the saving "power" of art, covets it for "something back of the veil spun by the interplay of institutions and false needs, objectively *demands* art, and that it demands an art that speaks *for what the veil hides*."¹³ Thus, moving away from the paradigm of presentationism and from the realm of the

10 Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. by Dennis Redmond (N.p.: cooltexts, 2022), 13–7.

11 Ibid., 21–2.

12 Jeanne Willette, "Theodor Adorno and 'Negative Dialectics,'" *Arthistoryunstuffed* (blog), March 2, 2012, <https://arthistoryunstuffed.com/theodor-adorno-and-negative-dialectics/>.

13 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 18.

aesthetically pleasing alternate reality constructed by imagery and imagination, Adorno directs his focus towards art expressing truth-content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*). The concept here relates to the idea that art aims to acquaint its viewers with experiences that are shaped by social and historical factors. These experiences are not random in the sense of merely portraying specific viewpoints on reality; they rather strive to capture something akin to a profound understanding of the fundamental nature of human existence within a particular historical context.¹⁴ Unquestionably, the writers of the 1960s, extensively discussed below, initiated a race for exposing hidden truths,¹⁵ be it the suppressed and the censored, the conservative and the hierarchical, or the old-fashioned and the unheard. Moreover, the very essence of human existence within a specific historical milieu was unveiled at the expense of an intimate interplay between art and reality. Ukrainian intellectuals sought to elevate poetry to the status of an alternative religion, the Parisian avant-garde called for a revolution of minds, and American protest singer-songwriters unified people in social outbursts. All these endeavors aimed to exorcise the stark reality or, conversely, to replace it with the medium of art. This confluence led to the melding of mass and elite cultures, an expansion of artistic genres, and an increased emphasis on everyday life as a point of reference. This trajectory finds further support in another facet of Adorno's *negativity* – art's principle to "overcome itself, to go beyond its own concept in order to remain faithful to that concept."¹⁶

Further element that elucidates Adorno's perspective on negativity pertains to his contention that substantive art should not rest on conventional notions of beauty. Art, according to him, does not exist with the primary intention of eliciting gratification or engendering pleasure. This proposition finds its roots, in part, within the context of the persistent commodification of art that unfolded during the 1960s, a period marked by the gradual entanglement of the concept of pleasure with market dynamics. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Adorno does not outrightly dismiss the concept of beauty; rather, he argues that art ought to transcend the realm of deceptive aspirations and false impressions through a process of negation capable of inciting a state of reconciliation. What is this negation precisely? The deliberate acceptance of "the painful, and the dissonant, within which the work becomes self-reflective (and also semblant) manifestation of extreme self-differentiation, opposition, and non-

14 Espen Hammer, *Adorno's Modernism: Art, Experience and Catastrophe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 124.

15 Talking about exposing hidden truth, Jean-Paul Sartre acknowledges detective fiction as the dominant literary genre of the 1960s (See Michel Sicard, *Essais sur Sartre entretiens avec Sartre 1975-1979* (Paris: Galilee, 1989), 51). Same was Roland Barthes's intuition who claimed that in the literary text, "signs are always ambiguous; deciphering is always a choice" (See Roland Barthes, *Izbrannyye raboty. Semiotika. Poetika* [Selected works. Semiotics. Poetics] (Moscow: Ripol Classic, 1994), 224.

16 Robert Pippin, "Adorno, Aesthetic Negativity, and the Problem of Idealism," *Nonsite* 33 (December 1, 2020), accessed August 25, 2023, <https://nonsite.org/adorno-aesthetic-negativity-and-the-problem-of-idealism/>.

identity.”¹⁷ In more precise terms, artistic success hinges upon the capacity to encompass within itself its own negation, expressing tension between form and content,¹⁸ the one that “integrates thematic strata and details into its immanent law of form and in this integration at the same time maintain what resists it and the fissures that occur in the process of integration.”¹⁹ As we further substantiate, the progressive literary scene of the 1960s serves as an exemplification of these theses. Through deliberate efforts to depart from the prescribed, seek novelty, and shift towards the silenced (voices, motives, and techniques), while simultaneously confronting the enduring oppressive Other, literary works shed light on the inherent contradictions of the reality they are rooted in, while also exposing their own internal contradictions. Also, the disposition of the 1960s writers is one of the *discontent* with the interplay of content and form, which is reflected in their restlessness within the former and their constant experimentation within the latter.

Although the products of the 1960s seem pivotal to this analysis, for Adorno, it was “self-evident, that nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore, not its inner life, not its relation to the world, not even its right to exist ... The sea of the formerly inconceivable, on which around 1910 revolutionary art movements set out, did not bestow the promised happiness of adventure.”²⁰ Therefore, Adorno himself would likely not concur with our thesis about the 1960s embodying his concept of negativity as in delineating his conception of earnest, authentic, and progressive modernist artistic expression, he invokes a sense of nostalgia in his contemplation of figures such as Samuel Beckett, Alban Berg, Pablo Picasso, Arnold Schönberg, and Anton Webern. Simultaneously, he adopts a defensive position in response to the burgeoning experimental artistic endeavors of figures like Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, Yves Klein, and proponents of Fluxus. However, the limitations of Adorno’s predictive capacity, constrained by his passing in 1969, prevented him from envisioning the subsequent trajectory of art. What followed is the era that witnessed a paradigm shift characterized by the complete dissociation of artistic elements, the postmodern substitution of foundational notions, an unfettered indulgence in artistic play, and an unprecedented degree of market-driven influence. When assessed within this scale, the 1960s emerges as a temporal juncture denoting the culmination of a final phase of modernism. In our contemporary perspective, *this* very loss seems more rational to mourn and lament – a juncture that remained imbued with courage yet pregnant with the seeds of decline.

Last and overall, negativity in Adornian terms means the “straightforward denial of some positive function or argument,”²¹ hence the rupture, a shift in terms what he distinguishes as content and form (with the introduction of a third element,

¹⁷ Hammer, *Adorno’s Modernism*, 198.

¹⁸ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

²¹ Pippin, “Adorno.”

canon, in this analysis). In what follows, we are going to examine these literary changes that emerged during the 1960s proving the negativity to be an aesthetic foundation for the epoch.

Content Reform as a Facet of Negativity

In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno defines content as what undergoes change, something that is merely given, "partial events, motifs, themes, and their elaboration."²² Content shifts in literature, i.e. innovation in topicality and problematics, ideas and trends, conflicts and plots, do not happen by themselves, but are the result, as is customary, of external and internal factors. By external we mean those structures pointed out by Said: historical (significant vicissitudes affecting those who write), political (system, political regime, and form of government), and socio-economic (social stratification, ethnic, social, group identity, and class affiliation). Undoubtedly, there are always internal factors at play: the author's individual aesthetic paradigm, personal history (biographical and psychoanalytic aspects), identity, position in the cultural hierarchy, etc. It will be obvious and unmistakable to note there is always a mixture of those two causing textual changes; however, the period of the 1960s appears to be loaded with the former. In the USA, for instance, such factors as the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the assassination of President Kennedy, economic stabilization, and social movements influenced the literary landscape. Regarding France, the loss of colonies, the *trentes glorieuses* economic boom, post-war reconstruction, the May 1968 revolution, and *goshism* played a significant role. In Ukraine, two distinct periods can be identified: the late 1950s – early 1960s, characterized by the debunking of Stalin's cult, socio-critical movements, economic development, and international travel opportunities; and the second half of the 1960s, marked by a new wave of authoritarianism, hence stricter censorship, economic stagnation, and the decline of USSR-style socialism. Without going too much into historical complexities, we can conclude that all three areas of this research have a common intersection point, namely a radical break – historical, political, and social. The era of the 1960s has long been established as an era of change, and culture is no exception. In this transformative period, rooted in negativity, the thematic underpinnings of literary compositions underwent substantive metamorphic changes.

