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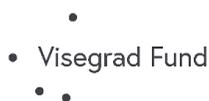
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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

the tenth issue of the academic journal *Oriens Aliter* focuses on the Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award (VEaPLA) and literature of the countries within the Eastern Partnership. It is not for the first time that *Oriens Aliter* brings information about the award. The issue 2/2014 informed about the first edition of the literary competition held in Bratislava. It was organized by the Department of Russian and East European Studies (Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia). In 2018 the project was taken over by the Department of East European Studies (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague). The philosophy of the project remains the same – to create a platform for cooperation among intellectuals working in the field of literature in the post-Soviet area and the Visegrad Four (V4) countries, and to promote authors of poetry, fiction and non-fiction from Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) across Central Europe.

The introductory text by Ľubor Matejko (Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University in Bratislava) enables us to understand the origins of the project aimed to expand the awareness of literatures of Eastern Partnership countries. The award went, so far, to four writers. The criteria remain unchanged: 1. the nominated book is to have been published within the last three years; 2. the book is to receive exceptional public response and significantly affect life in the country. Each year the partners from Eastern Partnership countries submit nominations. The committee of V4 partners then chooses the laureate. Hitherto winners include Ihar Babkov from Belarus for the book of prose *A Minute* (2013), Akram Aylisli from Azerbaijan for the novel *Stone Dreams* (2012) and two winners from Ukraine – Sofia Andrukhovych for her novel *Felix Austria* (2014) and Vladimir Rafeenko for his novel *The Length of Days* (2017). Mr Rafeenko won over other 13 nominations from 5 countries (Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine).

The current issue of *Oriens Aliter* offers texts from VEaPLA partners that address literature from the countries of Eastern Partnership. The first group of texts focuses on Ukraine, home of the 2018 VEaPLA laureate. The series of studies opens with the text by Yaroslav Polishchuk called *Donbas: Crisis of Identity*. The paper also serves as an introduction to the other studies. Polishchuk deals with the crisis of regional identity in Donbas. To describe the issue, he uses metaphors (industrial, Soviet and post-industrial) contained in different cultural discourses of the 20th and early 21st century that have, by now, lost their role. His paper also addresses contemporary literary texts by Ukrainian authors who reflect the identity crisis and offer a diagnosis of dehumanization in the region (Oleksiy Chupa, Oleksandra Ivanyuk, Vladimir Rafeenko, Lyubov Yakymchuk). In her paper *The Length of Days by Vladimir Rafeenko and Language Identity Issue in the Contemporary Ukrainian Literature*, Iryna Zabiika analyses language as an issue in post-colonial society. She suggests that language became an instrument of writing and a linguistic question, yet also a political factor in identification. To aid understanding of the issue of local national language and an empire language, Zabiika uses an article *What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?* by Indian author Arundhati Roy that explains the role of English language in India. Zabiika focuses on Ukrainian author Vladimir Rafeenko, who introduces the theme of the war in the contemporary literature, and also the issue of preferred language and identity (the novel *The Length of Days*). Preferred Identity is also the leitmotif in another war novel *Boarding School* (2017) by the acclaimed Ukrainian writer Serhiy Zhadan. Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk analyzes the novel in her paper *Boarding School as a Tale of Wandering – a Man and a Boy*. She highlights a number of crucial points of the novel leading to complex description of multidimensional situation of the main character (road as a transformation space, home and anti-home space, the question of national identity, maturing of personality, crossing cultural boundaries). The final study in this section, *In search of the lost home. Features of Kateryna Kalytko's poetic collection – Torture Chamber. Vineyard. Home* by Maryana Klymets focuses on a related topic (search for home), though this time on poetry. The first issue discussed in her article deals with multicultural, multilanguage experience of Kateryna Kalytko through translation from Bosnian and Croatian literatures that influences her own literary works. Maryana Klymets searches the way Kalytko takes the reader from a very personal experience to universal metaphysical comprehension. The book recalls the events of the Revolution of Dignity, armed conflicts in the winter of 2014, the shooting of peaceful protesters, the annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Klymets explores selected foci in Kalytko's poetry (pain, water etc.) that fully correspond with the theme. Another aspect is the language – the way of defining the new post-apocalyptic world.

The second group of texts includes articles summarizing the development of contemporary literary scene in Armenia, Moldova, Belarus and Georgia – the countries from which the V4 committee received the nominations for VEaPLA. Arevik Ashkaroyan, in her text *Revolution of a Written Word (Brief Overview of Current Armenian Literary Process)* explores the main issues in Armenian literary and publishing scene since 1991. She outlines new perspectives that arose from Armenian Velvet Revolution. She also addresses the most influential contemporary authors and their works. Natallia Babkova, in her text *Modern Belarusian Prose: Through the Perspective of a Literary Award*, maps the dynamics of Belarusian literature since 2012 when the Giedroyc Award was launched and facilitated major growth on the literary scene. She chronologically addresses the six laureates of the Giedroyc Award (from 2012 to 2017) and reflects some highlights of the award. Georgian literature is introduced by Shota Iatashvili in *Main Actors on Contemporary Georgian Literary Scene*. The author goes further into history and depicts three stages of cardinal renewal of Georgian literature in the 20th and 21st centuries. She particularly focuses on exceptional writers of the two later waves of the renewal and portrays their poetics and main literary works. Vitalie Ciobanu focuses on current literary process in Moldova. In her paper *New Literature in Moldova in 2018* she explores the tension between different mentalities of literary generations and deals with the progressive young generation, its key representatives and their books published in 2018. The issue closes with a short paper *Hungarian Reception of Felix Austria by Sofia Andrukhovych* by Lajos Pálfalvi.

We believe that texts published in this number of *Oriens Aliter* dedicated to the Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award will find their readers not only among Czech and foreign experts, but also among the public readers interested in the issues of V4 and Eastern Partnership countries, their literature and cultural situation.

Tereza Chlaňová

WISEGRAD EASTERN PARTNERSHIP LITERARY AWARD (VEaPLA)

Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award is a project about literature, but not merely about it. It is a project to benefit literature, but not only that. It is a project about the world of books and their authors, but also about the world of their readers. It is a Central European project, but it deals with books that are read in Eastern Europe. Though it is a project of four universities, it aims to reach beyond the walls of academia.

The story of the project began one quiet late evening at the end of August 2013 with a talk on East European literatures. The literatures that were – at least in Central Europe – previously recognized mostly within a concept of Soviet literature as an obligated accessory of much more famous Russian literature. After the fall of the Soviet Empire, these former “literatures of the nations of the USSR” acquired – somehow automatically – a status of national literatures. Yet some, or perhaps many, of them nearly disappeared from the libraries in Central Europe as the demise of the era of quotas on translations of fellow socialist literatures.

The August talk was no academic dispute, just a chamber conversation. Talking with my wife on life and literature we realized, to our surprise, that our knowledge of the East European world of books is quite poor even when speaking about some of the countries that are part of the EU Eastern Partnership programme. The countries that ought to be – in theory – closer to our cultural values and are passing through transition quite similar to that in our country (and culture). Hence, a question arose how does literature react to major changes in the societies and how can literature cause social change there?

Think of novels such as Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or Radishchev’s *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*. The first became the best-seller of the 19th century. The second was banned and earned its author an exile to Siberia under Catherine the Great for describing autocracy as a system of governance “most contrary to human nature”. It is generally recognized that the Stowe’s anti-slavery novel played

an important role in the abolition of slavery and “helped lay the groundwork for the Civil War”. Though Radishchev’s novel became widely read throughout Russia only after the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, it was highly influential. Moreover, Soviet authorities managed to describe Radishchev as “an active fighter against autocratic tyranny, and a genuine forefather of Bolshevism” despite the discrepancies between his ideal and Soviet reality.

The quest for East European *Uncle NN’s Cabins* and *Journeys from A to B* was what I had in mind when I started to write the project. I focused on two criteria: well-written books with exceptional public reception, and the public influence the texts had in their countries.

It was quite easy to find partners ready to support the endeavour in V4 countries: it wasn’t quite the same when looking for partners in some of the Eastern Partnership countries. Declarative statements of their political élites do not guarantee anything. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and the proof of genuine willingness and readiness to partnership is in cooperating on such a large project. Many journeys and meetings across ten countries, dozens of books to read, hundreds of pages to write... The first three years of the project implementation showed that not all the partners from Eastern Partnership countries are equally prepared to work on a common goal.

Despite all peripeties and thanks to the support of the Visegrad Fund, we were able to launch the project in the early 2014. As the main goal of the project we set out to present authors of poetry, fiction and non-fiction from countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) to readers from Central Europe. Within the first three years when the Comenius University in Bratislava served as the project coordinator the Award went to three books: *A Minute* by Ihar Babkov (Belarus), *Stone Dreams* by Akram Aylisli (Azerbaijan) and *Felix Austria* by Sophia Andrukhovych (Ukraine). I should like to express my gratitude to all the partners for their help and support, so vital at every beginning of such endeavour. Now the baton is passed to the Charles University (Czech Republic). We already know the fourth laureate of the Award: Vladimir Rafeenko for *The Length of Days*. I wish the book happy journey to the readers in V4 countries, and the VEaPLA project many new discoveries.

Lubor Matejko

STUDIES

Yaroslav Polishchuk

DONBAS: CRISIS OF IDENTITY

Three metaphors

Eastern territories of contemporary Ukraine present some of the greatest challenges. This is largely the consequence of their complicated history. For some time, these lands were parts of different states. They were colonized relatively late; moreover, economic development seemed quite unbalanced and uneven. Consequently, rich mineral resources of the region – the treasures of bituminous coal, which triggered rapid development during industrial capitalism of the late 19th and early 20th century and followed by Soviet industrialization of the 1920s–1950s, created their specific status among other territories. Though economic renaissance of Donbas was haphazard and one-dimensional,¹ it did not bring the cultural and civilization bloom, as would be expected.

The specifics of Donbas as a region manifested themselves differently in different times. Its stereotypical image is most connected with the deep-rooted type of Soviet civilization,² which lived in the system of self-made myths (the myth about heroic work of coal miners, crucial in this case)³. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this civilization, which experienced total defeat, preserved its sphere of influence in several specific enclaves – Donbas being one

¹ See: Куромія, Г. Х., *Свобода і терор в Донбасі. Українсько-російське прикордоння. 1870–1990-і роки*, Київ 2002; Studenna-Strukwa, M., *Ukraiński Donbas. Oblicza tożsamości regionalnej*, Poznań 2014.

² This term, coming from the well-known work by S. G. Kara-Murza, is widely used nowadays. We do not give it an impassioned meaning, as the above-mentioned scientist: Кара-Мурза, С. Г., *Советская цивилизация*, т. 1, 2. Москва 2001.

³ About basic myths representing the Soviet reality, see: Gill, G., *Symbols and Legitimacy in the Soviet Politics*, Cambridge 2011, 4–5. The Australian scientist writes first of all about the cults of so called “udarniks” (shock workers) and building of socialism, which is tightly connected with the formation of Donetsk identity.

of the most symptomatic ones. The characteristic tendency of those times lay in the fact that certain territories proved to be white spots in the background of social and political transformation of the early 1990s, to some extent becoming isolated from general processes. Soviet identity is preserved mostly among the population of “red pale” of the former Soviet Union, as American political scientist Roman Shporlyuk suggests: “...devotion of those people to Soviet values tempts to call them Luddites of the post-Communist era.”⁴ Donbas, indeed, was exactly such base. Therefore (with the legacy of the Soviet model), it turned out to be resistant to the changes of new times, being anachronistic in its fundamental orientations.

In the current conditions, the conflict of different identities within one state – Ukraine in this case – acquired an explosive character.⁵ However, in a historical sense the stereotype of the Soviet Donbas is only one of the metaphors which characterizes the past of the region. And this metaphor is fixed in public awareness because it was brought to life for a certain time through texts. The collective identity in such a case, obviously, is created not only on the basis of socio-economic or political conditions (as it might seem), but also on the basis of literary and cultural textualization:

*The evolution of the metaphors of Donbas is connected with the fact that the territory had a symbolic name, anchored with the help of literature, history and politics. In time, symbolic metaphors acquire certain existential meanings. They are so strongly rooted in consciousness that we no longer understand when and how these ideas appeared and how they influence us today. Over time metaphors transform into steady texts. As soon as we say “Donbas”, the associations of “coal country” and “the land of labour” come to mind. All of this comes from literature and is fixed in the texts connected with literature.*⁶

The metaphors of Donbas became indeed the product of mass culture. In particular, the Soviet image of the region is strongly connected with the literature of Socialist Realism (Russia and Russian language texts have significantly influenced the phenomenon), film, theatre, and mass propaganda. It was particularly during the 1930s–1950s that Soviet propaganda systematically strengthened the cult of blue-collar worker (miners and metallurgists), along with the related image

⁴ Шпорлюк, Р., *Формування модерних націй. Україна – Росія – Польща*, Київ 2016, 90.

⁵ Дорош, С., «Донбаський вузол»: ціна повернення Донбасу, *ВВС Україна*, 7. 7. 2016. [online: <http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2016/07/160606_donbass_mentality_identity_sd>, cit. 2018-09-12].

⁶ Левченко, І., *Метафори Донбасу: як писалася історія регіону в літературі*, *Читомо*, 14. 3. 2016. [online: <<http://www.chytomo.com/news/metafori-donbasu-yak-pisalasya-istoriya-regionu-v-literaturi>>, cit. 2018-09-12].

of new socialist everyday life that was to accompany the rise of new cities and agglomerations. It doesn't matter that such image differed markedly from the actual living conditions in Donbas. It is easy to demonstrate this on an illustrative example of architecture of that time. Planning new cities, where hundreds of thousands of workers and their families were supposed to live, was guided by double standards – the connection of “official” and “unofficial” construction. Such double standards accurately represented the peculiarities of Soviet politics, which, paradoxically, connected pomp with poverty. The official centre of a typical socialist city made a monumental impression; it was where the Communist party élites resided. From all sides, such centre was “surrounded by vast housing estates which lacked elementary facilities and whatever possibilities for recreation and independent public activities”.⁷ It was to induce the faith in Communist ideals as well as a belief that everyday inconveniences are merely temporary. Yet “temporary” issues had not been solved and were inherited by the new state of Ukraine that emerged after the breakup of the USSR. The situation was also highly complicated given the decline of industry at the end of the 20th century. It caused deep crisis and numerous social, everyday life and demographic difficulties for the functioning of the Eastern territory.

The 20th century gave rise to at least three metaphors of Donbas, each of them reflecting the state of the region and its meaning within the country.⁸ The first image was formed at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Its basic attributes were the steppe and hard physical labour. The second metaphor linked Donbas to Soviet industrialization and heroic labour. It became an axial for the consciousness of the population of the region and remained for a long time fixed in the Soviet society. The last, third metaphor, which becomes effective these days, substitutes and overrides the second one: it interprets Donbas as the zone of the entire crisis, dehumanization and existential void. The three metaphors that point, in different ways, to the mythologization of the landscape reflect the characteristic features of the region:

1. the beginnings of industrial colonization of the region;
2. its transformation into a leading zone of Soviet industry and exemplary agglomeration;
3. the crisis in the region which exhausted its economic potential; it also demonstrates the shortcomings of the system that was previously concealed.

⁷ Хмельницький, Д., *Сталінізація советського градостроїтельства в началі 30-х років*, in: *Miasta nowych ludzi*. t. 1 (OBÓZ nr 48). Red. Z. Grębecka – J. Sadowski, Warszawa 2007, 124.

⁸ Левченко, І., *Метафори Донбасу: як писалася історія регіону в літературі*, *Читомо*, 14. 3. 2016. [online: <<http://www.chytomo.com/news/metafori-donbasu-yak-pisalasya-istoriya-regionu-v-literaturi>>, cit. 2018-09-12].

It was in the 1930s when the Soviet cult of the region was launched with the dominant feature of the self-sacrificing and virtuous labour of miners. The cult gave rise to the so-called Stakhanovite Movement, i.e. the movement of *udarniks* (shock workers), which in those times seized the entire country. Nonetheless, this eventually turned out to be mere propaganda myth. Characteristically, its leading beneficiaries at the time were not represented by local intellectuals from Eastern Ukraine, but by those from the capital who were put in charge by the Communist government of the USSR. Those were mainly Moscovite writers and journalists, especially sent out to Donbas.