In all the three cases, content transformations are clearly visible with the emergence of the *counterculture*,²³ although the very term was widely popular and academically established only in the USA. Its mechanisms there encompassed a series

²² Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 147.

²³ In what follows on counterculture, we reference the yet unpublished conference proceedings: Yuliia Kulish, "The 1960s as a Landmark of Ukrainian Literary Emancipation (American and French Comparative Aspects)" (Paper presented at XXIII Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Tbilisi, Georgia, July 24–29, 2022).

of actions, including the challenging of conventional values, integrating what had been deemed “uncultured,” and elevating formerly marginalized narratives to the forefront of mainstream attention. These mechanisms work to reshape the norms governing narrative within literature, expanding the thematic setting, and paving the way for innovative modes of expression. Drawing inspiration from the deconstructive approaches of Mark Twain, J. D. Salinger, and Jack Kerouac, writers of the 1960s, “children of technocrats, critical of the absolutization of the role of objective consciousness,”²⁴ indeed demonstrate a transgressive strategy at the level of content. Richard Brautigan, Joan Didion, Richard Fariña, Ken Kesey, Norman Mailer, Thomas Pynchon, Diana di Prima, Tom Robbins and others delve into experiences that diverge from the accepted norms of American society, which was steeped in post-war ideals. These experiences encompass the realms of narcotics, psychopathy, nomadism, suicidal tendencies, and overall bordering on the unconventional. Through these narratives, representatives of the counterculture²⁵ movement meticulously dissect the core of orthodox American culture, particularly exposing the underpinnings of blind patriotism, rigid societal and gender roles, materialistic values, and the very notion of the “American dream.” Additionally, since the everyday life of the American 1960s was affected by extraordinary events – sexual revolution, anti-war and anti-authoritarian movements, regulation of the circulation of medicines and prohibited drugs – the prose absorbed alternative leitmotifs, since they themselves contained artistic elements, such as an unobvious setting, potential plots and images that could be collected simply “on the streets.” Among some notable cases of documenting the new reality are Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, an account of the bus, drug, and musical trips of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters; semi-biographical sketches of Richard Brautigan in *Trout Fishing in America*; Diana di Prima’s *Memoires of a Beatnik*, memories of the writer’s life in the masculine environment of beat culture; Iceberg Slim’s memoir *Pimp*, which tells about the author’s life in the black community; essays from Joan Didion’s *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* in the genre of new journalism, which widely covered aspects of American counterculture.²⁶

24 Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 55.

25 It is imperative to indicate that the “countercultural” milieu in the United States was predominantly shaped by and tailored to American men. A notable instance can be observed within the “Beat” generation, which historically has been closely linked to male writers until a more recent period. This particular phenomenon has been extensively examined and dissected within the realm of feminist critique; for an in-depth exploration, see Brenda Knight & Ann Charters, *Women of the Beat Generation: The Writers, Artists and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution* (Newbury Port: Conari Press, 1996); Joyce Johnson, *Minor Characters* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983); Mary Carden, *Women Writers of the Beat Era: Autobiography and Intertextuality (Cultural Frames, Framing Culture)* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018).

26 The popularity of the American counterculture increased to an extent that gave rise to a sprawling publishing network, driven by contributions from both individuals and institutions. Notably, the “Grove Press” publishing house assumed a pivotal role in this

In France, counterculture did not formally exist in the early 1970s,²⁷ but it was prevalent de facto given J. M. Yinger's broad definition of counterculture as "a theme of conflict with the dominant values of society, where the tendencies, needs, and perceptions of the member of the group are directly involved in the development and maintenance of its values"²⁸ or Westhues's – as "a set of beliefs and values which radically reject the dominant culture of a society and prescribe a certain alternative."²⁹ It was the 1960s that marked the beginning of a new artistic avant-garde in France: a new theater, a new novel, and a new wave in cinematography; and "newness" implies the denial and reinterpretation of the past. Vigilant openness to the unpredictable is generally a key characteristic of the French 1960s, which incidentally corresponds to the spirit of political struggle of those years³⁰ culminated in May 1968.

Therefore, it is possible to state that absurdist literature, nouveau roman, experimental poetry, and underground prose can be regarded as exemplars of the countercultural movement. Wallace Foley points out that in fostering a sharp opposition to the established and classical, in the "*absolutization of negation*,"³¹ French literary works of the 1960s reveal historical succession of surrealists of the 1920s,³² who were the first to express their commitment to rebellion, protest, pluralism, either with the play *Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry or the Dadaist manifesto. For instance, we may trace

phenomenon, producing works from both foreign avant-garde icons (like Ionesco, Beckett, and Robbe-Grillet) and local luminaries (such as Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, and Kerouac). An underground press, predominantly featuring free and politically radical publications like the *East Village Other* (1965–72), the *LA Free Press* (1964–78), and the *Berkeley Barb* (1965–80), along with smaller zines such as *Yugen* (1958–62), *Kulchur* (1960–66), *Kayak* (1964–84), *The Floating Bear* (1961–69), and *Fuck You* (1962–65), played a crucial role in disseminating new literature to the masses. This dissemination coincided with significant historical events like the assassination of J. Kennedy and M. L. King, as well as the conclusion of the Vietnam War, prompting people to become more actively involved in political matters and consequently seek literature that could genuinely reflect their reality.

- 27 Michael Rolland, "Actuel (1970-1975) et les contre-cultures des années 1968 en France," in 1968, *Entre Libération et Libéralisation* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 149–162, accessed August 25, 2023, <https://books.openedition.org/pur/101931?lang=en#ftn12>.
- 28 J. Milton Yinger, *Countercultures* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 23.
- 29 Kenneth Westhues, *Society's shadow: Studies in the Sociology of the Countercultures* (New York: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), 9–10.
- 30 Marko Juvan, "Literature, Theory and Politics of the Long '68: The Last Season of Modernism and Peripherality," *European Review* 29 (6) (2021): 744.
- 31 Yuri Uvarov, "Frantsuzskii psikhologicheskii roman 60-80 godov 20 veka (ideino-tematicheskii i zhanrovyye tendentsii [French psychological novel of the 1960-1980s (ideological, thematic, and genre trends)]," in Dmytro Zatonskyi, *Zhanrovoie raznoobrazie sovremennoi prozy Zapada [Genre Diversity of Modern Western Prose]* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1989), 137.
- 32 Wallace Fowlie, "A Stocktaking: French Literature in the 1960s," *Contemporary Literature* 11 (2) (1970): 137–54.

this continuity in the theater of the absurd, which emerged in the late 1950s and gained popularity in the 1960s through the works of Arthur Adamov, Samuel Beckett, and Eugene Ionesco. This theatrical movement embodies the Adornian concept of preserving non-identities³³ and reflects the spirit of the era with its atelic, semantically polymorphic, and existentialist nature. It resonates with the decline of dualistic thinking, the collapse of mythological systems, and the general confusion of being “on the threshold” of history, when everything is allowed and nothing is clear.³⁴ In similar way, the novel genre continued to evolve and introduce significant innovations despite the pressures of traditional fiction and censorship of the de Gaulle government.³⁵ The nouveau roman movement, represented by renowned authors such as Michel Butor, Marguerite Duras, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, and Nathalie Sarraute, rejected the traditional Balzac novel, emphasizing that the author should not claim to provide an exhaustive explanation of the world, but rather show it.³⁶ In parallel, censored literature also deviated from conventional themes, exemplified by Nicolas Genka, whose novel *L'Épi Monstre* faced publication bans until 2005.³⁷ The autofiction novel, alluding to the author's life, explored topics such as alcoholism, familial struggles, and incestuous relationships. Patrick McAvoy, with works like *Les Hauts Fourneaux* and *La Ballade*, offered experimental narrative perspectives, echoing the American counterculture's emphasis on marginal experiences.³⁸ Thus, in terms of content, French literature of the 1960s underwent significant transformations, especially compared to the first post-war years, obviously aimed at preserving the “emblematic value” of French literature, that is, at maintaining active contact with the French literary

33 Pertaining to this, the playwrights mentioned above engage with the French national landscape not so much through their nationality, but rather through their shared Francophone background, themselves identifying it as Irish, Romanian, and American, respectively.

34 The concept of absurdity can be traced back to the works of philosophers like Immanuel Kant (see Kimberly Baltzer-Jaray, “Absurdism: The Second Truth of Philosophy,” *Journal of Camus Studies* 3 (2013): 3–15) and Søren Kierkegaard (see Alexander Dru, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 603). However, it took on a contemporary resonance in Albert Camus's essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” This prevailing artistic theme emerged in the aftermath of a global catastrophe that left society bewildered and speechless – the Second World War.

35 Robert Netz, *Histoire de la Censure dans L'édition* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1997), 111–13.

36 Sarah Kay, Terence Cave & Malcolm Bowie, *A Short History of French Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 279.

37 Despite the fact that just in the 1960s his first novel *L'Épi Monstre* of 1961 won the Jean Cocteau award and the recognition of famous writers from abroad: Vladimir Nabokov, Yukio Mishima and Pier Paolo Pasolini intended to translate the novel into English, Japanese and Italian respectively. See Jacques Houis, “Transgressive Autofictions: Literary counterculture in 1960s Saint Germain-des-Pres,” *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 33 (3) (2013): 135.

38 Each story is recounted from the perspective of the fictional “I” crafted by the writer, e.g. the viewpoint of the deranged maniac, the hospitalized and ailing prostitute. See *ibidem*.

tradition threatened by the totalitarian regime.³⁹ Then, in the 1960s, when the tragedy of the war lost its primacy in the writers' reflections, space for experimentation with content gradually appeared.

In the Ukrainian context, distinguished by its departure from the capitalist and, at a minimum, more democratic trajectories of the USA and France, the countercultural manifestations of the 1960s unfolded in a distinctive manner. Creative freedom and avant-garde traditions were conditional and subdued due to lingering totalitarian control. Access to publications showcasing modern world literature was limited as the curtain was "too iron." As a result, an international-scale aesthetic dialogue was absent, unlike in America and France, where Americans celebrated new French literary forms,⁴⁰ while trends like William Burroughs's cut-up technique⁴¹ and other aesthetics of American origin⁴² were embraced by the French.

It is, of course, fruitful to evaluate Ukrainian counterculture through the lens of decolonial perspective. Alfred Crosby's assertion that, during the aforementioned period, "non-white" nations exhibited advancements but remained in the rear vis-à-vis predominantly white nations, presents an illuminating backdrop.⁴³ While a direct juxtaposition between the Ukrainian context of the 1960s and that of a "non-white" nation is not tenable, it undeniably offers a productive analytical parallel. Furthermore, as endorsed by Ewa Thompson, Ukraine was in *de facto* colonial dependence on Russian state entities. Nonetheless, this condition differed from the Western version of colonialism in several key dimensions: geographical proximity (Ukraine was located next to the metropolis), history (Ukraine had historical and cultural discourses related to the metropolis), and epistemology (Ukraine was targeted through the Russian monopoly on power and knowledge).⁴⁴ That is why, due to totalitarian restraint, the promising cultural breakthrough of the 1960s in Ukraine was destined to fade; however, it is inevitable to observe the distinct countercultural trajectory it embraced. As Taras Batenko states, Ukrainian literary 1960s "prematurely ceased to develop; although, most researchers believe that the 1960s in Ukraine is a creative search for new methods of struggle within the framework of the communist system."⁴⁵ Certainly, Roman Korohodskyi's perceptive insight that "literature under totalitarianism

39 Kay, *A Short History of French Literature*, 275.

40 Henri Peyre, *French Novelists of Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 360–1.

41 John D. Lyons, *The Cambridge Companion to French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 177.

42 Roger Asselineau, "The Impact of American Literature on French Writers," *Comparative Literature Studies* 14 (2) (1977): 132.

43 Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2.

44 Ewa Thompson, *Trubadury imperii: rosiiska literatura i kolonializm* [*Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*] (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2008), 39–71.

45 Taras Batenko, "Shistdesiatnytstvo – hrani intelektualnoi borotby" ["The Sixties as the Facet of Intellectual Struggle"], in Volodymyr Kvitnevyi, *U vyri shistdesiatnytskoho rukhu: pohliad z vidstani chasy* [*In the Maelstrom of the Sixties' Movement: a View from the Distance of Time*] (Lviv: Kameniar, 2003), 38.

metamorphoses into politics” is noteworthy here. In the context of Ukraine during the 1960s, the literary milieu *prominently echoed the discourse of protest*, particularly within the realm of politics. This inclination was predominantly driven by the historical continuity that compelled authors to embrace the tenets of Adornian negativity. Yevhen Sverstiuk defines the mindset of “the sixtiers” as “youthful idealism,” “the search for truth and an honest position,” “rejection, resistance to official literature and the entire apparatus of construction barracks.”⁴⁶ Practically, the protest reality⁴⁷ manifested through subversive actions such as distributing anti-Soviet and pro-Ukrainian materials, organizing readings, closed discussions, self-publishing, and demonstrations.