Local authors didn't join in until after the war. Consequently, the 1940s saw the emergence in Donetsk of the almanac *Literary Donbas* (in Ukrainian: *Літературний Донбас*) later followed by the magazine *Donbas* (in Ukrainian: *Донбас*) that reflected literary life in the region and published general government culture politics of the time. Symptomatically, it intentionally side-tracked Ukrainian language. The leading editorial posts were occupied by the writers P. Besposczadnyi, P. Syevyerov and P. Czebalin. They were pro-government writers who represented the Donbas version of Socialist Realism, focusing on industrial themes and miners' heroism. Many local talented authors could not even dream of publishing in *Donbas*. Creative self-realization in the conditions of the region seemed quite impossible unless an author became the bard of the Communist regime. On the whole, the literature of Socialist Realism did not aim to reflect actual situation. Moreover, it only superficially fit in the categories of truth and false: as contemporary researchers argue, Socialist Realism created a specific parallel reality and programmed life according to the laws which it developed for itself.⁹

Today, the region witnesses total crisis of humanism, a crisis that is the result of the neglect of humans and obliviousness to the social factors of social development. The epic scale of heavy industry, production plans and the pathos of self-sacrificing labour blocked another, shadow side of the life in Donbas that addressed self-awareness of an average person and moral values. This adversely affected the current situation where one finds himself in the role of *izgoi* who atones the sins of politicians, oligarchs and power élites, while those affected by the region's humanitarian catastrophe avoid accusation and attach the responsibility for their activities to others.

⁹ See: Добренко, Е., Соцреализм и реальный социализм (Советская эстетика и критика и производство реальности), *Colloquia*, 2007, vol. 18, 58–91. [online: <http://www.llti.lt/failai/Nr18_04_Dobrenko.pdf>, cit. 2018-09-13]. The basis for such a view on socialist realism was initiated by an American researcher K. Clark, see: Clark, K., *Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, Chicago 1981.

The image of the wearing and dangerous work was replaced in public mind in Donetsk by other life phenomena, especially new capitalist principles of the day. In the representation of the regional identity, this image frequently becomes crucial, as can be shown by the popular poem by Lyubov Yakymchuk, *Apricots of Donbas* (*Абрикоси Донбасу*, 2015). Yakymchuk, however, refers not only to the Soviet memory, but also to the prehistoric memory of the East (Scythian, steppe), relating it to the present state of crisis and destruction. She is alarmed by the general defeat of the humanist project in the region, as the laws of physical survival and brutal rivalry have lost none of their currency from the era of the industrial height. In the collection of her poems, Yakymchuk paints the image of decay, lasting crisis, a frontier that reflects the current state of the region, as the disqualified myths of the past. Vis-à-vis these phenomena, she points out to the apparent need for new identity, which has not yet been created. To Yakymchuk, Donbas nowadays resembles a decaying human body:

Wait!
 The mine will swallow you
 The dark-skinned beauty
 Stony
 Maybe the Scythians built monuments to her
 In the middle of the steppes unshaven as the miners
 Wait!
 She will give birth to a dead sea
 Her waist is not 60
 And breasts are hanging down to the hips
 Do not go into it
 You may not return
 As a child in mother
 Who does not want to give birth.¹⁰

Yakymchuk's poem *Apricots of Donbas*¹¹ combines the above-mentioned metaphors of the region – industrial, Soviet and post-industrial. At the same time, Yakymchuk attempts to construct some other identity that absorbs the experience of the past, but also indicates the perspective of its development. Alas, current

¹⁰ Зачекай! / Ця шахта ковтне тебе / Ця красуня з темною шкірою / Кам'яна / Може, це їй скіфи поставили / пам'ятники / Серед неголених як шахтарі степів / Зачекай! / Вона народить тобі мертво море / Її талія не 60 / А груди обвисли до пояса / Не заходь у неї / Можеш не повернутися / Мов дитина в матері / Яка не хоче народжувати.

¹¹ Якимчук, Л., *Абрикоси Донбасу* (поема), *Шо*. [online: <<http://sho.kiev.ua/article-sho/5361>>, cit. 2018-09-12].

circumstances in the region (though they can be somewhat extended to the entire territory of Ukraine with its uncertain and transitional quality), prevent even a sketch of such perspective. The total crisis buries Donbas into chaos and uncertainty; permanent existence in the dead point of the civilization can hardly be accurately defined. The only fact that analysts and writers point at is that the current processes are of irreversible nature and the return to status quo that had existed several years ago is utterly inconceivable. Tectonic landslides that caused the war and the alienation of inhabitants of the region have not been thoroughly identified. In this context, literature plays the role of a specific treatise which is able to identify the landscape and the state of affairs, though it is unable to ensure fast and proper changes that would rectify the current situation.

The zone of decay

Young author Oleksandra Ivanyuk in her novel *Amor[t]e* (*Амор[т]е*, 2017) paints vivid image of the Donetsk conflict through the sensitive emotional lens of the protagonist. The war appears as a background, but gradually evolves into one of the leading motives, thus breaking the continuity of the storyline. It abruptly storms in the private lives of the characters, not only violating harmony of their relationships, but also causing long crisis and turning into tragic experience. Human fate becomes hostage of evil genius who suddenly breaks into the ordinary life and infects everything around by the spirit of aggression and hatred. No less significantly, Ivanyuk proposes smooth introduction into the theme. She portrays Donbas on the eve of the events of 2014. She gradually follows the trends that evolved into the conflict in the region, depicting, as it were, the history of the disease that brought the tragedy of the war. It shows how the spirit of evil and intolerance, which eventually exploded in the bloodshed of confrontation, gradually acquired strength. The portrayal of the cause-and-effect chain seems to be convincing, at least in a way it is able to clarify the restless behaviour and unpredictable choices of the protagonists.

The core of the novel is created by a rather atypical, original plan. Ivanyuk tries to illuminate the theme from reverse perspective, i.e. she doesn't portray Donbas directly, but through special glasses, thus vicariously observing the development of social conflict. The unorthodox angle proves effective in achieving this intention. The story is told by a foreigner who finds herself in Donetsk and spends some time there, unexpectedly getting into the whirlwind of events. Hence the mapping is not routine, but through permanent comparisons drawn by the protagonist in her imagination. The perception of a young Italian woman who is not acquainted with Ukrainian context – and the more regional Donetsk – is

specific enough. It includes numerous details that represent mental differences, contradictions and related confusions.

Although the novel is meant to be a fiction, the author offers proof of the actual love history.¹² She includes a photograph of the lovers and biographical note of Yuriy Matushak who became the prototype of the protagonist: young patriot, historian who went as a volunteer to the frontline and died near Ilovaysk on the 29 August 2014. The character of Francesca, as the author admits, is not entirely fictional either: her prototype was a real person who the writer had met in Warsaw and who had wanted to share her moving love story¹³. Moreover, the impression of the documentary character of *Amor[t]e* is often evoked by descriptions and scenes. They generally correspond with the chronology of the events, and demonstrate the intensification of the tension and later even the open conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2013–2014. The material also contains descriptions of the main manifestations of the tension (public meetings, other civil activities).

Finally, the actual history is evidenced in the final chapter which is put together from Francesca's letters to Yuriy. These are letters to nowhere: they are not to be delivered to and read by the addressee. They are written in the state of frustration as an attempt of autotherapy and also as a desperate gesture – to save the beloved. Moving history of human love intrigues the reader and carries the novel far above the framework of social and political background (Donbas – Ukraine – war). Ivanyuk appeals to universal emotions and feelings outside the division into different languages, nations, political views, and social statuses.

Ivanyuk's Donbas is an infected, deformed, empty space. It is deprived of essential features, without which there are no chances for future. It is the region in the state of decay. In the beginning this state is fixed in the heads of the inhabitants. Later, it manifests itself in the reality and sets in motion a chain of corresponding events. Appealing to the theory by Marc Augé, Donbas in the novel *Amor[t]e* can be defined as a typical no-place, i.e. the transitive point where human life does not find comfort, but only sees a temporary port, poorly arranged, trivial transition. There is no will to live in such places because they represent space which cannot be defined either in terms of identity, relations or history.¹⁴ The people of Donetsk portrayed in *Amor[t]e* are well aware of this. Hence, they strive to leave the city at all cost. Among them we find Francesca's students who study Italian in order to emigrate. On the contrary, Francesca – led by the example of her lover Yuriy – is ready to accept Donbas seriously, not just as a transition zone. This, after all, determined her choice because she came there and stayed

¹² Іванюк, О., Я гуляла Донецьком по Google Maps, *ВВС Україна*, 23. 11. 2017. [online: <<http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/in-depth-42080988>>, cit. 2018-09-14].

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Augé, M., *Nie-miejsca: wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności*, Warszawa 2010, 53.

voluntarily in the uncertain times, in order to be with her boyfriend. Francesca becomes a good example of a civic responsibility for her surroundings not only in the apathetic Ukraine but also in self-sufficient Italy.

However, the novel shows the conditions of Donbas quite brutally, without glitz. In particular, Francesca is struck by the culture of the people who do not love each other, who are distrusting and evil, who consider their city to be merely a forced point from which they dream to escape as soon as possible. For Francesca, the shallow exotics of Donbas turns to be an emotional shock when she becomes more deeply acquainted with the mentality of the local people. She fails to find there any productive values that ordinarily form the foundations of civil society in Europe. The situation of being on the verge becomes true not only during the first days of the foreigner in an unknown city (which is quite understandable), but also every following day which can be full of unpleasant intrigues and events. This leads to the following considerations:

All the same, life in Donetsk – it's all hell where everyone you meet tries to con you. I have not met a single honest taxi driver or market seller. Once they discover I am a foreigner, which is not that difficult to tell in five seconds of conversation, they immediately try to deceive me, use me or rope me into something such as marriage business. My God, it seems everybody is obsessed with profit, fraud, escape abroad or whoever knows what else.¹⁵

To live in such no-place is not only uncomfortable and inconvenient, but also dangerous. The theory of no-place can be a successful explanation of the passivity of Donbas inhabitants unwilling to think on their own or falling into unfounded aggression when someone else is deciding their fate. In the novel, only the main characters (Yuriy, Francesca, and – to a point – their friends and relatives) try to resist the magical influence of no-place as a black hole; they fill the transit space with their own charisma, thus giving it certain attributes. However, they have to pay too high a price for this, because they are forced to sacrifice either their own life (Yuriy), or love and happiness (Francesca).

The collective portrait of the people of Donetsk is highly critical, though not unambiguous. It is a caricature – in the passages where Ivanyuk exposes ordinary inhabitants or accidental acquaintance. It is a compliment – in the situation when Francesca comments on Yuriy and his patriot friends who try to resist the enslaving

¹⁵ «Все ж таки життя в Донецьку – це суцільне пекло, в якому кожен зустрічний намагається пошити тебе в дурні. Я досі жодного разу не зустріла чесного таксиста або продавця на базарі. Коли дізнаються, що я – іноземка, – що не складно почути у перші п'ять секунд розмови, – мене одразу намагаються ошукати, використати або втягнути у щось таке, як торгівля шлюбами. Господи, тут наче всі зациклені на якомусь зиску, шахрайстві, втечі за кордон і бозна на чому ще.» (Іванюк, О., *Амор[те]: роман*, Чернівці 2017, 99.)

power of the no-place. The collective image of Donbas which appears in the novel merits further and more detailed analysis. It contains certain elements of what should become (and undoubtedly will become) the subject of serious intellectual reflection. It touches upon local identity as represented by the characters in the novel: everyone in its own way, in its mosaic variety, but in a weak, most often non-discernible quality.

The search for new meanings

Circumstances, namely the war, prevent neutral discussion about the regional identity of Donbas. The hybrid war (information and media confrontation, and competition of the latest technologies of mass manipulation) makes the issue of identity particularly complicated and unpredictable for the analysis. The puzzle of mental, political and cultural differences of Donetsk existed throughout the short history of independent Ukraine: it was either in the centre of public attention or, on the contrary, was marginalised. It is possible to say without exaggeration that the mentality of Donetsk, whether we like it or not, is an integral part of the forming a young state. The success of the state as a whole depends on the extent the Donetsk mentality is distinct and how it combines with other regional identities of Ukraine. On the one hand, Donetsk region is one of the youngest in contemporary Ukraine, which explains the obscurity and indistinctiveness of its current metaphors. On the other hand, at the time of opposition to the war, it is Donbas that becomes the specific prism where various projects and models of new identity, which Ukraine of the 21st century should acquire, are being refined.

During the era of the independent Ukraine, sporadic attempts were made to reform cultural identity of the region. Nonetheless, they proved too weak and did not bring wider effect. First, it relates to general weakness and vague nature of regional politics in post-Soviet Ukraine. Second, Donetsk intellectual élites were too weak to offer a new model of the region. Moreover, great many of them left the region for Kiev or emigrated from Ukraine. The efforts by different enthusiasts, unfortunately, did not match the interest of the state. Only lately, against the background of the armed conflict in the East (and in direct or mediated relation to it) the attention paid to the cultural identity of Donbas has been rapidly growing. Hence, the recently published anthology *Breed* (*Плода*, 2017) introduces a number of noteworthy authors of Donbas whose works are not yet widely known. The authors featured in the almanac, including Vasyl Stus, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Ivan Savych, Leonid Talalay, Vasyl Starun, Vasyl Holoborodko, present a different image of the region from that which was painted during the Soviet and

Socialist Realist era.¹⁶ For the first time, collection presents such an amount of literary works not marked either by ideological or thematic engagement. They tend to appeal more to universal themes of culture, and also reflect humanistic and psychological aspects of life, representative of the underground of the late Soviet period. Hence, there are analogies to the Donetsk almanac in Kiev and Lviv underground of the 1970s–1980s. It is not only a matter of works being written in Ukrainian, but also of cultural positioning of the many authors who associate themselves with Ukrainian East. That, however, doesn't entail any association on their part with the proletarian Russian literature that appeared in the context of double marginalization: as the provincial version of Russian literature; and as the thematic and style impasse, because it limited itself to the imitation of Moscovite patterns of official culture. The authors featured in the almanac manifest individual rebellion against general depersonalization and cynicism.

Only a handful of authors are currently connected with Donbas by origin and, at the same time, consider the region the object of their artistic imagery. The few of the kind include such authors as Vladimir Rafeenko, Olena Styazhkina, Oleksiy Czupa, Lyubov Yakymchuk, Oleh Solovey, or Olena Stepova. Their works contain some contradiction which is a distinctive of the theme. Characters largely refrain from expressing their individuality either because of public mimicry, or for other reasons. Their consciousness depends more on general norms, customs and stereotypes; if they rebel against these norms, it makes their rebellion unpredictable and spontaneous, often subconscious, hence futile. That creates fusion of individual identity with the collective one. It makes the possibility of differentiation between the two phenomena extremely difficult. While portraying the people of Donetsk, the writers endeavour to expose particular mentality, and to answer the question of local identity, which remains the theme of passionate disputes.

The characters portrayed by the above mentioned authors embody self-awareness of the frontier. Though not clearly shown in usual circumstances, it can acquire categorical forms, and trigger violence and aggression in dramatic situations. In the works of the Donetsk writers Oleksiy Chupa – *The Tales of My Bomb Shelter* (*Казки мого бомбосховища*, 2015) and Vladimir Rafeenko – *The Length of Days* and *Little Book of Goodbyes* (*Довгі часи*, *Мала книжка прощань*) one notices a lack of individual features and, on the contrary, the dominance of certain social stereotypes of the behaviour which is meant to hide this absence. Apart from that we can talk about biological features of these types, the physical reactions (pain, fear, suffering), which have great impact. As the physical reactions are expressed quite clearly, in issue arises the acceptance of norms of social behaviour. Non-recognition or blind rebellion against social norms conceal the absence of

¹⁶ *Порода: Антологія українських письменників Донбасу*. Упор. В. Білявський – М. Григоров, Київ 2017.

certain moral and ethical tradition, and also the memory of the past. Thus, it is possible to perceive Donetsk identity as indirect consequence of the Soviet experiment, which reduced itself to the denial of tradition, maintenance of absolute power and the right of the stronger.