In terms of aesthetics, Ukrainian post-war literature’s protest discourse was characterized by a research character, analyticity, artistic exploration, and the humanistic essence of literature.⁴⁸ This phenomenon crystallized as a result of a partial departure from the dogmas of socialist realism, which had exerted its hegemonic sway over the Soviet landscape for more than two decades, particularly emerging during the latter half of the 1950s and the initial years of the 1960s. As the cult of Stalin was debunked and ideological pressure weakened, writers seized the opportunity to shift their thematic focus toward realms of national identity and ethical contemplation, thereby engaging with “forbidden” subject matters rooted in axiological principles⁴⁹ (Lina Kostenko, Mykola Kholodnyi, Vasyl Stus, Yevhen Sverstiuk, and Hryhir Tiutiunnyk). Therefore, the phenomenological definition of the general aesthetic tendencies among emerging writers during that era could potentially be construed apophatically: the progressive literary expressions of the 1960s aspired to stand as an *antithesis* to socialist realism. Halyna Hrymych highlights that the protest took various forms, including conscious avoidance of sociological topics and an antisocial approach, focusing on neutral and predominantly universal subjects.⁵⁰ The shift in themes moved away from Soviet aesthetics of collective practices, monumentality, futurity, and industrialization towards a different portrayal of everyday life. The new focus centered on individuals, exploring personal experiences through aesthetics that unite people based on human nature rather than state affiliation.⁵¹ Notably, intimate and

46 Natalia Zahoruiko, *Taborovyi epistolarii ukrainiskhykh shistdesiatnykiv* [Camp Epistolary of the Ukrainian Sixtiers] (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2018), 49.

47 Luidmyla Tarnashynska, *Ukrainske shistdesiatnytstvo: profili na tli pokolinnia* [Ukrainian Sixtiers: Profiles against the Background of the Generation] (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2010), 543.

48 Halyna Hrymych, *Zahadka tvorchoho buntu: novelistyka ukrainskykh shistdesiatnykiv* [The Riddle of Creative Rebellion: Novels of the Ukrainian Sixtiers] (Kyiv: Ukrainskyi pysmennyk, 1993), 59.

49 Luidmyla Tarnashynska, “Dyskurs shistdesiatnytstva v ukraiinskii literaturi 20 stolittia” [“Discourse of the Sixtiers in Ukrainian Literature of the 20th Century”] (Thesis abstract, Kyiv: NAN Ukrainy, 2014), 1.

50 Hrymych, *Zahadka tvorchoho buntu*, 37–8.

51 Leonid Novychenko stated, “what unites the pursuits of young novelists, this common denominator will still be: the desire to present an individual in the unadulterated truth of their actions and experiences, an attraction to in-depth psychological analysis, and

philosophical poetry such as the works of Ivan Drach, Vitalii Korotych, Vasyl Symonenko, Dmytro Pavlychko, Mykola Vinhranovskyi, and Iryna Zhylenko serve as illustrations.

In addition, being countercultural in Ukraine implied possessing "semi-censored" literary works, mostly read underground. Works by Camus, Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and Sartre were commonly circulated, while discreet channels facilitated the distribution of Western literary treasures from earlier epochs.⁵² Consequently, Ukrainian literature that was constrained by limited access to contemporary content revitalized itself by drawing inspiration from the rich historical heritage: both foreign and national. As for the latter, Ukrainian writers turned to their literary predecessors, such as Mykola Kulish, Mykola Khvylovyi, and Mykhailo Semenko, finding thematic and ideological connections with the semi-forbidden generation of the 1920s,⁵³ akin to the dynamic observed within the French context. This allowed for creative expressions to flourish, compensating for the absence of contemporary influences. For example, Osyp Zinkevych mentions how Oles Honchar spoke about young poetry at the IIIrd Plenum of the SPU [Union of Ukrainian Writers],⁵⁴ imitating the techniques of early Pavlo Tychyna and the monumentality of Olexandr Dovzhenko. Thus, the young poets who inscribed their names in the chronicles of the "Ukrainian poetic revolution" with their poetry collections of 1962 deliberately engaged with the roots of early modern Ukrainian poetry. They diverged from the orbit of socialist reality and gravitated toward individualistic realms, while also immersing themselves within the revolutionary vortex that encapsulated the global 1960s. Works such as Ivan Drach's *Soniashnyk*, Borys Oliynyk's *Biut u krytsiu kovaly*, Vasyl Symonenko's *Tyshha i hrim*, Mykola Vinhranovskyi's *Atomni preliudy* – soon banned from distribution⁵⁵ – were perceived as *countercultural phenomena*, heralding narratives of a new world. Disrupting established norms and foregrounding marginalized themes to transcend the confines of conventional content parameters were undeniable priorities for writers of the 1960s. This pursuit aimed to uphold and perpetuate an aesthetic branch that diverged from official doctrines. Such themes encompassed personal mythology, as exemplified by Vasyl Holoborodko and Iryna Zhylenko, and the cultivation of civic responsibility, as

attempts in one way or another to depart from traditional descriptive forms." See Leonid Novychenko, "Novobranty" ["The Newcomers"], *Literaturnaia Hazeta* 8 (1962).

52 Including works by Walt Whitman, Pablo Neruda, Nazim Hikmet, and René Char. See Taras Pastukh, *Kyivska shkola poetiv ta yiyi otochennia* [Kyiv School of Poetry and its Environment] (Lviv: LNU imeni Ivana Franka, 2010), 157.

53 This tendency is quite clear: as Vira Aheieva says, the 1920s is the only period in Ukrainian literature that aesthetically coincided with the trends of European literature. Vira Aheieva, "Ukrainian Literature of the Modern Period" (course of lectures, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, March 2018).

54 One of the regular meetings of the Writers' Union of Ukraine.

55 Osyp Zinkevych, "Moloda poeziia v Ukraini 1960-1963 rr. i yiyi rozhrom" [Young Poetry in Ukraine of 1960-1963 and its Crackdown], *Literaturna Ukraina* 14 (5302) (2009), accessed August 25, 2023, <https://museum.khpg.org/1457121207>.

pursued by figures like Vitalii Korotych, Vasyl Symonenko, and Vasyl Stus. Furthermore, the exploration of alternative manifestations of collectivity and the engagement with philosophical subjects, as undertaken by Ivan Drach and Mykola Vinhranovskyi, became integral. Equally noteworthy were the apolitical discourses rooted in surrealistic, hermetic, and mythological trends – a hallmark of the Kyiv School of Poetry (Mykola Vorobiov, Viktor Kordun, Vasyl Ruban), together with their role in outlining a new folklorism in poetry.⁵⁶

Another area questioned was intra-Ukrainian content conservatism and the dominance of the realistic genre namely the descriptive-ethnographic narrative and traditional dramatic scenarios. Their review and reassessment are characteristic, for example, of Hryhir Tiutiunnyk, who, according to Oksana Zabuzhko, “managed to brutally and mercilessly show the ruin of traditional peasant ethno culture”⁵⁷ through narratives like *Vohnyk daleko v stepu* and *Klymko*. Valerii Shevchuk’s early prose bearing the seeds of magical realism (*Sered tyzhnia*, *Naberezhna 12*, *Seredokrestia*), is similarly emblematic of these shifting currents. Cumulatively, these dynamics contributed to the emergence of a burgeoning stylistic polyvariability⁵⁸ within Ukrainian literature, encompassing neo-romantic, neo-realist, and impressionist tendencies. Consequently, the protest-oriented literary movement of the Ukrainian 1960s earnestly sought “a new artistic form, new rhythms, new music of the word.”⁵⁹

Upon observation, it becomes apparent that all three literary domains of the 1960s are determined by the dominant shifts in content – a mechanism launched by the counterculture of varying intensity. A prevailing theme involves the assimilation of everyday concerns into narrative frameworks that considers both personal and collective liberation, as well as existential exploration. The archetypal figure from the 1960s is, then, an individual engaged in a profound metamorphosis, exploring the intricacies of the world, their own identity, and philosophical quandaries. Picturing not only a universal hero but also marginalized existences assumed crucial roles within the literary panorama, casting a spotlight on individuals relegated to obscurity, lower strata of society, and those at odds with the sanctioned discourse. Embedded within this semantic revolution, is a transformation spotlighted by Michel Foucault, tracing an evolution in literature’s trajectory from the 1940s to the 1960s. He suggests that the postwar literature commonly labeled as “humanistic,” in effect, delved into the exploration of meaning, raising profound inquiries about the essence of humanity, the world, and humanity’s place within it. In contrast, the literature of the 1960s introduced something entirely different – “that which opposes meaning, that is, is itself a sign, or even a language” was added.⁶⁰ To explore this aspect, it is necessary to research the formal dimension of literature, a pivotal element that contributes to the negativism characteristic of the 1960s.