Grey Donbas

Oleksiy Chupa and Vladimir Rafeenko choose as their literary object an ordinary, “grey” inhabitant of Donbas in contrast to the business nouveau riches who are the actual wardens of the region. The authors attempt to listen to Donbas not in the hypothetical meaning as presented in political slogans. Instead, they deeply immerse themselves in the self-identity of their countrymen in order to comprehend their essence – either in the noble impulses or in low instincts or moral fall. They also create corresponding style. They argue that harsh conditions can be described by means of dry, laconic language, rough writing with elements of naturalism which enables to express the specificity of the characters. However, this is only applied at certain level, as both authors portray the different types of Donetsk inhabitants with vibrant local colour, though without flexible psychological motivation of their behaviour in general or in specific situations. Their characters are ordinary people with characteristic passions that often lead, through slippery roads, to suffering, aggression, violence and crime. Every history hides some fate, usually complicated, damaged, deformed. Although they don't quite emphasize this, it would be useful to look closely to the essence of those people in order to imagine, in their characters, their long-suppressed, withheld traumas. After all, every life was endowed with noble potential, yet the question is what came out of it in the gloomy surroundings of the demoralized Donetsk dump. The following excerpts from a short story by Vladimir Rafeenko illustrate the point:

Zabolot has just turned forty five. The age of men strong in spirit. The cottages immersed in November. There was no strength to look at such beauty. The cottages, half of them empty, everything, literally everything was buried under fallen leaves. [...] The cottagers who have not left for the city yet, were quickly leaving, abandoning everything here.

Zabolot, clad in a dirty, stinking overcoat, wandered from cottage to cottage and shot straight to the windows. He was not afraid of the coming autumn.

He was welcoming its terrible approach.¹⁷

¹⁷ «Заболоту стукнуло сорок п'ять. Вік сильних духом. А на дачах був листопад. Жодних сил не було дивитись на таку красу. На дачах, половина з яких були порожні,

Or another example of the incomprehensible, prima facie brutal behaviour:

Zabolot put on his overcoat. He brought Mary's things out of the cottage. He covered them by cellophane. He opened petrol canister and set the cottage and stable on fire. After rains it burnt badly and the petrol wasn't actually petrol.

He went quickly on the road, taking a close look at the architecture of the space lying under his feet.¹⁸

It is nor by chance that the two scenes are full of absurdity, revealing the futility of the situation or even of the surroundings, but of the conscience of the characters, their stereotypes, tendency to aggression.

Oleksiy Chupa wrote his novel *The Tales of My Bomb Shelter* straight after the beginning of the war in Donbas. He displays good knowledge of local conditions, along with solid understanding of specific schemes of the conduct of his characters. The chapters (the novel consists of separate stories) are histories of the lives of certain people. The book as a whole is perceived as an unorthodox collection illustrating the Donetsk mentality. The database of events is quite plain and schematic, not corresponding with the format of the novel. It is rather a series of stories connected by the unity of space and time, that becomes apparent only in some episodes: the armed conflict at the door of Vierka Labuha's flat (the chapter *Threesome / Секс утръох*) or in the attempt to destroy a monument (the chapter *Good Bye, Lenin!*). Chupa is not so concerned with the plot, as with the description of his characters. It is important for him to create a specific gallery where everyone can be recognizable without resembling anyone else. All in all, the characters represent an inherent community, city, region. Chupa strives to bring the collective image of his home out of the shadow of the traditional insignificance and greyness. He paints it with vivid, picturesque meaning. If he needs a plot, it is only to introduce more fully and with relief the features of the characters, their "cause and effect" condition. The portraits of the characters may appear prima facie static. Yet it is through their inner monologue that their thoughts and emotions are presented, and they acquire the fullness and complexity.

все, достоту все, завалювало опалим листям. [...] Ті з дачників, хто досі не виїхав до міста, поспіхом виїжджали, кидаючи все. Заболот у брудній, смердючій шинельці блукав від дачки до дачки і стріляв їм просто у вікна. Його не лякало прибуття осені. Він вітав її страшний прихід.» (Рафеєнко, В., *Мала книжка прощань: роман*. Харків 2017, 11–12.)

¹⁸ «Заболот одягнув шинельку. Виніс з хати речі Марії. Накрив їх целофаном. Відкрив каністру бензину, та й підпалив хату і стайню. Після дощів горіло кепсько, та й бензин, мабуть, був не до кінця бензином. Шляхом крокував швидко, пильно вдивляючись в архітектуру простору, що лежав під ногами.» (Ibidem, 54.)

The identity crisis of Donetsk explored in this study reveals liminal condition, one between the past – as characterized by the Soviet myths of Donbas – and the present, which made it possible to discredit the former at last. Today, the dysfunctionality of the Soviet metaphor of Donbas is clearly manifested especially in the aforementioned literary works. At the same time there is a need for different cultural and civilizational identity of Donbas that is fundamentally different from the one used in the past. It is difficult to say what the identity will be like. The prerequisite for the creation of the new Donetsk project is in-depth and critical rethinking of cultural heritage of the region, something that has been, as yet, addressed only marginally in public discussions.

Principles of integration of Donbas into general Ukrainian space need to be created. One needs to look for those connecting points of regional and national identity in order to bring them in sync. Oleksandra Ivanyuk, Vladimir Rafeenko, Oleksiy Chupa and Lyubov Yakymchuk attempt, characteristically, to appeal to universal truths, to Christian moral principles, to shared national values. The Donetsk crisis, as reflected in the literary works of the past few years, attests the fermentation of a new quality that emerges from the destruction of the stereotypes – the legacy of the past. Alienation and self-isolation, cowardice and brutality, which are often disguised as strange and exotic, are the distinctive features of this context. On the outside, it aims to look strong and self-sufficient (from here comes the cult of strength and violence, which is discursively present in the characters of Donetsk inhabitants). Beneath this image usually lays fear, helplessness, inertia and an unwillingness to change life. Such gradation shows instability of self-awareness of the people of the region of Donetsk. It highlights the state of existential void that appeared in the place of the ruined Soviet myth, and the crisis of values and moral landmarks in contemporary conditions. How to fill this emptiness with a new meaning remains a topic for future discussion.

ABSTRACT

Donbas: Crisis of Identity

Yaroslav Polishchuk

The crisis of the regional identity, which is a fundamental problem of the post-industrial Donbas today, is one of the main themes of this study. The identity of the region has been expressed in a few of metaphors. They can be found in culture texts of the 20th and early 21st century. The image of Donbas is formed by three metaphors: industrial, Soviet and post-industrial. By today they had lost

their meaning. The process of creating new identity is very difficult as it entails negation of stereotypes of the past. Soviet history had the strongest influence on Eastern Ukraine. From the point of view of that history, the population of Donbas enjoyed elite status. The current crisis reveals the disqualification of the Soviet narrative. It manifests itself in the escalation of aggression and violence which conceals fear and existential confusion. Instead of the status quo, another metaphor ought to be made to reflect the present-day context. Contemporary literary texts of Ukrainian authors point to these problems to a large extent. Identity crisis is reflected in the novels by Oleksiy Chupa, Oleksandra Ivanyuk, Vladimir Rafeenko and Lyubov Yakymchuk. They diagnose a deep dehumanization of the region and highlight the need of a new cultural and civilization project of Donbas.

Key words: Donbas, Regional Identity, Crisis, Soviet Myth, Contemporary Literature, Region.

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Iryna Zabiika

THE LENGTH OF DAYS BY VLADIMIR RAFEENKO
AND THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE IDENTITY
IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

Publishing rules, which have been changed in Ukraine after 2014, have a major influence on the publishing sector and, more widely, on literary life in Ukraine. After the introduction of limits on import of Russian books and state preferences for Ukrainian language in culture (films, books, radio and TV programs), language issue appears to be quite popular and important in discussions about self-identification among authors and everyone else involved in culture. While authors publishing in Russian as their main language and those writing in Ukrainian were previously separated and virtually existed in different worlds, today they try to cooperate on the basis of similar themes and views or become enemies because of different ideologies. Language now indicates the group to which a writer belongs, and ideology he or she would like to present in their texts. Language became not only the instrument of writing or a linguistic issue: it became a political instrument of both identification and division.

The Ukrainian situation is not unique. Language appears to be an issue in post-colonial societies in many countries all over the world. One of the examples is India, as discussed in the lecture *What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?*¹ by Arundhati Roy, Indian English-writing author, the Man Booker Prize Laureate (for the novel *The God of Small Things*). In her lecture, Roy addresses Indian attitude to English language. She was accused of using colonialist language for describing postcolonial situation in India. She talks about English as the only language which may be common for different people from different parts of India, who use different languages for their everyday communication. She talks about English as an opportunity for the dialogue and for similar ground for understanding each other. She doesn't deny small languages

¹ Roy, A., What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?, *Literary Hub*, 25. 7. 2018. (First part). [online: <<http://lithub.com/what-is-the-morally-appropriate-language-in-which-to-think-and-write/>>, cit. 2018-11-08].

of India (and any other small languages), her novels tell a lot about language, culture and mental diversity of India and the world. Yet she also shows how important it is to have something in common, to have the unifying language: “How many tongues does she [India – *author’s note*] have? Officially, approximately 780, only twenty-two of which are formally recognized by the Indian Constitution, while another thirty-eight are waiting to be accorded that status. Each has its own history of colonizing or being colonized. There are few pure victims and pure perpetrators. There is no national language. Not yet. Hindi and English are designated ‘official languages.’”²

She points out that the state tries to keep together India’s diverse ethnic, culture and language groups; a result of the British colonialism, English language is the best and perhaps the only possible language for the state: “India as a country, nation-state, was British idea. So, the idea of English is as good or as bad as the idea of India itself. Writing or speaking in English is not a tribute to the British Empire, [...] it is a practical solution to the circumstances created by it.”³

Ray also warns against the rise of nationalism and separation movements inside India, because they do not lead to cooperation, but instead to conflicts and misunderstandings. She suggests that “language is that most private and yet most public of things”,⁴ which has great influence on us. The society we live in decides which language or languages are more appropriate to express ourselves and to speak aloud about the issues that matter to us. Ray admits that her discussions about language suddenly became more than just her private position: “It was about language again. Not a writer’s private language, but a country’s public language, its public imagination of itself. Suddenly, things that would have been unthinkable to say in public became acceptable. Officially acceptable.”⁵

As a writer she deals with the language as an instrument for writing and expressing different situations, people and feelings. Her second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* joins different voices from different parts of India, which actually speak different languages. Yet in the novel they all are brought together by English: “And so, in this novel of many languages, it is not only the author, but the characters themselves who swim around in an ocean of exquisite imperfection, who constantly translate for and to each other, who constantly speak across languages, and who constantly realize that people who speak the same language

² Ibidem.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Roy, A., What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?, *Literary Hub*, 25. 7. 2018. (Second part). [online: <<https://lithub.com/what-is-the-morally-appropriate-language-in-which-to-think-and-write/2/>>, cit. 2018-11-08].

are not necessarily the ones who understand each other best.”⁶ Actually, working and thinking about this multilanguage fiction world gives Ray the right to say that the main enemy of her novel is the idea of “one nation, one religion, one language.”⁷

The issue of diversity and freedom was also raised by a group of European authors in January 2019. They published an open letter in *The Guardian*, entitled *Fight for Europe – or the wreckers will destroy it*.⁸ The situation described in the letter is political, though the signatories are mainly novelists and philosophers from all over Europe, such as Milan Kundera, Salman Rushdie, Elfriede Jelinek, Orhan Pamuk and Bernard-Henri Lévy. They see how the right words in languages can change the attitude to the issue. They show the other, negative, side of using the term identity, mainly in populist and uncompromising manner. They appeal: “Enough of ‘building Europe’!” Let’s reconnect instead with our “national soul”! Let’s rediscover our “lost identity”!⁹ This is the agenda shared by populist forces emerging across the continent. Never mind that abstractions such as “soul” and “identity” often exist only in the mind of demagogues.

The signatories are internationally distinguished figures. Most of them have chosen their identity because their origin, biography and mindset are wider and deeper than the national identity carved in stone. Salman Rushdie, similarly to Arundhati Roy, was born in India. Yet his writing is closely connected to British culture and language. He is known for his post-colonial novels, which bring together Indian and European issues. Elfriede Jelinek was born in Austria and is Austrian writer and Nobel Prize laureate, but her parents have quite a mixed identity, her mother was Romanian–German and her father was Czech Jew. In such situation the identity can’t be simple, and it is always the result of personal choice. Herta Müller, also signed the manifesto. Born in Romania with German as a mother language, she describes in her novels Romanian reality, but is supposed to be German author.

The manifesto was also signed by Milan Kundera. A native of Czechoslovakia, Kundera had to leave the country because of political reasons. In 1975, he went to France, and became French citizen in 1981. His first novels were written and published in Czech, but then he began writing in French. He forbids to translate

⁶ Roy, A., What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?, *Literary Hub*, 25. 7. 2018. (First part). [online: <<http://lithub.com/what-is-the-morally-appropriate-language-in-which-to-think-and-write/>>, cit. 2018-11-08].

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ See: Fight for Europe – or the wreckers will destroy it, *The Guardian*. [online: <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/25/fight-europe-wreckers-patriots-nationalist?fbclid=IwAR3dqQXYoSRMF4Au62EVTMkRnoiY-yCCHUiOe3rfYi56kUGKW34BNcvK0Ug>>, cit. 2018-11-06].

⁹ Ibidem.

his early books from Czech language and prefers the French version for all of them. It seems that the words of one of his main characters from the novel *The Farewell Party* (Czech version was published in 1972, French in 1976) Klíma, who is leaving Czechoslovakia, are the author's words too. He says that he wants to leave everything that belongs to this country, in this country. Someone may not like this, but the character/author is able to do this and change their identities. To choose the one which is closer and more natural for them. Ukrainian translation of the novel, published in 2018, for example was made from French version of the novel, as Kundera wished. And that's the freedom, he and his colleagues are talking about in the manifesto.

But let's return to Ukraine. The post-colonial situation here leads to the definite separation of two languages, Ukrainian and Russian. This separation takes place also in works of some authors, who now decide to change their language identity. The very interesting example of it is Vladimir Rafeenko. He was born in Donetsk, but after the beginning of war in the Donbas region he had to move to Kyiv. He became famous because of his novels written in Russian. Yet his last novel *The Length of Days* was published both in Russian and in Ukrainian (as translated by Ukrainian writer Marianna Kiyanovska).¹⁰ *The Length of Days* was nominated to several literature prizes (longlist of the 2017 BBC Book Award, the 2018 Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award) and was well-received by Ukrainian literary critics and public.

When comparing language identity in India and Ukraine, Ukrainian situation appears arguably simpler: Ukraine doesn't have hundreds of native tongues. Nonetheless, the conflict between the national tongue (Ukrainian) and the empire language (Russian) is very deep and does affect the process of self-determination. Rafeenko's novel manifests similar attempt to understand what is happening in the Eastern part of Ukraine and why, something that is akin to Roy's novels and articles about India. They both deal with the history trying to explain its influence on the current situation. The fact that the novel became so popular, especially after it was translated into Ukrainian, shows not only the importance of the war topic in the contemporary Ukrainian literature, but also the fact that the idea of chosen language and chosen identity presented through the language is common for Ukrainian society today. Rafeenko would be likely to agree with Roy on the idea that language (especially for a writer) is not something given once and for all. One is free to choose and change it by changing language identity. Rafeenko defines this idea at the beginning of his novel by using a quotation from Lithuanian author Tomas Venclova "nationality is no more definite by origin, it becomes the problem of individual choice". As we can see from the aforementioned manifesto that describes the situation across Europe, the thesis is not quite common yet.

¹⁰ Рафеєнко, В., *Довгі часи*, Львів 2017.

There is a suspicion that this simple truth (which seems to be common for Europeans after World War II) can now be in jeopardy. Contemporary literature is like a mirror: it tells us the facts about the society and predicts different scenarios about what may happen in the future. Ukrainian contemporary literature that talks about the Ukrainian war context and self-identification seems to be of relevance beyond Ukraine as well.