56 Pastukh, *Kyivska shkola poetiv*, 160.

57 Oksana Zabuzhko, *Chronicles from Fortinbras: Selected Essays of the 90s* (Kyiv: Fakt, 1990), 166.

58 Tarnashynska, *Dyskurs shistdesiatnytstva*, 17.

59 Zinkevych, “Moloda poeziia.”

60 Tel Quel, “‘Une littérature nouvelle?’ Décade de Cerisy,” *Tel Quel* 9 (1963): 38.

Formal Experiment as a "Negative" Expression

While the content outline of literature naturally undergoes fluctuation, the evolution of its form – "the quintessence of all elements of logicity, or, more broadly, coherence in artworks"⁶¹ – appears to be a profound journey. It took centuries for the transition from rhymed verses to the free ones, from conventional novels to anti-novels, and the validation of media like new journalism side by side with fictional narratives. Undoubtedly, the 1960s witnessed a metamorphosis etching itself within the very fabric of consciousness: as societal conventions underwent scrutiny, so too did the boundaries of creative expression. Thus, the formal experiments – in the poetry and prose of France, Ukraine, and the USA – are characterized by a turn towards avant-garde, the pronounced prevalence of poetry, and the emergence of innovative intermediate genres.

The progressive poetry of the American 1960s is mostly free verse favored by the Black Mountain School, New York School, Black Arts Movement, and The San-Francisco School. Spontaneous poetry, monograms, intermedia forms like singer-songwriter ventures, performances, prose poetry, and slam have become closely intertwined with the vibrant cohort of young American artists. For a general illustration, it is worth noting at least the monosyllabic and repetitive poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks (*We real cool*, 1960), the sprawling and eventful passages of Allen Ginsberg (*Howl*, 1955; *The Lion for Real*, 1961), the lapidary poems of Richard Creeley (*For Love*, 1964), and "breath line"⁶² by Chales Olson (*The Maximus Poems*, 1960). American poetry traces "the disorganized, but still effective cooperation of historically different avant-gardes, who are now ready to restore the relations of culture and politics, which after fifteen post-war years of 'consolidation' managed to naturalize."⁶³ Likewise, we can trace similar tendencies towards expansion of literary laws in the world of prose. Norman Mailer's polemical metaphor embedded within the experimental structure of a stream of consciousness in the novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, interspersed with the protagonist's "recordings" of radio broadcasts; Pynchon's labyrinthine and entwined plot narratives marked by a "paranoid" disposition in *The Crying of Lot 49*; Joan Didion's utilization of multiple focal points in the novel *Play It as It Lays*; and John Barth's endeavor in *Lost in the Funhouse* to rejuvenate the meta-artistic portrayal of reality – instances serve as exemplars highlighting formal innovations within American fiction.

61 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 140.

62 Olson argued that a poem should be founded on the human breath rather than on rhyme, meter, or sense. He asserted, "Verse now, 1950, if it is to go ahead, if it is to be of essential use, must, I take it, catch up and put into itself certain laws and possibilities of the breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well as of his listenings." See Charles Olson, *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), 239.

63 Al Filreis, "Introduction to the poetry and poetics of 1960," in Al Filreis, *Poetry in 1960, a symposium*, accessed August 25, 2023, <https://jacket2.org/article/introduction-poetry-and-poetics-1960>.

In the realm of French literature, analogous inclinations toward liberating the artistic narrative manifest through engagement with the legacy of the avant-garde. This approach hinges on intermediacy as a pivotal artistic instrument, interweaving poetry and performance, political activism, and theoretical propositions. The Lettrist movement, subsequently metamorphosing into the Situationist International and Ultra-lettrism, reconfigures the conventions of the poetic genre by embarking on experimentation with “phonetic poetry.” François Dufrêne, inspired by Isidore Isou, christened his poetic creations as “improvised screams” or “crirythme.”⁶⁴ The situationists, led by figures like Ivan Chtcheglov, Attila Kotányi, Patrick Straram, and others, tried to transpose poetry onto the streets, thus catalyzing the metamorphosis of everyday existence. Employing revolutionary techniques such as deployment (known as *detournement*) and the formulation of *situations*,⁶⁵ they confronted and subverted the prevailing political and aesthetic order, wresting the environment from the encroaching clutches of capital. Within this context, poetry emerged as a formidable instrument in their arsenal, capable of disrupting and reshaping the world around them. Hence, the situationists extended an offering of the “poetry of life,” achieved through practices like the drift (*derivé*)—an exploration of urban landscapes guided by the aesthetic impressions and inner drives of the individual subject. OuLiPo, a group founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais, also ardently advocates for this linkage between poetry and the tapestry of everyday life. Termed “potential literature,” their literary oeuvre delves into imaginative configurations constrained by well-defined limits and rules.⁶⁶ These parameters encompass techniques such as the “N+7” formula, visual poetry, and collage. While the principles upheld by the Oulipians bear distinct echoes of high modernism, their endeavors, predominantly rooted in formal experimentation, obviously foreshadow the postmodern notion that “literature” inherently functions as a linguistic game, rather than a mere vehicle for the depiction of reality. However, to categorize their literature as conventionally postmodern would be inadequate, given its enduring connection to a genuine aspiration for transformation, advancement, and rejuvenation inherent in the context of the 1960s. Alongside, the advent of the nouveau roman ushered in a wave of innovative experimentation within the domain of prose. This encompassed cinematic narrative techniques, implicit narrators, recurrent motifs, objectivist descriptions (referred to as *l'école du regard*), internal duplications (*mises en abyme*), *tropism*, and *chosism*. Renowned figures such as Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet asserted that “the subordination of form to content led to socialist realism, which was simply a revolutionary parody of (Balzac’s) bourgeois realism of the nineteenth century.”⁶⁷

64 Experimental poetic pieces consisting of clicks, coughs, sobs, and laughter.

65 More on that see <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/>.

66 Andrew Gallix, “Oulipo: freeing literature by tightening its rules,” *The Guardian*, accessed August 25, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/jul/12/oulipo-freeing-literature-tightening-rules>.

67 Danielle Marx-Scouras, “The nouveau roman and Tel Quel,” in Joe Bray, Alison Gibbons, and Brian McHale, *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 94.

Consequently, they championed a literary trajectory that would embrace progressive formal constructs. The avant-garde periodical *Tel Quel*, which ventured to grapple with "fundamental issues of language, without which literature would cease to exist,"⁶⁸ aligned itself with the methodologies of the neo-novelists. For instance, Phillipe Sollers's novel *Park* (1961) employed multiple narrative perspectives and symbolic modes, foregrounding the very tragedy inherent in language itself. Equally compelling shifts unfold within the domain of the psychological novel tradition. In Jean-Marie Le Clézio's semi-pistolary work *Le Procès-verbal* (1963), the author casts aside ties to naturalistic narrative, firmly ensconced in the French literary tradition, and instead delves into a multifaceted exploration of human madness. Here, fiction and the spatial dimensions of the novel seamlessly meld, forming a compelling symbiosis.

Ukrainian literature underwent a fresh reconfiguration of formal boundaries in a similar way, although faced with the restrictive regulations. During the 1960s, Ukrainian writers recalibrated their artistic compass to poetry as a prevailing form of artistic expression. Its innate attributes – fluid dissemination, ease of reproduction, and memorability – combined with its linkages to national mythology and its capacity to allude to deeply ingrained themes, bestowed upon it a unifying potency distinct from socialist or Russian influences. This simultaneous endeavor to uphold historical continuity amidst censorship and persecution not only reclaimed an avenue for countercultural expression but also charted an alternate course. Thus, Ivan Drach stepped forward with his free verses, Vitalii Korotych mastered hermetic poetry, and Mykola Vinhranovskyi embraced new rhythmical directions.⁶⁹ Another major cluster of formal experiment within the 1960s emerged as the Kyiv School of Poetry. In its works, "the form-creating principle played an active constructive role and determined the ideological and expressive tendency of the text."⁷⁰ Whether embodied through the hermetically woven free verse of Mykola Vorobiov or the monologues of Vasyl Holoborodko – these literary endeavors effectively introduced pioneering innovations to literature. In the realm of prose, it is noteworthy that Soviet literary critics expressed dissatisfaction with the works of Yevhen Hutsalo, Hryhir Tiutiunnyk, and Valerii Shevchuk. The critics accused the writers of distorting both ideological and artistic content by employing formalistic devices.⁷¹ According to Halyna Hrymych, authors like Shevchuk, Hutsalo, and Mushketyk were criticized for "using 'truncated' phrases and paragraphs, 'broken' composition, complicated figurative associations, etc."⁷² This critique is not incidental, as these writers were gradually gravitating towards plotless narrative solutions. As Tiutiunnyk observed, "Now, more than ever, prose should

68 Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 21.

69 Although cast within the Soviet milieu as apologists of formalism and abstractionism, they were, in fact, adherents of the innovative literary tradition rooted in the 1920s. See Zinkevych, "Moloda poeziia."

70 Pastukh, *Kyivska shkola poetiv*, 204.

71 Hrymych, *Zahadka tvorchoho buntu*, 18.

72 Hrymych, *Zahadka tvorchoho buntu*, 57.

embrace the conciseness akin to oral storytelling,”⁷³ emphasizing that form is crucial for circulation of information and consolidation of society. The expansion and diversification of artistic prose forms was further catalyzed by the broadening of genres to encompass non-fictional realms, including memoirs, essays, diary literature, and correspondence. Owing to the constraints of censorship, these genres at times became the most potent conduits for disseminating artistic ideas.⁷⁴

Therefore, the formal transformations within the literature of the 1960s, as observed in the three studied geographical domains, encompass several key elements. These include the merging of fictional and non-fictional genres, the liberalization of form with the rise of free and experimental verse, and the emergence of postmodern formal trends (such as collage, multiple focalization, a “floating” narrator, and a departure from traditional plot structures). Explaining this formal revolution, Julia Kristeva aptly highlighting that the formalist reaction “of the late 1950s and early 1960s is explained by a rebellion against the romantic, pompous and pathetic rhetoric of the post-war years,”⁷⁵ which means “that subjective or the rhetorical swelling that our fathers created to protect themselves from the devastating suffering of war, the suffering that they used to construct their martyrdom with.”

Canon Reshaped: Transformative Potential of Negativity

We have discerned how the progression of literature is driven by a synergy of content and formal innovations, a momentum originating from the Adornian concept of negative gesture. Furthermore, this dynamic interplay and inherent tension between them naturally catalyze the expansion and enrichment of the literary canon. Although the literary canon in France, Ukraine, and the USA followed different historical paths of formation, expansion, censorship, and standardization, the 1960s were certainly a period of unanimous reading list expansion. As for the USA, since the American identity is formed rhetorically – from the belief in a certain corpus of texts,⁷⁶ *the aesthetic protest* of the 1960s is realized through the comprehensive canon reformation.

73 Anatolii Shevchenko, *Vichna zagadka liubovi: literaturna spadshchyna Hryhora Tiutiunnyka, spohady pro pysmennyka* [*The Eternal Mystery of Love: The Literary Heritage of Hryhir Tiutiunnyk, Memories of the Writer*] (Kyiv: Radianskyi pysmennyk, 1988), 56.

74 During the 1960s, a substantial number of Ukrainian writers turned to these genres for their literary expression. To provide a representative overview, it is essential to acknowledge the contributions of figures such as Vasyl Stus (diaries, letters), Ivan Dziuba (notes), Vasyl Symonenko (diaries), Ivan Svitlychnyi (letters), Hryhir Tiutiunnyk (notes), and numerous others.

75 Julia Kristeva, “My Memory’s Hyperbole,” in Domna C. Stanton and Jeanine Parisier Plottel, *The Female Autograph* (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1984), 263.

76 Natalia Vysotska, “National Mythology in American Literature and Culture,” (Lecture, A series of workshops in honor of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Ukraine “Stronger Together,” January 10, 2022).

A previously marginalized spectrum of voices, particularly those of women writers and representatives from various minority groups, emerged prominently for the first time. The 1960s became the era of social movements for women's rights, identifying the flaws in the ideal image of the American family, where the only possible role for a woman was that of a happy homemaker who takes care of her husband and children. Similar changes are taking place in the world of literature. Elaine Showalter delivers a talk, *Women and the Literary Curriculum*, where she points to the need to include women writers in literature lists, which, surprisingly, had been problematic until then.⁷⁷ Despite this, during the 1960s a number of American women writers such as Elizabeth Bishop, Harper Lee, Flannery O'Connor, Kathryn Anne Porter, and Jean Stafford attracted critical attention. In 1963, two revolutionary books were published: Betty Friedan's nonfiction *The Feminine Mystique*, where the author criticizes the everyday life of the "typical American woman," quoting excerpts of interviews with various women that confirm Friedan's thesis about the "unnamed disease" that they suffered from (by which she meant social and gender inequality). The second publication is the fictional novel *The Group* by Mary McCarthy, which offers a candid portrayal of the harsh realities of female education in America and the restrictive societal conditions that women are compelled to navigate throughout their lives. One cannot ignore Sylvia Plath, who became an icon in the poetic community and a role model among young women. With a satirical critique of the gendered conservatism, whether it be marital obligations or professional choices, Sylvia Plath became part of the canon as soon as her posthumous collection *Ariel* publicly appeared in 1965. Thus, activism for women's rights also entered the cultural sphere, growing out of the politically engaged feminist movements of the time.