Chosen identity is also the main topic of the other war novel *Boarding School* (2017) by the acclaimed Ukrainian writer Serhiy Zhadan. This theme also appears in some short stories by Kateryna Kalytko in her book *The Land of the Lost* (2017) that received the BBC Book Award. The historical novel *The Neat Samples of Writing from Archduke Wilhelm* (2017) by Natalka Snyadanko also addresses chosen identity. It is based on real-life story of Wilhelm of the House of Habsburg who decided to be Ukrainian politician. It's quite symptomatic that a number of most successful Ukrainian books from the last year have a single topic in common.

Rafeenko sees the core issue of Eastern Ukraine to be an attempt to return to the past, to the age of Soviet Union, not even real, but formed by propaganda and nostalgia. It led to the conflict, and to the absence of self-identification. The city Z, described in the novel, is unable to return to Ukraine and its identity, but it is also unable to join Russia. It finds itself in some mystical, unreal and desperate situation – it doesn't exist. One of the characters tells the other: "This is because you, Vasyl, don't really exist! And no one who lives here exists! Instead of joining Russia [...] you have joined the Soviet Union, as you wished for all your mad life."

These words are very similar to those from the manifesto that warn against returning to the past: "Our faith is in the great idea that we inherited, which we believe to have been the one force powerful enough to lift Europe's peoples about themselves and their warring past. We believe it remains the one force today virtuous enough to ward off the new signs of totalitarianism that drag in their wake the old miseries of the dark ages."¹¹ The fictional world of the Rafeenko's novel is full of tragedy (and comedy sometimes), and it is rapidly losing itself. It can be saved, but also in very strange and mysterious way (which is full of the author's irony – he makes the Indian god Ganesha and Ukrainian Romantic author Taras Shevchenko join forces to save Donbas). The language like a code can help, but it can be also used like an instrument of propaganda. Both sides to the conflict in the novel use the characteristic propaganda statement "people just wanted to speak their native language and to pray to their gods" without thinking

¹¹ Fight for Europe – or the wreckers will destroy it, *The Guardian*. [online: <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/25/fight-europe-wreckers-patriots-nationalist?fbclid=IwAR3dqdQXYoSRMF4Au62EVTMkRnoiY-yCCHUiOe3rfYi56kUGKW34BNcvK0Ug>>, cit. 2018-11-06].

on what this sentence (and these concepts of language and gods) really mean to them. The sentence is used for so many times by both sides of the conflict that it loses its meaning; it's not about the language or religion, it's about policy. As Roy said, it's not a private question any more, it's country's public question. As the manifesto says it's already the imagination of demagogues.

Along the line of Roy and other European novelists, Rafeenko shows what really matters: "Ukraine is not about borders, customs, or religious background. It is not about the map of language preferences. It's not about watersheds or tectonic plates. It is about people, damn it! People and only people! They are the culture!" The language and religion should bring people together, and not draw them apart.

Rafeenko's novel is full of intertext and quotations, which reach as far as the wide Ukrainian (allusions to Zhadan, Andrukhovych and others) and world cultural context. For example, he uses the quotation by Karel Havlíček Borovský, Czech writer and 19th-century politician: "Russian people name everything Russian to be Slavic just to name everything Slavic to be Russian." Such quotes set the novel to the wider area, where language identity is only one between other identities and make readers think about language choice as about the part of more complicated personal and social identity.

Also quoting Dmytro Dontsov, deemed to be one of the key Ukrainian nationalist ideologies, Rafeenko uses his idea that expresses the differences between Ukrainian (and other non-European) and Western attitude to the issues of identity: "It's interesting that for the European man there is no difference in race, language, traditions, but the wishes and the latitude of will really matter." We can admit that such an attitude is seen like wider stage, when the language and other individual identity issues are solved and are not be discussed in such cruel way as in Ukraine or India, where they are still topical. On the other hand, however, we can see that the issue of mixed, complicated and chosen identity is also important in Europe today. The straightforward choice of one nation, one language and simple identity doesn't work, and European history shows it very well. The topic has regained currency and makes its comeback in literature.

Roy expresses similar idea: "All this to say that we live and work (and write) in a complicated land, in which nothing is or ever will be settled. Especially not the question of language. Languages."¹² Until the identity (and language identity as a part of it) is not determined, it will be the object of writing and thinking, of hesitation and attempts to explain.

¹² Roy, A., What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?, *Literary Hub*, 25. 7. 2018. (First part). [online: <<http://lithub.com/what-is-the-morally-appropriate-language-in-which-to-think-and-write/>>, cit. 2018-11-08].

ABSTRACT

***The Length of Days* by Vladimir Rafeenko and the Issue of Language Identity in Contemporary Ukrainian Literature**

Iryna Zabiika

The article deals with the language question in the contemporary Ukrainian literature, which became not only the esthetic, but also the political issue. This situation is not unique in the world, for example in India the position of English language (the language of colonist) has very similar position as Russian language in Ukraine. That's why the point of view by Arundhati Roy, well-known Indian author, is presented in the article together with position of Volodymyr Rafeenko, the Ukrainian writer. His novel *The Length of Days* appeared in both Russian and Ukrainian versions, his next novel is written only in Ukrainian, although before his forced relocation to Kyiv from Donetsk in 2014 he wrote only in Russian. The novel itself is about the self-identification through language and culture codes, and that's very common theme in contemporary Ukrainian literature. The article explains why is it so important and how Ukrainian author deals with this problem.

Key words: Vladimir Rafeenko, *The Length of Days*, Ukrainian Literature, Russian Language, Ukrainian Language, Self-identification.

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Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk

BOARDING SCHOOL AS A TALE OF WANDERING
– A MAN AND A BOY

The Revolution of Dignity and then the war have greatly influenced the processes of shaping contemporary Ukrainian literature. The traumas experienced by Ukrainian society called for identification of new forms of expression. The quest was uneasy and entailed a plenty of risk. Initially, documentary literature dominated literary discourse. Authors wished to convey their dramatic experiences to posterity. The same applied to poetry: not only established poets but also amateurs, indeed much more willingly, felt the urge to verbalise their emotions and experiences. Publishing on this subject has become fashionable and widely read, following the publish-or-perish dictum: “If you don’t publish anything on the war in Donbas, you’ve lost,” writes Andriy Kokotyukha in his article *Війна в лідерах продажу*.¹ Among the hundreds of titles only some stand out in literary terms and merit attention among readers and scholars. These include, by all means, the novel *Boarding School*² by Serhiy Zhadan. From the critics’ perspective: “...this is a novel about the mysterious East of Ukraine, the mentality of its population, the dramatic fragmentation of the last years in the Donbas region”,³ and the war prose which, however, is not quite orthodox as the term prose about the war has been hitherto unknown.⁴

Boarding School by Serhiy Zhadan is an exceptionally well-written novel about Donbas and its residents. Zhadan placed it in the positional war phase, showing the vast destruction it sows in the lives of ordinary people of the occupied territories. The military events become a mere backdrop in the portrait of the

¹ Кокотюха, А., Війна в лідерах продажу, *Espresso.tv*, 15. 9. 2015. [online: <http://espresso.tv/article/2015/09/15/viyna_v_liderakh_prodazhu>, cit. 2018-09-30].

² Жадан, С., *Інтернат*, Чернівці 2017.

³ Поліщук, Я., Дух «мокрої псини», *Річ: часопис текстів і візій*. [online: <http://chasopys-rich.com.ua/2018/01/06/dukh_mokroyi_psyny/>, cit. 2018-08-22].

⁴ Василенко, Г. – Булкіна, І., Сергій Жадан. *Інтернат*, *Критика*, 2018, № 1–2, 243–244. [online: <http://krytyka.com/ua/reviews/internat>, cit. 2018-09-30].

fate of certain people, of the surrounding world, the issues that determine their identity, unimaginable fear and exhaustion that embodies the question: When will this finally end?

“It was important for me to try to show [...] these events in the eyes of civilian population. In any war, local people are deprived of their voice. The war itself silences the voice of peace. It seems that it is the civilian population who should make certain conclusions and understand that bringing a war to one’s home automatically entails to deprive oneself of one’s voice. By bringing war to your home you risk losing plenty. It is hard to imagine a war where civilians dictate the rules of the game, set the tone. Instead, they are the background in which dramatic, bloody events unfold,” said Zhadan.⁵

Boarding School could be understood in terms of the theory of cultural geography, pioneered by Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson. It focuses on the link between the space and the issues of power and ideology. It applies to both theory and cultural practice, as following the Raymond Williams. These scholars extended the definition of culture to include daily routines.⁶ It is the latter that the Ukrainian writer uses to present the problems faced in Donbas in the most graphic way. Using the theory of Elżbieta Rybicka, we can identify a few methods by which Zhadan represents power as landscapes. Principally, one should consider the way of cultural production of the landscape, which in the case of *Boarding School* essentially entails destruction, a conversion into chaos. It is directly related to the possibility of exploring the novel in terms of “landscape as an ideological concept, which emerged under the influence of specific national concepts and historical memory”.⁷ The notion of space as portrayed by Zhadan is subjected to constant change because of the conflicting national and historical ideas. These transmutations have their deepest impact on the characters, breaking into their lives, dominating their choices and thoughts and even their senses.

In order to explain the complexity of the situation portrayed, Zhadan uses the road as the leitmotif in the novel. Here, the meaning of the road is not “a separate strip of land connecting particular towns or points of the area adapted to communication” as described by Stanislaw Dubisz.⁸ The protagonist has to step off of the ready-made trails in literal as well as figurative sense. It is instead “the space that separates specific destination”, not only physical migration, but even more so internal migration. It is a journey on roads as well as “off-roads, routes,

⁵ Куришко, Д., Жадан про «Інтернат»: приводячи війну у дім, ти ризикуєш втратити багато, *ВВС Україна*, 6. 12. 2017. [online: <<http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-42185504>>, cit. 2018-08-10].

⁶ See: Rybicka, E., *Literatura, geografia: wspólnie terytoria*, in: *Od poetyki przestrzeni do geopoezyki*, E. Konończuk – E. Sidoruk, Białystok 2012.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 16.

⁸ Dubisz, S., *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego*, t. 1, Warszawa 2003, 700–702.

highways, roads, access roads, bypasses, paths, streets, exits, stations, cellars, staircases, and all other places that may help to avoid an encounter with the military”⁹

In addition, Zhadan used the meaning of the road anthropologically as something that connects two points in space, a road that mediates centre with periphery. Physical and literal road described in the *Boarding School* connects two points: dormitory and home. The home, although lacking a lot, constitutes the centre for the protagonist – Pasha, a teacher of the Ukrainian language – and for his nephew Sasha, who lost his home because of his illness. *Boarding School* – dormitory, however is the periphery, a place where the boy was sent to, where he felt forced into exile.¹⁰

The novel opens with scenes inside the home. The opening dialogue starts with the father asking Pasha to bring the boy back from the dormitory. We observe the strained relationship in the family and their distinctively functioning home in the opening lines. A home, which is often portrayed in literature as apology of childhood, utopia etc. In the novel it is a home with no room, in literal sense, for the boy suffering from epilepsy.

This informs us about the inner state of the characters, their choices, values and understanding of humanity, to whom the home is a shelter and the best representation of themselves. We are therefore faced with a specific space, at first glance a certain “anti-home”, home infested with the legacy of the Soviet Union. In the centre of this space stands a continuously running television, which plays the part of an evening fireplace; it is the hearth and home. Still, Pasha has a bond with the building: “Pasha loved this house, he has lived here his entire life, and was going to continue living there. It was built by German prisoners, immediately after the war. It was a fairly spacious building for two families. The second row from the railway station, a densely populated private sector, largely inhabited by stationed workers.”¹¹

Despite all the shortcomings and flaws of Pasha’s family home, it was his sustenance and his shelter. It was far from perfect and filled with plenty of difficult and painful memories. History and socio-political changes never spared it. Yet, during his journey Pasha will understand that there was also love amidst the distance and coldness among the family members. The space of the home formed an unbreakable bond and love they shared. At the last stage of his journey, the protagonist will learn that, though this home is no paradise, to him it possesses the qualities of the Promised Land.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ About “internat” as a metaphore wrote Y. Polishchuk see: Поліщук, Я., *Гібридна топографія. Місяця й не-місяця в сучасній українській літературі*, Чернівці 2018, 181–186.

¹¹ Жадан, С., *Интернат*, Чернівці 2017, 7–8.

In spite of appearances, the home in the novel acquires broader meaning. It is closely integrated in the space surrounding him and in an unbreakable way it is connected to the history, immensely complex and difficult, yet closely related to Donbas. This also brings in the issues of national identity. The protagonist has more questions than answers about his sense of belonging to a culture and nation. Therefore, contrary to other portrayals of home in Ukrainian literature, Pasha's home cannot be portrayed as a symbol of deep-rooted sense of Ukrainian nationality: to him the culture is not an easy inheritance. During his journey, when stopped by soldiers and asked who he was, he never answered in the categories of nationality, but by profession – a teacher.

Despite it all, the home becomes a shelter from all the pandemonium of the world. The characters feel as if it is their place on Earth where they feel quite safe, even though they don't know how long such state is to last and whether the rocky past would not take over the last piece of their space that is most precious to them. The functionality of the home is subordinate to a specific time in Ukrainian history – the war of 2015. It is the mayhem of military operations that forces the characters into a journey. Scholars in cultural studies point out that the road is perceived as dangerous experience, because of the unknown, the unpredictability, the undefined and the uncleanliness. All these elements become an experience for Pasha and later for his nephew, Sasha.

The main character begins his journey during Christmas, traditionally a season of hope, family reunions and happiness. Yet, his experiences are quite different. With great reluctance he begins his lonely journey to collect his abandoned nephew from the dormitory. The Christmas spirit is not only missing from his inner core, but also from the surrounding world. People seem to have forgotten about the holidays, and the silence around, associated with the momentary lack of explosions, in no way resembles blissful peace. It suggests a threat instead. It gives rise to suspicion and fear in the protagonist. Further experiences are even worse: images of destruction, decay and chaos appear before Pasha. Zhadan is quite adroit in the depiction of the contrast: "Two-storey building, above the main entrance sign Paradise. In the right wing of the café, in the left – a car wash, in the centre – an entrance to the reception. [...] Parking is filled with machinery and cars – heavy "crafts", undisturbed cars with Polish licence plates, a cluster of beaten and discarded cars – without windshield, with broken doors, with torn hoods. [...] – Paradise, – he says, smiling. – Instead the first ring of hell. Are you going – he throws him in the direction of Pasha and goes to the band."¹²

The scents of decay, decomposition and damp rise above these and similar views. The surrounding world is degrading, and all this takes place in a way that evokes the feeling of the greatest abomination. What is worse, during his journey,

¹² *Ibidem*, 30.

he becomes a part of this world: “In the corner the TV shows the news, and Pasha has a feeling that he has seen the news in real life today in the fresh air, a few kilometres from here.”¹³

External degradation is accompanied by the disappearance of human reflexes, by dehumanization. The protagonist confronts the destructive system and politics through subsequent detentions, checking documents and demanding explanations about who he is, where he is going to and why. There is no good answer for the latter. Any explanation may arouse suspicion and lead to accusation. So it is like playing roulette.

Using the topos so popular in literature, the wandering Zhadan exposes the conflict of generations, which has been growing between the uncle and nephew over the past several months. For Pasha, the experience of the collapse of the Communist system and subsequent transformation has affected his entire later life. Without it, he was deprived of a sense of security and childlike faith in the good of the world. After the rebellion, there was disappointment and a need to reconcile with the gloom of everyday life. When in other regions of Ukraine people enjoyed the regained independence and freedom, in Donbas, for the family of Pasha and their neighbours it meant poverty and a lack of future. Independence deprived them of the world that guaranteed them stability and prosperity. Narration from the inside, from the perspective of Donbas, it yields credibility to the text by Zhadan.

Further in the novel the uncle's attitude to the outside world is seeped in helplessness; the unwillingness to fight for change irritates the nephew. Based on their relationship, Zhadan reveals the cultural specificity of the region, its problems, seen from the perspective of its residents. As Agnieszka Matusiak and Mateusz Świetlicki suggest: “If we take into account the traumatic nature of the memory transfer of the past (especially the closest, the times of real socialism) and the systemic breakthrough in post-totalitarian societies, their culture-related consciousness and generational dispersion turn out to be the most appropriate research instrument to trace, understand and describe the nature and mechanisms of change in socio-cultural paradigms in order to reassess the totalitarian past of post-Communist countries. [...] This perspective seems to be the most effective strategy to describe the reality of the Eastern Bloc, because the satellite states were not only charged with trauma of totalitarian Communist legacy, but also of the stigmatizing colonial heritage of the Soviet / Russian Empire...”¹⁴

¹³ Ibidem, 33.

¹⁴ Matusiak, A. – Świetlicki, M., *Kategoria pokolenia we współczesnych badaniach, Posttotalitarny syndrom pokoleniowy w literaturach słowiańskich Europy Środkowej, Wschodniej i Południowo-Wschodniej końca XX – początku XXI wieku w świetle studiów postkolonialnych*, Poznań – Wrocław 2016, 17–18.

Zhadan flawlessly constructed the figure of an adolescent who cannot accept the constant withdrawal of his uncle, especially being at the stage when he needs authorities. There is no father and the mother, who works as a conductor, is seldom at home. The boy tries to look for support in the outside world, only to find it full of temptations and challenges. Giving in, he probably wants to attract the attention of the family. Raised without enough parental attention, he wants to see strong man in Pasha, a warrior for his family and ideals. The uncle's constant helplessness, even when the mother sends the boy back to the dormitory, evokes in his nephew rebellion and a sense of betrayal. No wonder that, when the war breaks out, he declares that he "does not want to know him and is ashamed of him". He expects him to take sides, but the uncle evades such choice. Zhadan uses the character of tutor at boarding school to diagnose the problems of the Donbas residents. In a stormy conversation with Pasha and a local PE teacher, she says: "You've been hiding your whole life. You have been used to someone deciding for you, someone solving everything for you,"¹⁵ "you are afraid to call things by their proper name, you are afraid to tell the truth,"¹⁶ says Nina to the PE teacher. When Sasha and his uncle start their journey through the war-torn territories from the dormitory back home, the boy is often the one to give explanations and display better judgment. In the face of the growing threat, these proportions, however, change.

Pasha and other people on the journey are filled by incessant fear: "Fear is invisible, but it's all-encompassing: as if you cannot see any fire, around quietly, even the sky above the glittering metal plates, but [...] the realization that you are in sight [...], makes this whole situation uncomfortable, and I want to continue to sit with my eyes closed and count, say, up to one hundred, until the next local monsters will go away..."¹⁷ The shadow of death, often meaningless, floating over them only intensifies the fear. At the same time, he mobilizes to fight for survival after all: "Pasha again conceals the unspeakable fear, he again wants to close his eyes and hide under the blanket, but the iguana does not spend time in vain, presses on gas and turns aside, just to the ravine, where the river should flow."¹⁸

His journey to a precise destination, despite earlier expectations, takes on instead the character of continuous escape, sometimes reminiscent of wandering. This incessant struggle with borderline situations, however, brings an unexpected approach to Pasha and his nephew. Overwhelmed by the growing fear, Sasha dumps the mask of an adult, and Pasha learns to control his own fear and be a support not only for his nephew, but also to the others they meet along the way. The joint journey home and numerous border experiences cast aside past

¹⁵ Жадан, С., *Интернат*, Чернівці 2017, 160.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 159.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 55.

resentments and disappointments. Zhadan shows how both his heroes begin to build their relationships from scratch and grow closer to each other. Sasha often regrets his overly long passivity, his waiting and looking at the threats to which the boy is exposed. Taking action to save the boy from the war, he tries to redeem his faults, at least in part. Sasha often notices his uncle's horror, his fatigue, but he appreciates that he can control them. He also tries to overcome his temporary weaknesses without revealing them to his uncle. He tries to behave like an adult, only occasionally showing that he is still a child.

Wandering through the apocalyptic world is a test of courage, strength and endurance. The landscape is an indispensable element of their search for the way home. Rybicka, in her studies of cultural geography, distinguishes different orientations. In Zhadan's novel, two of them are the strongest. The first "is to study the landscape as an ideological product that was created under the influence of specific national concepts and historical memory. [...] The landscape here becomes more of a field of struggle for the meaning and its use by specific national, ethnic and social groups rather than a neutral, geographic area."¹⁹ Zhadan portrays the complexity and ambiguity of these issues on the territory of Donbas. The meaning, which is the object of the fight, is not well-defined, ordinary citizen is lost in reading them. Yet, he experiences the effects of the fight painfully. Pasha and Sasha have to repeatedly wade through the tank tracks, pass by destroyed buildings and farmsteads with no doors or windows, covered with bloodstain. The entire landscape is shrouded in mist and smoke: "They have been floating since yesterday, as if the ground broke somewhere and something worst came out of the earth, and no one knows how it could be stopped, because no one knows how it happened, that the ground parted, releasing this darkness, which now spreads over the January sky, clogging all openings and crevices."²⁰ Rybicka points out another phenomenon: "...the research on the sensory perception of the landscape. The sense of sight plays the predominant role. [...] Nonetheless, its position is being contested by such categories as smellscape or soundscape."²¹ *Boarding School* abounds in descriptions that strongly affect the readers senses. Along with the wandering heroes, they almost feel the overwhelming smell of smoke, decay and rotting meat. They experience cold and damp, and his eyes are filled with the sights of destruction. The description of the field of undeveloped sunflowers exerts powerful influence on the imagination. At a point, yellow field with blue sky hovering over might evoke associations of Ukrainian national symbols.

¹⁹ Rybicka, E., *Literatura, geografia: wspólne terytoria*, in: *Od poetyki przestrzeni do geo-poetyki*, E. Konończuk – E. Sidoruk, Białystok 2012, 15.

²⁰ Жадан, С., *Интернат*, Чернівці 2017, 167.

²¹ Rybicka, E., *Literatura, geografia: wspólne terytoria*, in: *Od poetyki przestrzeni do geo-poetyki*, E. Konończuk – E. Sidoruk, Białystok 2012, 16.

Yet no sooner had the boy and his uncle seen the sunflowers than they turn black. “And so, they will stand,” thinks Pasha of the sunflowers, “like a zombie. Forgotten and cursed. Until someone ploughs through it all.”²²

Experiencing the hardships of wandering through the apocalyptic world, slipping through snow and wilderness, fighting with fatigue and their fears and hiding from the military together leads to a breakthrough in their relations. The resentments and disappointments from the past are set aside and the most important thing is to achieve common goal or safe return home. To achieve it, they must care for each other, keep spirits high. The events bring them so close that, at the end of the journey, the uncle and his nephew become friends who return to their safe haven.

Pasha’s journey is multidimensional, partly a lonely one and partly accompanied by his nephew. Circumstances forced the teacher, attached to the place where he lives, to undertake the journey. He does not set off voluntarily and does not expect the journey to affect him in any way. It turns out, however, that the decision to leave the house was the first step to maturing and responsibility. His sister placed the epileptic boy to the dormitory, no one wanted to take care of him and the issue was silenced and avoided by the family. Yet, when the boarding school was in the centre of the war, the feeling of guilt towards the boy and the responsibility for him could not be avoided. The sense of responsibility grows with the awareness of the horror of the situation and the conviction that it is the last moment to save his nephew because the new authorities will not care about the dorms. During the numerous difficulties encountered along the way, Pasha is not indifferent to human misfortune, on the contrary; he begins to feel more and more responsible for the people around him. He also experiences the strength that good deeds release in others. One of the turning points of his journey is a meeting in the boarding school with Sasha’s teacher who, with her relentless attitude and accompanying children despite the numerous threats, forces him to confront himself. One of Nina’s statements directed to Pasha is also extremely important. It concerns a much larger group of people, exposing the mechanisms of securing peaceful life by avoiding confrontation and not taking responsibility for anything. The teacher accuses the silent fleeing from speaking out about important matters and for participation in the moral and social discourse.

Thus, Sasha’s journey to the boarding school becomes not only a journey in space, but also an inner wandering, which he did not want. Thanks to her, however, he returns to the long-forgotten values and demeanour. It is not always easy, for it forces him to evaluate his lifestyle and work. It is especially difficult for a teacher to meet a former student at one of the block posts: the student chose hostility towards Ukraine. How could I have not noticed that my students are fighting

²² Жадаң, С., *Интернат*, Чернівці 2017, 171.

against me, against what I have taught them? – contemplates the teacher. The journey is also a metaphor for the next stage of maturing of both the adult Pasha and his adolescent nephew. On a journey through the mayhem of war, one can also see the metaphor of the family life of the residents of the house by the station. Its subsequent stages are connected with various stages of family relationships. The journey home becomes a pilgrimage and purification. It helps them to understand the value of home, and to appreciate all the elements that are important there and the processes that it is subjected to: “A house filled with a thousand items, spacious and memorised, to the last button in the top drawer. The homeland to which you are accustomed, get used to your own body. Parents are still alive and healthy, from whom you grow increasingly distant, whom you understand less and less, although this does not in any way disturb you: it is enough for you if they just are somewhere, somewhere near,” the protagonist recalls the days of his youth.²³ Now only his father is alive, but his presence is still irreplaceable, it becomes the patron of a sense of inner security even if the world collapses. “Quiet evenings, dark nights. So much joy in everything, so much warmth.”²⁴ The travellers, experiencing the horrors of war, think more about the home as the Promised Land and paradise lost. “Let’s catch the horn. Our windows are lit by the television screen. Home smells of fresh livestock,”²⁵ reminisces Sasha. The paradise is to become an ordinary everyday life. The four walls closed to strangers are in fact an alternative world, which was created by its inhabitants against the war. Alas, it is only up to them how long it will last.

Along with Zygmunt Bauman, it might be suggested that this exceeding journey not only becomes his experience of diversity, but it also makes him cross his cultural boundaries and the restrictions implied by his social context.²⁶ It allows him to break out of the impasse of acting as *Homo post-Sovieticus* unconcerned about the surrounding world, to see a new perspective and start fighting for what he really cares about.

²³ Ibidem, 227.

²⁴ Ibidem, 308.

²⁵ Ibidem, 335.

²⁶ Bauman, Z., O turystach i włóczęgach, czyli o bohaterach i ofiarach nowoczesności, in: *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*, Warszawa 2000, 133–155.

ABSTRACT

***Boarding School* as a Tale of Wandering – a Man and a Boy**

Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk

This article analyses Serhiy Zhadan's novel *Boarding School*, where, upon military conflict in Ukraine, are depicted different fates of individuals, their varying interpretation of the surrounding world, the difficulties they face when trying to determine their own identity, the constant fear and fatigue, as well as the inevitable question "At what time will it be over?" In order to interpret *Boarding School* author used the theory of cultural geography of Cosgrove and Jackson, which puts a special focus to the link between space and the issues of power and ideology. Author has supported this perspective with the theoretical basis developed by Rybicka, that allows disentangling different ways of imaging power with the landscape. Analysis of Zhadan's anthropological understanding of the road links two points in space, while mediating between the centre and the peripheries. Following Bauman, one could say that the extremely tedious journey of the main character not only becomes an experience of diversity, but it also forces him to cross cultural borders and the limitations existing in his social group. In some ways, this journey allows him to break the impasse of functioning as Homo post-Sovieticus, who is oblivious to the world around him as well as to look at the world from different perspectives and start fighting for what he truly cares about.

Key words: Ukrainian Literature, Serhiy Zhadan, *Boarding School*, Military Conflict in Eastern Ukraine

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IN SEARCH OF THE LOST HOME.
FEATURES OF KATERYNA KALYTKO'S
POETIC COLLECTION – *TORTURE CHAMBER.*
VINEYARD. HOME

Kateryna Kalytko is undoubtedly one of the most interesting figures in contemporary Ukrainian literature. She is the author of two prose books, seven poetry collections, recipient of several poetry awards in Ukraine, winner of the international Vilenica Crystal Prize in 2016 and the Joseph Conrad Award in 2017. Although Kalytko debuted way back in 1999, and her work was duly noticed and noted, it seems that she really started reaching new heights in 2014, when her poetry book *Torture Chamber. Vineyard. Home* (*Катівня. Виноградник. Дім*) was published.¹ It was one of the most awaited books of the year and won the award of the Ukrainian literary portal Litakcent. In 2017, she published a prose collection *Land of the Lost or Short Scary Tales* (*Земля Загублених, або Маленькі страшині казки*), which received the BBC Book Award. Her next poetic collection *Бунар* (*Бунар*) was published in 2018. Kalytko is involved in organizing literary festivals and readings, for example, the short prose festival *Intermezzo* and the literary festival *Island of Europe*. She is also a reputed translator and promoter of literature from the former Yugoslav countries in Ukrainian cultural space. As she grew increasingly interested in Balkan culture, Bosnia in particular, Kalytko felt close connection and common rhythm with the country, which also gave her the opportunity to learn her second mother tongue. She has translated and familiarized Ukrainian readers with texts by the authors, inter alia, Melina Kamberić, Miljenko Jergović, Nenad Veličković, Mileta Prodanović, Mihajlo Pantić, Ozren Kebo, and Miša Selimović.

In one interview, Kalytko talks about how she became interested in Balkan literature, the issues raised by this segment of European writing, and her vision of her role as a translator: “I [...] translate from Bosnian and Croatian, and only occasionally from Serbian. I deliberately overlook linguistic issues related to the functioning of the Croatian-Serbian diasystem, and the three languages within this

¹ Калитко, К., *Катівня. Виноградник. Дім*, Львів 2014.

diasystem – the structure appeared instead of Serbo-Croatian after the geopolitical changes. It's in this manner that I support the right to self-determination of all small nations, fully aware of how important it is as seen from the perspective of Ukraine. Indeed, working on these translations is far from just simply exercising my profession. If I were to invoke a poetic metaphor, it's like a delta, into which I fall as a river, and from where I, the author, translator and human being, open up a great sea. Generally speaking, the theme found me on its own, as do all important things in life. For example, Miljenko Jergović represents an important, decisive phase in my life, both as translator and human being. In his story, *The Geographer*, the protagonist, a retired geography teacher, observes the dramatic changes on the map of Europe, and during the war he sees God in a dream; God shows him a bizarre new map, circling with a pointer the border of the country, a country no larger than a teardrop, exhales the name Bosnia and says: "This is your most important matter on Earth!" Oddly enough, I associate myself very clearly with this story and the hero. Moreover, the authors and I are mutually in agreement when there's a common nerve, geopoetics, humane principles, national distinctiveness, methods to preserve their small borders, including the internal ones. I was once even accused of showing excessive love and admiration for anything non-Ukrainian but, I, for one, believe that, first, our shared pain and experience contribute to our common destiny, and second, that it can work, figuratively speaking, as a "pending coffee": Ukrainian lady became so fond of little Bosnia and wanted to tell everyone how the country resisted, and somewhat later someone impartial will want to tell the world about Ukraine.² Such a rich multicultural experience, a sojourn in two different geographical and mental spaces, between what is one's own and what has been acquired, influence Kateryna Kalytko's writing, which is very different from the style of Ukrainian writers of her generation, though they beat as one heart in interpreting heroic folk epic.

In the end, Kateryna Kalytko's language is very special, bookish, refined and selective; her metaphors are ample and complex; they require reader to engage intellectually, as the author is culturally astute. Her images are not plastic, but multileveled, appealing to different experiences and, accordingly, requiring different readings. Kateryna Kalytko takes the reader from a very personal experience to universal metaphysical comprehension; the path through this maze is not easy, but there is Ariadne's thread, on which she strings allusions, like knots, to well-known cultural Christian, Islamic, literary and geographical topoi. Readers, who dared to enter the maze of Kalytko's worlds, will find it quite difficult to make their way through. Yet one can say with certainty that they will start discovering

² Калитко, К., У найближче десятиліття є підстави очікувати дуже свіжої, страшної і доброї прози, *Insider*, 2. 3. 2017. [online: <<http://www.theinsider.ua/art/katerina-kalitko>>, cit. 2018-10-03].

the meaning of things, the white light which, like amygdalin, hides in the “belly of an apricot kernel”.