In addition, the literary landscape saw the inclusion of writers from diverse minority backgrounds, such as those associated with the Black Arts Movement. Notable works included James Baldwin's influential collection of essays *The Fire Next Time* (1963), which featured the powerful text *My Dungeon Shook – Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of Emancipation*. Recounting the long-ignored pain of a person with an African American identity, Baldwin addresses his provocative essays to a white audience that could not comprehend the extent of racial injustice. Other significant anthologies like *Soon, One Morning: New Writing by American Negroes, 1940-1962* (1963), edited by Herbert Hill, and *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (1968), edited by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal, made notable contributions. Vince Passaro points out that during those years, "African American studies had an exceptional influence on American academia and culture in general."⁷⁸ The remarkable influence is exemplified by the increasing inclusion of African American authors in anthologies like Langston Hughes in Walter Lowenfels'

77 For example, Gwendolyn Brooks and Elizabeth Bishop, laureates of the Pulitzer Prizes in 1950 and 1956 respectively, are not mentioned at all in the poetry anthologies *New Poets of England and America* (1957) and *The New American Poetry, 1945-1960* (1960).

78 Vince Passaro, "Black Letters on a White Page," *Harper's Magazine* (July 1997): 70.

Poets of Today (1964).⁷⁹ Notable names such as Ed Ballins, Eldridge Cleaver, Jane Cortes and Marie Evans gained increasing prominence, legitimizing the 1960s as a transformative period when literature embraced broader perspectives. Overall, Emory Elliott states that “the vast majority of women writers and self-conscious ethnic writers tried to rewrite the past in order to faithfully recreate previously distorted events or figures.”⁸⁰

The question surrounding the canon was also a matter of concern within the French context. In the 1960s, emerging movements such as the New Critics and Structuralisms challenged the prevailing notion that the literary “canon” inherently embodied humanistic values. Instead, they put forth the idea that the canon itself underwent an evolutionary process, where certain authors and genres were favored while others were excluded or rejected.⁸¹ When a young French author of the 1960s wonders why she should follow Racine or Balzac, she emphasizes not the historical longing, but the *breaking* of ties with history. Thus, France in the 1960s gave birth to the later concept of women’s writing, *écriture féminine*, which was first brought to the attention by Hélène Cixou in the essay *Le Rire de la Méduse* in 1975 – writing free from the conventional rules of the patriarchal system. However, as early as the beginning of the 1960s, when the second wave of feminism exploded under the slogan “the personal is political,”⁸² French female writers increasingly published in popular publishing houses (Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Yourcenar, Monique Wittig, Violette Leduc, Nathalie Sarraute, Andrée Chédeville, and Edmonde Charles-Roux). Similar to the situation in the USA, the French canon is expanding to include not only representatives of mainland France, but also francophone literature from the colonized lands: Patrick Chamoiseau, Amin Maalouf, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Kateb Yacine, Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Feraoun. Additionally, the magazine *Tel Quel* emerged as a captivating hub for the canon’s revision, seeking to reinvigorate the avant-garde movement by bridging the realms of art and politics.⁸³ It aimed to lay to rest “obsolete ideas” grounded in the

79 While in the aforementioned anthologies *New Poets of England and America* (1957) and *The New American Poetry, 1945–1960* (1960), Amiri Baraka is the only non-white author, the 1964 anthology *Poets of Today*, edited by Walter Lowenfels, already had 15 African American authors poets and writers among its total 85 authors. Moreover, we can see the poem *Prologue* written by Langston Hughes on the first page of the anthology.

80 Emory Elliott, “Enduring Myths / Disturbing Realities: The U.S. Meets the 21st Century,” in *Mainstream – Heterogeneity – Canon in Current American Literature, Proceedings of the Third International Conference on American Literature, Kyiv, October 2–3, 2005* (Kyiv: Fact, 2006), 48.

81 David Coward, *A History of French Literature. From Chanson de geste to Cinema* (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 446.

82 Kyra Krall, “A Brief History of French Feminism,” *Feminists in the City* (blog), accessed August 25, 2023, <https://www.feministsinthecity.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-french-feminism>.

83 Susan Rubin Suleiman, “As Is,” in Denis Hollier, *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 1013.

foundations of "nature, humanism, and tragedy."⁸⁴ Instead, it sought to champion revolutionary authors like Georges Bataille, Andre Breton, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. This marked a departure from post-war French literature, including the works of Albert Camus, Vercors, and D. Anselme.

In Ukraine, the pursuit of "expanding the creative boundaries of socialism,"⁸⁵ ultimately led to the neglect of those very boundaries. Consequently, the transformation of the canon became an inevitable outcome, as the values themselves underwent a metamorphosis. According to Yevhen Sverstiuk, during the times of socialist realism, "everything lost its significance and meaning; a person lost their face and any weight; the word weathered; the language was littered and despised,"⁸⁶ so the first step was the "internal" cancellation of the socialist realist canon. The term "internal" is used here primarily because, officially, literature sympathetic to Soviet prescriptions still prevailed in 1960s. According to Oleksii Zaretskyi,⁸⁷ the ideological and ethno-cultural systems of the official USSR discourse, particularly during that period, were built upon two main pillars: the dichotomy of "good and evil" and a form of scientific truth rooted in folk wisdom, thereby resulting in a pseudo-syncretism. Consequently, official literature was bound by these less progressive norms, while the emergence of the "new word" relied on individual efforts showcased in publications like *Literaturna Ukraina*, *Dnipro*, or *Vitchyzna*, as well as other local periodicals, eventually supplemented by self-published literature. Nevertheless, according to Taras Batenko, this tradition faced a weakening effect due to the inherent aversion of the 1960s towards "peasantism" and "regression."⁸⁸ He explains that writers of that era "went on the road without real teachers and without much respect for their parents, that is, officially recognized writers."⁸⁹ This can be attributed to the prevailing aesthetic sensibilities of the previous two decades, characterized by an overabundance of uncritical humanism, collectivist fervor, and a dualistic worldview. In response to this climate, writers were driven to seek inspiration from relevant voices of the past: those from the Nadniprianshchyna (Central Dnieper) region sought guidance from the "Ukrainization" period, while those from Galicia found solace in the works of Ivan Franko.⁹⁰ As a result, figures such as Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Mykola Kulish, Olha Kobylianska, Mykola Khvylovyi, Pavlo Tychyna, and Mykhailo Zerov were "reclaimed" and reintegrated into the canon as newly recognized literary "parents." Hence, it can be asserted that writers from Ukraine during the 1960s formulated a distinct private alternative canon spanning multiple

84 Ibid., 1012.

85 Batenko, "Shistdesiatnytstvo," 45.

86 Yevhen Sverstiuk, "Shistdesiatnyky i Zahid" ["The Sixtiers and the West"], in Yevhen Sverstiuk, *Bludni syny Ukrainy* [*Prodigal Sons of Ukraine*] (Kyiv: Znannia, 1993), 28.

87 Oleksii Zaretskyi, *Oftsiiyni ta alternatyvnyi dyskursy: 1950–1980 roky v USSR* [*Official and Alternative Discourses: 1950–1980s in the USSR*] (Kyiv: Fitosociotsentr, 2003), 32–5.