In the above mentioned interview, Kalytko explains how she intuitively set upon the path towards artistic poetic expression: “I don’t try to formalize my artistic quest, to put it in a stylized frame. I’ll be banal, but I want to say that I write because I cannot not write, and I do it quite intuitively. I had a long pause when I wasn’t at all in the public eye, experimenting with writing and rejecting forms of speech with which I had no affinity. At some point, I realized that I wasn’t interested in the technical vulgarity of versification; I wanted to find the rhythm of poetic speech that is closest to breathing, to an emotionally spoken phrase that is interrupted by inhalation and exhalation, and not restricted by any sort of corset. For me, shaken and torn rhythms are very much alive... At the same time, I prefer accentual-syllabic verse, because the forms of expression aren’t decayed or ossified, but dynamic and flexible, pulsating and rhythmic”.³ The pause that Kateryna Kalytko mentions lasted nearly seven years – between the release of her book of prose *M. Hysteria* in 2007, and her poetry collection *Torture Chamber. Vineyard. Home* in 2014. Nonetheless, a limited electronic version of her poetry collection *The Season of Storms* was released in 2013. It was an experiment of words inducing taste, rhythm and sound; some of the texts were included in the 2014 collection.

The title *Torture Chamber. Vineyard. Home* is strong and expressive, immediately prompting an association with the triad of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, and corresponding existential states: fear/pain – search/path/return – memory/love/liberation, or the three stages of human life: birth, adolescence, and old age. The three parts of the book bear titles referring to the most important images of the last verses of each section – *Cruel Rivers*, *Children with Hands of Snakes* and *The Apricot Stone*, all of which constitute emotional, figurative and semantic markers. Pain, fear and suffering are the key emotions and feelings in the book. It is full of lexical elements that invoke physical and mental pain. Such words as cold, fear, war, wounds, spasms, burns, hack, break, cut, bandage up, heal, cry, weep, cutters, cripples are endless; all these lexical elements demonstrate the amplitude of pain. For the lyrical character, pain is one of the paths leading to complete self-awareness and repentance. As in the poem about a woman on a late moonlit night, who imagines that a prisoner has luckily escaped execution and returns home, and who says that “death brings a basket of strawberries... She is not blind; she has seen him”. This woman’s tragic tale unfolds as if on stage, illuminated by the moon, which the author takes from a folk legend about the curse of the moon that struck Cain after he stabbed his brother with a pitchfork: “...dreams and bats surge from above, and drops of his brother’s blood from the moon.”

³ Ibidem.

In the book, pain is often accompanied by cold. It teaches us that “shores, gods, as well as debt” approach with the first cold – old age. Pain is not a transient or intermediate state, but one of full-blooded being, a sense of vigour in our body, in each cell and nerve. A person in pain cannot play double game; he is honest in face of the entire world, and mainly vis-à-vis himself; confined in prison, prisoners show their real faces; the hunter-God “peels away the faces of empty people with his nails” and “midday strips away the shadows from things existent”. Pain is a catalyst for triggering changes in human body, for man's re-birth: body's odours start changing on prison stairs: “as it falls into ruin, the body descends, shaken with juices and tremolos; the pain releases iron birds, mostly in pairs”. Pain brings people together, becomes a marker for collective trauma, which leaves its marks on the body and on memory: “a burn is a password, recognition of one's own people that have survived”.

In the end, vines are born through pain, and give us harsh wine; pain gives birth to meaning and truth:

*Мусять мучитись лози, зростати на кам'яній
кручі й солі, щоб смак увійшов і сенс
у вино їхнє.⁴*

The book is painful for Ukrainian readers because it recalls the events of the Revolution of Dignity, the armed conflicts in the winter of 2014, the shooting of peaceful protesters, the annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of the war in Ukraine. The lines of the *Children's Crusade*, which seem to hint at the bloody events of February 2014, are tragic and bone-chilling:

*Але от: серед ночі, зачувши близьку біду,
Однією лавою леві й дерева йдуть,
А за ними діти, зграйками, насторожені,
Дерев'яні щити несуть, і тріщина в кожнім.
Обережно несуть їх там, де від крові слизько,
Бо щити, можливо, згодяться ще на коліски,
На легкі плоти, на ноші, коли вже раптом,*

*Але жодне, звісно, не хотіло вмирати,
І вони затулялися ангелами та хрестами...⁵*

⁴ Vines must suffer, grow on steep stone / slopes and salt to make the flavour of their wine / true and meaningful. (Калитко, К., Катівня. *Виноградник. Дім*, Львів 2014, 89.) Here and thereafter translated by Halyna Dolynna and Christine Eliashevsky.

⁵ But look: in the middle of the night, hearing the nearby cries of distress / Lions and trees go forward in one steady row, / And behind them, children, in packs, on their guard, / They carry

The story of the children's crusade is woven into the narrative about the fairy-tale battle for Narnia. Yet suddenly, violent reality cuts through the story: the images of the children painfully remind us of the Maidan victims, the heroes of the Heavenly Hundred, who tried vainly to protect themselves from sniper bullets with their wooden shields. Other figures step into this matrix of Ukrainian reality – cripples, who put their hand on their hearts while listening to the anthem; their angel is a twenty-year-old girl, an invalid, who “hasn't died and isn't yet dying”⁶, or the toy government that organizes dance parties at night. Or military troops that leave the water every night to guard the fortress, “so that there's a standoff”.

In general, the theme of war, not necessarily a specific one, is the leitmotif of the book. War does not always appear, but it is felt in general tense and anxious atmosphere; metonymic images of regiments, ruined fortresses, guards, knives, iron bullets, call signs, blood on spears, blossoming poppies, which appear in different contexts, as if pulled from memories, dreams or ancient narratives by a reflector. Nonetheless, there are also texts where Kalytko speaks more openly about war, as, for example, in the poem *The Sixth of April*, where, by listing plain endless numbers, which all wars have in store, she evokes the tragedy of human lives:

*Двоє родичів – один мішок із кістками,
Тисяча триста дев'яносто п'ять днів облоги міста,
три пакунки з гуманітарною...
П'ять разів із барака виводять під зливу вночі
До відкритої ями, в якій вже гниють сорок троє...⁷*

“War starts as soon as you stop remembering the names of the victims and start counting them in numbers,” writes Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić. The phrase is embodied in the Kalytko's poem about the war in her native Ukraine. In the poem *He Writes*, the geographical (though not historical) framework has

wooden shields, with cracks in each one. / They carry them carefully to where the ground is slippery with blood, / Because the shields may yet be their cradles, / Or light flatboards, or stretchers, sometimes immediately, / But, of course, not one of them wanted to die, / And they hid behind angels and crosses... (Калитко, К., *Катівня. Виноградник. Дім*, Львів 2014, 56–57.)

⁶ Words taken from the Ukrainian anthem.

⁷ Two family members – one bag with bones, / The city besieged for a thousand three hundred and ninety-five days, / Three packages with humanitarian... / They're led out of the barracks five times at night / To the open pit, where forty-three are already rotting... (Калитко, К., *Катівня. Виноградник. Дім*, Львів 2014, 44.)

been narrowed down. War victims are members of a family from Podillya⁸: the mother whose sons are away fighting, the soldier Petrus who is waiting for a letter from his brother Andriy, also a soldier:

*Злива б'є в барабани, болото попід фронтами,
Ми йдемо вздовж річок і під хмарами, безнадійно.
Я усе забуваю, з мене наче витекла пам'ять.
Чи співає ще, мамо, в церковному хорі Гафія?⁹*

Water is portrayed in all shapes and sizes – as harsh downpour, swampy mud, streaming river, or fog flowing into the Lethean oblivion.

Water is an element that plays the most important role in the cosmogony of this book. There are seas, oceans, swamps, downpours, rain, fogs, and Jeremiah's tears. Water takes away and gives back; it drowns boats and brings ships to harbour; it lulls, purifies and shows the way. The water symbol is multi-sensory: birth, memory, oblivion; it is always dynamic. Fire is also an important creative element of the world presented in the book; it is found most often as a yellow and golden colour in the images of a (yellow) snake, the craters of a volcano, and burns. Fire, like war, is part of the initiation, a permission to enter the adult world: children pass through a high fiery edge as flames arise at their feet. And then, there is the teenager who recovers from fever, "crossing narrow bridge over the crater of the volcano", and comes to understand the passage of time. The author adds another dimension to fire, which is traditionally a talisman of the hearth and home, namely destruction and oblivion:

*Селище порожніє,
Тріскотять родинні хребти, як лоза у грубі,
Вигорають нагріті кубла, злиденні, невідкупелні,
І ведуть дітей у вирій приручені ними змії.¹⁰*

And yet, the image of a warm hearth and home is also there. In the final text of the book, the lyrical character returns home exhausted (his hair has been trimmed in "some kind of Dalila's barber shop", and he recognizes his home from

⁸ Podillya – central region of Ukraine.

⁹ Rain beats against the drums, mud along the front lines, / We walk along the rivers and under clouds, hopelessly. / I've forgotten everything; it seems that my memories have run dry. / Mother, does Hafiya still sing in the church choir? (Калитко, К., Катівня. Виноградник. Дім, Львів 2014, 19.)

¹⁰ The village is emptying, / Family spines crack and split, like vines on rugged land, / The warm nests burn up, the beggars and the unredeemed, / And the snakes tamed by the children lead them to the South. (Калитко, К., Катівня. Виноградник. Дім, Львів 2014, 93.)

the smell: “something’s always being burnt here; this time it’s sagebrush”. Yet the greatest dimension of fire is passion – the thirst for love and love of music. It seems that the author wants to find a language that can explain pain and war, a way to articulate, experience and survive traumatic experiences. This may be why many poems are addressed to the conditional “You” – either to herself, or to an imaginary interlocutor, which adds dramatic and emotional tones to the texts. “You address yourself as ‘you’, because to address yourself as ‘I’ is like confessing under torture... At the same time, it’s like stepping out of the darkness, taking a step away from the enchanted circle, coming forward. So, this is me and my knowledge about how a person immersed in water grows gills, like fish thrown on the shore that begins to breathe as deeply as possible. This is about how we inhale and exhale a medium from which there’s no escape – language.”¹¹

In the poem *Cassandra* by the Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka, Helen argues with Cassandra about the connection between the future and the word that describes the future: “Do you think that truth engenders language? I believe that language engenders truth.”¹² The world, with Kalytko as its demiurge, is truth, for understanding, debating and fixing what is needed, like clay, new language. After all, “articulation creates bright or languid look on a human face... every truth creates living mouths for faceless clay dolls.”¹³ She believes that language is living matter, which has its own physical dimensions – taste, smell, tactility: Cyrillic can be crushed and scattered to fish like bread. The word “nothing” is full of smoke; eternity is in consonants, whereas a foreign language is alive, rather harsh, “like a wax mould made from my lips”; the words “it’s too tight between the water and the salt”; the word “night quarters” is perfect, as “a night lair”. Language, along with blood, is the fifth element that nourishes this world, gives it the rhythm of breathing, and reveals its significance. Language is also a way of defining the new post-apocalyptic world (“how to live after all that’s happened?”, “the floor hasn’t been swept for six days”), giving names to things that have suddenly changed their appearance and essence; that is why it must be repeated again and again, and that is why this classic all-time expression – “Speak! Talk!”¹⁴ – is so relevant here.

This new world, which is created right in front of the reader’s eyes, needs its own heroes, who, like this world, are very young. In this legendary world, there are naive, but also unreasonable and courageous children with hands-raised snakes.

¹¹ Калитко, К., У найближче десятиліття є підстави очікувати дуже свіжої, страшної і доброї прози, *Insider*, 2. 3. 2017. [online: <<http://www.theinsider.ua/art/katerina-kalitko>>, cit. 2018-10-03].

¹² Українка, Л., *Драматичні твори*. Київ 1989, 285.

¹³ Калитко, К. *Катівня. Виноградник. Дім*, Львів 2014, 20.

¹⁴ Quote from *Intermezzo*, a short story by Ukrainian writer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, М. Kotsiubynsky. (Коцюбинський, М., *Твори в двох томах*, т. 2, Київ 1988, 50).

At first, they are presented as victims that the magician of Hamelin lured from the city with “a voice as dark as honey”. They are orphans who were bewitched by the Caliph stork, “unrepentant children” who “run from school, stand at the sea, like before a court of justice”; the children “forgotten and alone on a fiery threshold”. However, these children grow up very quickly; they follow the rivers “higher and higher, lost and missing, and then return”. And suddenly, they see their first corpse and the pain helps them to grow and mature, like vines; they set out on their children’s crusade, go out to meet the wind on cold boats, travel to the South with their tame snakes, holding this world on their backs:

*Світ ніякий не круглий, це добре видно згори:
Раби гостроплечі, юні та срібні, несуть його, як паланкін...
І світ буде тяжко нести і надто вже шкода кинути.¹⁵*

Until they select a king amongst themselves, a man who takes on pain and responsibility for the world:

*Зводять на трон хлопчика-короля,
він тримається добре, хоча ридання бритвою
ріжуть легені, вдих і видих болять.
Поруч – вовки, що вчили його говорити.¹⁶*

Heroic epic does not anticipate irony or sentimentality, only moderate pathos and tragic stoicism, which correlates with pain and suffering – for there is an endless struggle against evil and darkness, until “the black earth melts the darkness and turns it into myrrh”. Hence, all emotions are crystal clear and absolute – energy is infused into creating monumental images, while half-tones and details will be added later. Therefore, even the air here can cause pain; asters burn the retina, and love is like something that pierces the throat, or something so tender that lovers are torn “like a grenade, from the inside, a white great silence”.

The geography of this world can be recognized; it is washed by the Dnister and Southern Bug Rivers; over the Danube blows the koshava.¹⁷ This is a cold world, “the southerners asked us how the cold lives in our world”. Where the land has become “wild and naked”, the snow is “hungry and restless”, and winter

¹⁵ The world is not at all round; it’s clearly visible from above: / Sharp-shouldered slaves, young and silver, carry it like a palanquin... / And the world will be hard to carry, but it’s a pity to throw it down. (Калитко, К. Катівня. Виноградник. Дім., Львів 2014, 125.)

¹⁶ They seat the boy king on the throne, / he holds himself well, although he laments as his lungs are severed / with a razor, breathing in and out is so painful. / Nearby – the wolves who taught him how to speak. (Калитко, К. Катівня. Виноградник. Дім., Львів 2014, 74.)

¹⁷ Name given to the dry south-east wind in Serbia.

“coughs up water from its lungs before the arrival of dawn”. Cherries, apricots and grapes grow in this world, while men carry ripe and long-winded names of August. This world is created from individual memory “going from grandchild to grandfather, an eternal living martyrologist” and collective memory “...we brought forth satiated snakes of the past from under our skin, full of us, and cut them into pieces, and then got rid of either the voice, either a hand, or all of ourselves”. Flowing one into another, like wine in the blood, it will modify the religious and culturological topoi; this is an inverted world that has been reflected in one of those cruel rivers. Because

*Є ріки, які на роду нам – перепливати,
а є такі, над якими довго жити і думати.*¹⁸

The world lives according to ancient symbols and meanings – vine grows from the rib of Jesus (on an ancient Baroque Ukrainian icon), to be filled with new apocrypha – Anna does not give birth to the Virgin, but to three sons; Joseph travels with his infant in a dangerous age of “knives and strange music of spheres”, and Mariya from the provinces walks with hope, but with no husband. And, the Messiah becomes a young girl named Mariya who is destined for a very feminine role – the path and liberation (a delicate paraphrase of the words of Jesus, because it seems that humanity has already passed the stages of truth and life).

In this world, men are travellers. They are nomads, warriors, guards, defenders, dervishes, or hunters of the Golden Fleece, who can always count on returning to their home. Where clothes are hanging out to dry in the courtyard, where time seems to have stopped, where everything is “a game forgotten in the beloved green courtyard”. Where, in empty commandant villas, women dressed in black have been waiting for three hundred years for their men to return from their sea journey. For such is Penelope’s destiny – eternal expectation and sacrifice. Solitude is engraved in the names of Esther, Miriam, Selima and Sevgil; in the end, the women’s great silence is broken by a song. Risking her life, sister rescues her twelfth brother, and the other sister, whose description is linked to Marusya Churai, suggests Lina Kostenko,¹⁹ is given an embroidered handkerchief – family talisman from their mother. The woman has “an enormous though strange memory of hunger”, silently wipes the dirt of humiliation from the face of her husband, former prisoner of war. The nameless woman, for whom God “extinguishes people like runway lights”, uses her last strength to “warm the bed and milk”, to watch over

¹⁸ There are rivers that are meant to be crossed, / but there are some that we must live with and think about for a long time. (Калитко, К. *Катівня. Виноградник. Дім*, Львів 2014, 14.)

¹⁹ Marusya Churai – legendary Ukrainian songwriter. The main heroine of the eponymous novel written by Lina Kostenko. (Костенко, Л., *Маруся Чурай*, Київ 1990.)

her husband's dream, so that he "doesn't venture beyond photo frame alone". And, the main thing – the woman prays to "mature and catch a baby", and then marks the stones on the way home in white.

This legendary, balladic, tense world is nevertheless permeated by silence; the sounds of storm and war ("the violins playing, the tritons blowing into the shells") become silent. Then the peninsula (Crimea?) ceases to be "the most dramatic form of existence for the mainland". Quiet and peaceful oases emerge, a place for the reader to rest as he contemplates impressionistic marine sketches (*Portrait with a Child*) or an idyll with exotic Oriental notes (*Feeding the Donkey with Bread...*), listen to the rhythm of a Bosnian Sevdalinka (*Sevdah*), or read the author's interpretations of Lorca and Sappho (*Amargo, I Loved this Woman...*). How can we go on living today? We must continue living, because even in times of war "we continue baking bread, and the nights, guards and pilgrimages also continue".

Kateryna Kalytko is no doubt one of the most interesting names in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Unfortunately, as of now there hasn't been any academic analysis of her creative writing, though literary criticism closely follows her new texts and the ways her poetic world changes. Among the critics who offer their interpretation and interesting perception of Kalytko's works stands out Yevhen Stasinevych and his critical article *Crusade to God-Knows-Where*²⁰ about Kalytko's collected poems *Torture Chamber. Vineyard. Home*. Also, Hanna Ulyura in her article *The right to be Misunderstood*²¹ points out to the issue of alienation that Kalytko explores in her collection of stories *Land of the Lost or Short Scary Tales* and the methods of working through this theme in literature. In particular, the collection of stories *Land of the Lost or Short Scary Tales* demonstrates Kalytko's stylistic aptitude and her ability to work across a range of prose genres. It also defines the author's thematic vector: there's place for everybody and no one is inessential – this is what the Earth of Lost is for.²²

Kalytko's most recent book is the collection of poetry *Bunar*.²³ The portal Litakcent named it the best collection of poetry of 2018. She writes about the road, history, war and love – everything that one can see peeping into the well of human memory.

²⁰ Стасіневич, Є., Хрестовий похід бозна-куди, *Видавництво Старого Лева*, 13. 3. 2015. [online: <<http://starylev.com.ua/club/article/hrestovyy-pohid-bozna-kudy>>, cit. 2018-11-23].

²¹ Улюра, Г., Право бути незрозумілим, *Видавництво Старого Лева*, 25. 5. 2017. [online: <<http://starylev.com.ua/club/article/pravo-buty-nezrozumilym>>, cit. 2018-11-23].

²² The quote from the interview by Kateryna Kalytko: Катерина Калитко: «Для всіх є місце і ніхто не є неістотним – на те й існує Земля Загублених», *Видавництво Старого Лева*, 20. 5. 2017. [online: <<http://starylev.com.ua/news/kateryna-kalytko-dlya-vsih-ye-misce-i-niht-ne-ye-neistotnym-na-te-y-isnuye-zemlya-zagublenyh>>, cit. 2018-11-23].

²³ *Bunar*, in Croatian the well.

ABSTRACT

In Search of the Lost Home. Features of Kateryna Kalytko's Poetic Collection – *Torture Chamber. Vineyard. Home*

Maryana Klymets

The research is focused on the features of a collection of poetry by the Ukrainian writer Kateryna Kalytko. In the article the author examines the poetic and stylistic features of the book, its core motives and images. The author also establishes the grounds to prove the thesis that the book is not just the collection of poetry, but a holistic text with its own architectonics.

Key words: Contemporary Ukrainian Poetry, Kateryna Kalytko, *Torture Chamber. Vineyard. Home*.

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REPORTS

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REVOLUTION OF A WRITTEN WORD
(A SHORT OVERVIEW OF CURRENT
ARMENIAN LITERARY PROCESS)

The second republic of Armenia has gained independence in 1991, right after being the first to leave the collapsing USSR. This change has largely influenced publishing industry and literature itself. Publishing, being completely state governed before, was privatized and faced considerable difficulties, just as the country fell into severe economic and political crisis that arose from the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (today Artsakh), failure in economy, emigration, etc. The decade after independence was marked by books about war, challenges of migration, criticism of the Soviet state which was not permissible under the previous regime and its censorship. Meanwhile, publishing has become a small and difficult business, print runs dropped to a minimum of 500 and less copies, self-publishing dominated over commercial deals, book distribution systems failed and book prices rose making it virtually a luxury product for most people.

The break of millennia brought upsurge in publishing. By 2010 vast number of new authors appeared. Their themes shifted considerably from the post-Soviet theme. They addressed new social, political issues with a greater accent on internal world of an individual. The writers started to seek new styles and genres to express their ideas, some of them reaching for postmodernism – something that came quite belatedly from Europe, though just in time when considering local realities.

Poetry has always been strong in Armenian literature historically and during the Soviet era. Consequently, a new generation of young poets have appeared with some outstanding names such as Hasmik Simonyan, Karen Antashyan, Armen Sargsyan, Husik Ara and others. Among fiction writers, the names such as Aram Pachyan with a long running bestseller *Goodbye, Bird* (2012), Hrachya Saribekyan and his *Sun of the Twins* (2013), Jean Chat (Hovhannes) Tekgyozyan and his novel *Fleeting City* (2012), Armen of Armenia with *The Return of Kikos* (2013) and *Mommyland: The Flag* (2016) and many others who took over the literary scene. The new generation of writers started to experiment with form and content, touched upon some burning issues of modern Armenia, such as

relationships in a militarized state, gender and LGBT issues in Armenian society, internal conflict of an individual in the modern world. At the same time, the authors of the older generation started to publish new novels and gained another momentum. These are the authors such as Gurgen Khanjyan with his novels *Yenok's Eye* (2012) and *Give Me Your Hand, Kid* (2017) who uses modern topics and language and being an author of the older generation isn't afraid of open descriptions of sex and sexuality, Hovhannes Yeranyan's *The Rope of Sin* (2017) who touches upon father and son relationship, Susanna Harutyunyan's *Ravens before Noah* (2015) with outstanding depiction of a mystical village inhabited by Genocide survivors which stays out of reach of Soviet government, as well as others, who found their way through many general topics relevant not only locally but internationally, too. These authors also introduced the modern novel which became a new trend in literature, while before all these authors were more interested in short stories.

With the changes on the literary scene, publishing industry underwent some considerable changes. Even though the official number of registered publishing houses is over 200, the number of active publishers is not even over twenty, most of them publishing less than five books a year. There are three publishers who produce over hundred books a year. These are big publishing houses that supply the market with almost 70 percent of books in Armenian language. Only some 20 % of those come from Armenian authors and the rest are translations from other languages. In 2018, new small publishing houses were established that focus on translated non-fiction. This is a brand-new trend, as non-fiction has not been popular among readers.

The effort to promote Armenian literature worldwide intensified over the past few years. Some authors made successful debut internationally: for instance, Aram Pachyan in Ukraine, UK and with rights sold to Bulgaria, Egypt, France and elsewhere, or Jean Chat (Hovhannes) Tekgyozyan in Turkey, Canada and France. The work with foreign markets has its own challenges largely arising from the lack of literary translators from Armenian to other languages, and limited state support to translations.

The recent Velvet Revolution in Armenia gives a lot of hope to see considerable change in the country, particularly in publishing. Apart from the many changes that Armenia currently faces in the system of governance, there is an imperative condition that bears the potential to serve as the base conducive for change. The new Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan is an acclaimed journalist and author of the book *The Other Side of the Country*, which has been published shortly after his appointment. It is a novel he has written a decade earlier that appeared in parts in newspaper. Yet it was only recently that it came out as a book. It was sold in several thousands of copies and influenced public mind as no hitherto government official has been closer to intellectuals. It is also worth noting that

the Velvet Revolution had its anthem based on a poem by the Prime Minister. The poem contained no political text. Cultural revolution is what the people in Armenia hope for now, as it would be the key prerequisite for the growth on the book market and publishing industry that can bring the country to the new level of development.

Natallia Babkova

CONTEMPORARY BELARUSIAN PROSE:
THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE
OF A LITERARY AWARD

Belarusian literary landscape enjoyed major transformation in 2012. Polish Embassy, Polish Institute in Minsk, Belarusian PEN-Centre and the Union of Belarusian Writers launched a new prestigious Award for books of prose written in Belarusian, which eventually attracted quite a lot of public attention to the books as well as to the literary process in Belarus.

The Award was named after Jerzy Giedroyc – editor, publicist and politician. Born in Minsk in 1906, Giedroyc was fervent supporter of good relations between the neighbouring countries in the region – Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania. The mission of the Award was to honor his memory, to promote Belarusian literature in Belarus and Poland and to encourage Belarusian writers to step into the international arena.

Prior to 2012, Belarusian literature had been struggling through a “marginal” period: there was little common platform for readers and critics to discuss the literary process and for writers to make themselves heard (read) nation-wide. Labyrinths of a postcolonial society (two Unions of writers, two languages, at least two literary canons) were exacerbated by the government decision to create literary holding that excluded the writers of the Union which didn’t enjoy the favour of the official establishment (up to the point of re-writing school curriculum in Belarusian literature). The new and old, the national and imperialistic, the local and global in Belarusian literature sometimes ignored each other, sometimes co-existed not only in opposition: they overlapped and swapped places giving rise to literary “betrayers” and “fugitives”.

The new Award brought a breath of fresh air. Though it didn’t create nation-wide platform for literary process, it facilitated wider discussion, reshuffled both canons and brought readers from different camps to become acquainted with new authors.

To present the current Belarusian literature, the following paper portrays chronologically the so far six laureates of the Giedroyc Award (from 2012 to 2017) and points out some highlights of the Award.

Year One (2012)

In 2012 bookmakers predicted victory either to a novel about the contemporary artist and his adventures in Europe (*Shalom* by Artur Klinau) or to a documentary research of a Minsk period of Kennedy's assassin (*Oswald in Minsk* by Aliaksandar Lukashuk). Both are solid conceptual novels, offering highly impressive depictions of Minsk.

Surprisingly, neither of the books won. The Award went to a thin book of fourteen short stories that was to become the first laureate. *National Team of the Republic of Belarus in Secondary Sports* by Pavel Kastsiukevich is a collection of stories, made of what the dreams are made of, where characters do not even pretend to be real and the main character is the delicate Jewish-Belarusian intonation.

The author explains that the book is about fear, disappointment and frustration. Yet, it is one of the funniest Belarusian books I've read, with housewives-visionaries, desperate athletes and – my favorite – female smugglers outsmarting not only the customs at the Belarusian border, but life itself.

Pavel Kastsiukevich is an acclaimed translator from Hebrew and English. His translations of Israeli writer Etgar Keret proved to be major success. I cannot help the subtle feeling that Pavel and Etgar have a lot in common, particularly in how they grasp reality and where they make reader burst in laughter.

His most recent book, the novel *Barbarosa Plan* (2016) ensured him even a better reputation. It is a story of a therapist torn between his great-grandmother (and, perhaps, a hook from the past that still keeps hold of him) and a lover (an immigrant with no sentiment for her past hooks but with a new story of success achieved without remorse in the West). Some complained the novel was worthier of the Award, but it came too late: the rules of the Giedroyc Award prevent former laureates to bid for the Award more than once.

Year Two (2013)

The lauded poet and former candidate for presidency in 2010 (the candidacy was to eventually cost him prison sentence) Uladzimir Niakliaiev wrote his *Soda Fountains With and Without Syrup* in 2012. The novel portrays the reality of dictatorial society in the 1960s and in 2010. Yet, along with the real figures and relations, some events in the book seem almost fantastic.

In the story, young poet (the author's prototype) comes to Minsk to pursue his studies to find himself in dissident circles. They hang out together, play with the radio, challenge the society with bold fashion style, bump into Nikita Khrushchev

to end up detained by KGB and charged with an attempt to assassinate the supreme leader of the country. This plot caused a wave of criticism from Minsk readers. People blamed Niakliaiev for embellishing his biography: in reality, Niakliaiev's youth was far from dissident: he was a laureate of the greatest Soviet young Communist award.

Critics split into two opposing camps – some vehemently defended the author, claiming the novel is plain art and doesn't have to address real stories; others were sceptical about and dissatisfied with the degree of politics the novel contains. Yet, even in such heated post-award discussions, everyone admitted that Uladzimir Niakliaiev is a great poet and remains a poet even in his prose.

The atmosphere of Minsk is portrayed through a string of neat and precise images: a date with an ex-girlfriend thirty years after the separation, interrogation by KGB officers with a threatening syringe, chic youngsters laying their hands on smuggled bits of American newspapers. Considering the topic, one might expect this to lend some heavy reading. Yet the novel is quite light and dynamic. Rather than politics, it focuses more on love and betrayal.

The novel consists of three intertwined parts: the story itself, a chapter of documents and afterword by one of the book characters. Interestingly, the notorious Lee Harvey Oswald, Kennedy's assassin, appears as well, thus making it seem very realistic and almost a documentary.

Year Three (2014)

The third Giedroyc Award went to Ihar Babkov for his novel *A Minute* (2013). The book was subsequently awarded the Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award and was published in the Slovak language in 2014.

Interestingly, it was only the first part of a large saga intended by the author. When in 2017 the second part appeared (*A Minute. Second Book*), it caught many readers' attention – now they had to reread the thing as a whole.

The first book begins with a real Minsk-based café Minute of the 1980s where three main characters – Eva-Dominika, Bohdan and Frantisek – are setting out on an adventurous and exciting journey to fight the regime. The book leaves us with their lifelines puzzled as their journey becomes unclear. The second book deals mostly with their despair and how they learn to come to terms with the new times, when they are a lot older, betrayed and separated.

According to his self-definition Ihar Babkov is a poet, philosopher and wanderer. Hence, his prose is a bit magic, shamanic and poetic. The rescue he envisages for his characters rests in metaphysics – somewhere on the crossroads of our lives and dreams.

Year Four (2015)

Viktar Kazko, a representative of the traditional Belarusian prose, received the Giedroyc Award for his book of three tales *Time to Collect the Bones* (2014). The narrator is a man on the verge of dying who is looking back at his life and trying to metaphorically collect the stones from his path. Curiously, the stones turn out to be bones.

Viktar Kazko received the Award while being already an established author in Belarus. He was one of the few writers of the Soviet era who continued writing after Belarus gained her independence. His prose has since reached deeper, acquiring a tint of tragedy and dissonance with the times. Some critics accused him of abusing hate-speech. In fact, the narration is on the verge of moralizing; the spirit of all three tales is apocalyptic, even revengeful.

Yet, the style is spotless, as is the language. Though it does not resonate with me and I cannot relate to it entirely, I find it to be an important and curious reading, an unexpectedly sad take on the 1990s.

Year Five (2016)

Max Shchur is a poet and an anarchist, forced to emigrate from Belarus twenty years ago after writing and staging a play about the death of a dictator. He found political asylum in Prague, where his real literary life only began. His novel *To Complete Gestalt* (2015), which received the fifth Giedroyc Award, was written in Prague, in Belarusian and was published in Ukraine. It is a seemingly simple story about a long trip to Amsterdam.

The main character goes on a trip during a hard spell of his life: he gets fired at the beginning of the book, he is an émigré, lonely, unable to remember even the illusion of happiness he used to enjoy many years ago when visiting Amsterdam. Hence, he wants to revisit the city to try to understand what is going on in his life and in Europe; and to track the trajectory of anarchist/hippy/beat generation ideas in Europe over the last fifty years.