88 Batenko, "Shistdesiatnytstvo," 42.

89 Yevhen Sverstiuk, "Ukrainska literaturna i hrystyianska tradytsiia [Ukrainian Literary and Christian Tradition]," *Suchasnist* 12 (1992): 143–4.

90 Batenko, "Shistdesiatnytstvo," 42.

domains: the preceding generation of national literature, the semi-censored literary output of the 1930s-1940s mentioned earlier, the alternative literature cultivated within the confines of the Soviet Union,⁹¹ and their emerging canon of young writers who pursued a divergent trajectory.

Equally significant is the fact that the evolution of the literary canon often gives rise to parallel transformations in critical and theoretical discussions. The 1960s witnessed a notable phenomenon of terminological revision, which played a pivotal role in reshaping the contours of the literary canon. Foremost, there was a crucial redefinition of the fundamental concept of “literature” itself. Paul Lawter’s analysis underscores how this process, particularly evident in the United States, catalyzed “the diversification of the subject, which began in the late 1960s, and had a more general effect – the loosening of the knots of the literary canon. This legitimized a much broader concept of who and what is considered important for the study of literature – what exactly is meant by the term ‘literature.’”⁹² Among other things, the 1960s marked a boom in American publishing sphere, with an array of both modest and prominent literary magazines such as *Partisan Review*, *Evergreen Review*, *Poetry*, *Floating Bear*, *White Dove Review*, *Wild Dog*, and many others. On these pages, literary critics including Morris Dickstein, Mary McCarthy, Lionel Trilling, and many others offered insightful reviews on contemporary phenomena. In doing so, they not only increased the recognition of these phenomena but also gave them legitimacy. Similar trajectories were present in France, as noticed by Wallace Foley, who observes that “most of the new poetry and criticism were attempts to define poetry. Both the old and the young are increasingly concerned with the question: what is literature?”⁹³ In their engagement with critical works by figures such as Baudelaire, Flaubert, Mallarmé, Malraux, Proust, the surrealists, and Sartre, the writers of that emergent epoch increasingly turned to theoretical discourse. At the same time, in tandem with the prevailing current of American literary criticism, often aligned with the tenets of new criticism, figures like Sarraute, Ionesco, Butor, not to omit the regular contributors of the *Tel Quel* group, begin to deliver lectures, assume instructional roles, and build their own theoretical proposal regarding the future of fiction. In the context of Ukrainian literature, Vitalii Donchyk asserts that, “the second half of the 1960s is characterized by a whole range of criticism.”⁹⁴ Within this milieu, questions of definition

91 The cultural “exchange” among socialist republics was artificially prompted by the concept of the “friendship of peoples,” enabling the Ukrainian literary milieu to forge connections with diverse scenes across the Union. Occasionally, these connections had adverse repercussions within the prevailing oppressive environment, resulting in notable subversive dialogues among prospective dissidents. Noteworthy instances include Serhii Parajanov’s involvement in the Ukrainian cultural movement or other figures’ influence, such as Oleksander Ginsburg or Viktor Nekrasov.

92 David Wyatt, *American Literature in Transition, 1960–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 363.

93 Fowlie, “A Stocktaking,” 137–54.

94 Vitalii Donchyk, *Hrani suchasnoii prozy: literaturno-krytychnyi narys* [Edges of Modern Prose: a Literary and Critical Essay] (Kyiv: Radianskyi pysmennyk, 1970), 310.

became particularly important: literature acquired novel connotations within the critical contributions of figures such as Yuriy Badzo, Mykola Ilnytskyi, Mykhailyna Kotsyubynska, Margaryta Malynovska, Vasyl Stus, Ivan Svitlychnyi, and many more.

During the 1960s, the literary sphere was witnessing a distinctive uprising against established canonical norms. This resistance expressed its diversity through endeavors that ranged from challenging male-centric narratives in the United States and questioning fundamental literary conventions in France to rejecting totalitarian mandates in Ukraine. As clarified by Jacques Rancière, such form of dissent carries out aesthetic functions intertwined with the political landscape.⁹⁵ It introduces a fresh aesthetics that sparks a political perspective against the limitations imposed by the establishment, shaping the boundaries of what can be perceived.⁹⁶ Thus, trying to widen the limits of the canon signifies a broader effort to redistribute the sensible – an act of critiquing the Other from within the circle. This recurring theme captures a distinct essence of negativity.

Conclusions

The literature of the 1960s within the geographical regions we have examined, marked by distinct political, historical, and socio-economic characteristics, bears a common aesthetic principle of negativity. Drawing on Adorno's ideas, we interpret it as an effort to challenge the aesthetic status quo, aiming to shift the conceptual focus towards the non-identical. This negative trajectory of the 1960s has catalyzed the emergence and evolution of countercultural movements. In all three examined contexts, these movements find practical support through the rise of underground publishing sphere and alternative artistic groups. Also, they are supported conceptually through counterculture-produced literature that challenges proclaimed norms and subverts the dominant discourse, expanding the boundaries of artistic expression. As stated earlier, negativity played a key role in shaping the aesthetics of the 1960s, bringing about changes in artistic content, form, and canon. Additionally, two additional aspects deserve closer examination here: dissent and existentialism. While not the central focus of this article, these aesthetic tendencies contribute to the formation of the concept of global literary connections, highlighting the universality of that era. Understanding their roles and how they interact with negativity is a fundamental aspect of this research into the 1960s.

Having established how negativity can shape the aesthetic *modus operandi* of various literary landscapes, our subsequent logical inquiries naturally lead towards the genesis of these aesthetic universals. It is also worthwhile to contemplate how these universals deepen our understanding of literature as a facet of reality. These queries

95 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 15–21.

96 Ibid.

prompt the need for versatile discussions and innovative approaches. However, at a basic level, when considering this specific era of the 1960s, a catalyst of immense magnitude – a catastrophic event, namely the WWII – becomes evident. It brings in new perspectives influenced by a detachment from its aftermath, encouraging a stronger inclination to embrace novelty and explore uncharted trajectories. Another pivotal catalyst in this transformative process could be confrontation: the emergence of an adversary, a distinct Other, mirrored in literature by the notion of the “outdated,” “totalitarian,” “bourgeois” juxtaposed with the aspiration for “progress.”

Concerning the latter question – how the global perspective enhances our understanding of literature as a facet of reality – the inherently global nature of literature in the 1960s allows us to suggest that during a crucial period in history, characterized by a transformative shift in discourse, at a juncture marking the gradual demise of grand narratives, certain modes of communication, ways of thinking, and ideological standpoints, literature finds its alignment in shared attributes. In the 1960s, it mobilized its presence to serve the expression of truth. This expression embodied a dialectics of lack, where the existential and philosophical intertwine as one, depicting the immediacy of life. When the end is coming, you must speak – there is no other choice; there is *no* choice. Thus, we observe how, even within an era that lacked the swift networks of dissemination, voices came together to form an interjection – a greater awareness of spiritual freedom. Whether this phenomenon is exclusive to the conditions of a modernist era – one with a subtle yet determined sense of hope shimmering on the horizon – is another question that invites further exploration.

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Yuliia Kulish is a PhD student at the Department of History, Theory of Literature, and Comparative Studies at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Her research focuses on the intersection of aesthetics and comparative literature, primarily within the context of the 1960s. Her academic interests include literary theory, social criticism, and poststructuralism.