Max Shchur's prose offers anything but smooth and convenient narrative. He doesn't use conventional structures for his stories. Instead, he sends the narrative into long and winding labyrinths, with particularly enjoyable dialogues and quite witty (let them be self-derogative) monologues. Again, I subconsciously put it down to the influence of Latin American literature which he works most with, being a translator, working with several languages, though primarily with Spanish.

Year Six (2017)

The most dramatic influence on the contemporary literary developments in Belarus, though, came from Svetlana Alexievich, the 2015 Nobel Prize laureate. The Prize made non-fiction popular almost overnight. That might also have been why the 2017 Giedroyc Award went, for the first time, to a non-fiction book, *There Lived a Speaking Sparrow with its Lord* (2016) by Zmitser Bartosik.

Bartosik is an actor, journalist, popular bard, and author of a collection of stories *My Black Pistol*. During his journalistic expeditions he spoke to plenty ordinary people from remote places in Belarus. Their stories about Belarusian history made this award-winning book. They are unique because they are confessions of people who have reached the very end of their lives. The book, although it is about Belarusian history, deals more with the soul and heart of human being than with an established line of history events.

The editor of the book, Siarhey Dubavets noticed that Bartosik walks in the footsteps of Alexievich and Dylan at the same time. He doesn't explore the "Red Man", as Alexievich did, but ordinary Belarusian people falling out of the Soviet system, whose life stories would challenge the accepted vision of the 20th century events.

Alherd Bakharevich, a category of his own

When the long-list for the Giedroyc Award 2018 was announced in June 2018, Alherd Bakharevich was declared the most frequently nominated Giedroyc author – the last seven years saw seven of his books in the run up for the Award. Three times his books received the second prize, and once the third. His 2018 book, *Dogs of Europe* is believed to be his opus magnum. A number of critics predict he will finally break the vicious circle of second prizes and become the laureate.

His latest book is an anti-utopia about Belarus and Europe fifty years from now. It has already made its reputation of being the most attractive anti-bestseller. One of the slogans of the book intriguingly claims: "You will never read this book". The volume of the book – it is more than 900 pages long – and frequent passages in the constructed language Balbuta would intimidate a hesitating reader. Yet, people increasingly see it as an intellectual challenge and reach for the book.

The dark metaphor, taken into the title of the book, stands for people of culture on the verge of disappearance. In as much as barking presents the last chance for a chased dog to feel alive, writing is the same for authors right before the end of their era, at the dawn of the one of hate and destruction.

Summing up this short overview of contemporary Belarusian prose, I can't help noticing that Belarusian literature of the last decade stands in between two extremes. On the one hand, there is the desperate and tragic barking of the "dogs of Europe" in Belarusian prose, with the bark growing louder because of the continuing authoritarian regime in Belarus, the Russian war in Ukraine, the end of hopes for the rescue to come from the West, and the rise of non-democratic tendencies in the West. On the other hand, Belarusian literature focuses on the traditional Belarusian longing for "home, sweet home". It features the traditional Belarusian ability to make home against the odds. Perhaps, the wavering between the noble despair and the archaic healing hope is inherent in Belarusian mentality. And it is this wavering, this fleeing form that makes Belarusian literature so beautiful.

Shota Iatashvili

MAIN ACTORS ON CONTEMPORARY GEORGIAN LITERARY SCENE

Georgian literature has a history that spans one thousand and five hundred years. This short article can hardly have an ambition to depict or even schematically outline major stages of its development. The origins of contemporary literary scene in Georgia trace back to the first years of Georgian independence in the early 1990s. This study thus offers an analysis focusing on this latter period. While discussing various contemporary tendencies, we shall also try to mention certain decisive literary events of previous centuries. When looking back at the 20th century Georgian literature from the perspective of the 21st century, it is obvious that it has gone through three stages of fundamental renewal. In the global context, these stages have resulted from international literary processes and yet they had unique views and perspectives of their own, mostly arising out of the national political context. First modernist or avant-garde renewal in the early 20th century was orchestrated by poetic activities of Symbolist, Futurist and Dadaist movements (the latter two movements were actually merged in Georgia), while the prose was largely dominated by authors who wrote in the expressionist style. Such diverse processes were brought to an abrupt end in the 1930s by the Soviet regime that established Social Realism as the only legal form of artistic expression, thus blocking all paths to further literary quest. Similarly to all countries of the Soviet Union, another wave of renewed quest began in Georgia by the late 1950s and 1960s, during the political meltdown of the Khrushchev administration. It has to be argued that several authors that pioneered the renewal and renovation of Georgian literary scene at that time are still actively involved in literary processes nowadays. These include key figures in contemporary literature, of whom Besik Kharanauli (1939) and Lia Sturua (1939) can be deemed as poets of major significance. Sturua and Khahranauli, along with other authors, were among the first blank verse poets, introducing and establishing this poetic form in Georgia.

Besik Kharanauli uses a language that is evocative of folklore style of the Fshavi dialect (one of the northern dialects of the Georgian language). His poetry is reflexive and often oscillates on the verge of wisdom and naiveté. His verse impresses with unique features and extensiveness, and it is always directed towards the quest of ever-new poetic forms. Kharanauli's aesthetics changed considerably since the break of the millennium. His new books don't fall within the categories of any particular genre. Reader will find it impossible to trace in the text influence of a specific style. In its essence, his poetry is one deep breath, as Kharanauli focuses particularly on the stream of consciousness – a single but extremely powerful and uninterrupted stream. The poetry of Lia Sturua is filled with unhackneyed, surrealist metaphors; her style is gentle and refined. Yet, the key to her metaphors is frequently intellectual. She has also written many sonnets throughout her life. Whilst composed with full respect for classical and formal rules, they sound unconventional and unique, and cannot stand out as fundamentally different pieces in her career. Instead, they present logical and natural continuation of her mainstream works *in verse libre*. The poetic tandem of Taniel Tschanturia (1933) and Vakhtang Javakhadze (1933) is notable among those poets of the 1960s who are still active writers. They introduced irony and parody to Georgian poetry, loading their verse with *calembours*, word play, and alliteration. They have remained faithful to that style. The latter generation of poets was followed by another in the 1970s and 1980s that absorbed and interpreted these renovations, successfully combining the tradition with their own individual voices. These include, inter alia, Tedo Bekishvili (1941–1993), Jarji Pkhoveli (1943), Givi Alkhazishvili (1944), Tamaz Badzaghua (1959–1987), Ella Gochiashvili (1959), Omar Turmanauli (1959), Nino Darbaiseli (1961).

The third renewal dates to the late 1980s and early 1990s, marked by the Soviet perestroika and the first years of Georgian independence. This period and the new generation of artists revived the experience of the avant-garde movement in the beginning of the 20th century, combined it with the aesthetics introduced by the generation of the 1960s, and integrated a number of texts within the creative process that were hitherto taboo. Subsequently, the image of Georgian poetry changed entirely. Renovations to the poetic forms led to the opening and expansion of problems and themes. Poetry of that period took great interest in American culture and literature of the second half of the 20th century. Davit Chikhladze (1962) played a major role in popularisation of American literature. He translated poems by Ginsberg and Kerouac, essays by Susan Sontag, etc., involving Georgian authors and translators in the process. His interests influenced not only his worldview, but also his poetry. Eastern religions found their way to Georgian poetry – a powerful means of cultural self-identification of beatniks and hippies. The phenomenon is interesting also because Georgian culture had been under the influence of Eastern aesthetics for centuries. Thus, once again, the East entered

Georgian poetry indirectly. This time, however, it was not the Arab or Persian East, as the influence came from India, China and Japan. Haiku and Tanka became particularly popular.

While discussing smaller poetic forms, Kote Kubaneishvili (1952) deserves particular mention. In the early 1990s Kubaneishvili and Irakli Charkviani (1960–2006) founded a poetic group, The Reactive Club. They wrote on political issues and endeavoured to alter and influence the thoughts and views of Georgian public, sometimes using provocative or scandalous statements. Later the two broke up. Charkviani focused increasingly on music, gradually growing into one of the most significant figures in Georgian alternative rock in so much so that he received a posthumous degree. Although his rock poetry retains its social and political currency, Charkviani also addressed in his works perpetual themes of life and death, love and passion. Kote Kubaneishvili has remained faithful to social art, as he deems poetry to be a means of communication, quick reaction and protest. Hence, his texts are often reduced to just two lines. Kubaneishvili's poetic slogans and mono-rhymes become winged phrases widely known all over Tbilisi: élites, ordinary workers and police officers – they all know them by heart. Zurab Rtveliashvili (1967) is an acclaimed experimenter, multimedia artist and performer. He endeavours to free his poems from excessive verbal material, thus enhancing clarity of message. His texts vibrate, and his declamations are best examples of sound poetry. The most recent collections by Zurab Rtveliashvili, *Anarchy* and *Dictatorship of Poetry* best illustrate the main features of his poetic ideology. Dato Barbakadze (1966) is the key figure in this generation. His philosophical and conceptual poetry had major influence on the development of new poetics. He studies the structure of language: odd syntax and somewhat artificial grammar are what catches the eye in his works. The flow of his thought and his word constructions do not comply with natural or conventional syntax, thus making him subject his language with hitherto unknown rules. Zviad Ratiani (1971) is an expressive poet. Themes and images in his poetry are emotionally loaded. Mood controls the poet, gives him the impulse, and energy that may seem excessive at times; yet it is at that crucial moment when a kind of controlling force, which is born within the poet, subdues the creative process, and having returned it to the usual course, tries to find some optimum means of expression. Therefore, his poetic ideas can be conveyed with equal success in both blank and conventional verse forms. His poems include “interpreted material”, borrowed from the works of various poets. Not that they are allusions – he quotes directly from various types of poetic writing, and avoiding trite subtexts and plotlines, he creates impressive imagery. Giorgi Lobzhanidze (1974) is one of the best orientalist in Georgia. He made powerful impression on readers with his translations of classical and contemporary poetry of Iran and Arabic-speaking countries. His translations broke all stereotypes of contemporary Eastern poetry.

The phenomenon of Westernisation in new Iranian poetry can aid the perception of the issues Lobzhanidze addresses to in his poems. Beyond the oriental decorative style, there are always existential issues and taboos that cut through his poetry. Lobzhanidze depicts them with a degree of provocativeness.

History of Georgian literature of the second half of the 20th century has a long list of successful and talented women poets. Along the same line, 1990s and the millennium have seen a number of brilliant works. Their authors can be regarded as pioneers of Georgian feminist poetry. The main theme of Rusudan Kaishauri's (1957) poetry is the routine in woman's life. The lyrical person describes women's everyday life, and activities traditionally ascribed to them, including doing laundry, cleaning and cooking. Although her depictions may be aggressive at times, general attitude is far from single-sided. Sometimes the routine begins to transform itself, and the usual world suddenly gives way to the magical. Compared to Kaishauri, texts by Maia Sarishvili (1968) are more complex and associative, more hermetic. Abundant metaphors and originality of imagery in her poetry may be evocative of Lia Sturua's texts. However, while Sturua's works are known for their aristocratic refinement, Sarishvili takes her verse to a different level of tension and frankness, which opens the vast tragic world of depression. Lela Samniashvili (1977) is a philosophical author and keen researcher of cultural phenomena. Her all-encompassing poetry addresses wide range of issues. Her observations and metaphors are always precise, as if she has the entire creative process planned and designed from the very beginning. She constructs the body of poem with filigreed accuracy and emotional balance whether it be the theme of love or some global issue, blank or conventional verse. Tea Topuria (1977) is distinguished with her concealed humour and self-mockery that are inherent features of her poetry. Contrastingly, however, her themes are usually solemn and dire: Topuria's poetry and prose mainly focus on death – she manages to remain equally successful in both genres. Diana Anfimiadi (1982) is a professional linguist, which is also reflected in her poetry. In addition to linguistic games in her works, what also epitomises her works is poetic reinterpretation of characters and themes from Greek mythology. The leitmotif in the poetry by Eka Kevnishvili (1979) is social injustice and the fate of insecure people in contemporary alienated and indifferent world. She is a professional journalist, and her poetry illustrates the false environment smeared with global wars and ethnic conflicts, mass media, and political speeches. Last but not least, Lia Likokeli (1986) is among the finest Georgian authors. The distinctive features of her works are the world of fairy tales, myths, and creatures evoked from the past. When composing a particular plot (hers are long, narrative poems), she discusses painful issues and analyses the fate of women in general through the world of folklore and fairy tales.

A number of authors stand out in the list of poets of the millennium. Poetry by Rati Amaghlobeli (1977) is inimitable for its exquisite musicality, ornaments

and abundant alliteration. He often employs archaisms and dis-quotations from old Georgian poetry. His more recent collected poems *Angelarium* is an attempt to perceive angelic world through poetry. Nika Jorjaneli (1978) is an intellectual poet. In his poetry (blank or conventional verse), emotion is always subdued to the leitmotif. The texture of his poems is always weaved with great accuracy and profound knowledge of various canons and rules of poetry. Paata Shamugia (1983) is ironic and sarcastic. His poetry is the study and portrayal of social or political injustice and perversions, and interpretation of religious themes or taboos.

Prose, similarly to poetry, also underwent some renewal in the 1950s and 1960s. Its development proved quite impressive and successful. There are authors who are now already considered classics, such as Chabua Amirejibi (1921–2013), Otar Chkheidze (2020–2007), Otar Chiladze (1933–2009), Tamaz Chiladze (1931–2018), Nodar Dumbadze (1928–1984), Archil Sulakauri (1927–1997), Otia Ioseliani (1930–2011), Rezo Inanishvili (1926–1991), Jemal Karchkhadze (1936–1998), Rezo Cheishvili (1933–2015), Erlom Akhvlediani (1933–2012), and Nugzar Shataidze (1944–2009). They managed to avoid and contradict the ideological dogmas of Socialist Realism imposed by Stalin. Instead they introduced unique style, “Aesop’s language”, unrestrained and free humour, irony and a number of other literary forms. Guram Dochanashvili (1939) is the only author from that generation who remains active in contemporary literature. His name is associated with *The First Garment*, published in 1976, which has already become a major classic in Georgian literature. The style of this novel shows some stylistic resemblance with Latin American magic realism. Indeed, the book contains the story of an actual rebellion in the 19th century in Canudos, a settlement in Brazil. Mario Vargas Llosa also discusses similar issues in his novel *La guerra del fin del mundo*, which was, however, written in 1981. Thus, it can be argued that Dochanashvili’s interests and literary quest developed in an independent, and yet parallel manner to that of Llosa. *The Last Garment* is an original piece of a significant literary movement of the period. Guram Dochanashvili has published several dozens of volumes of novels and short stories. He is one of the most revered authors in Georgia. Naira Gelashvili emerged in the early 1980s. Arguably, she is the first Georgian female prose writer, who, with her multi-level, complex narrative and highly refined style, established herself among many notable authors right with her literary debut. Her novels and stories always stood out with their psychological depth. Later, however, social and political contexts began to prevail in her works. Hence, she employed various methods of the interpretation of documentary material. Gelashvili also began to write works in the genre of autobiography, which acquires parabolic forms in her *The Splinters of Mirror*.

When it comes to the breakthrough in prose in the 1990s, Aka Morchiladze (1966) is one of the main ground-breaking authors. A professional historian,

Morchiladze as a writer is like a magician: he breathes life into everything that he touches, transforming it into uniquely accomplished and mysterious images. He can revive the environment and life of the period between the late 19th and early 20th century and carve characters and people of the period. He is capable of studying and telling stories characteristic of the Soviet era. Furthermore, he can depict contemporary reality and fantasy worlds with equal splendour. Morchiladze masterfully matches it all with stylized language according to situations, as he is a perfect narrator, filled with humour and fantasy. The works of Zurab Karumidze (1957) draw from the age of modernism, and his works always “burn with the fire” of experiments and quests characteristic of that era. He is a passionate intellectual. He plays with epochs and cultures, mixing them together and contrasting, staging carnivals. His use of Georgian language, in which multiple layers coexist, is utterly captivating. Furthermore, Karumidze has profound knowledge of English language and culture, and writes in English effortlessly. One of his novels in English tells the mysterious story of the murder of Dagny Juel – Norwegian writer and the muse of Edward Munch. The event happened in Tbilisi in the early 20th century. Kote Jandieri (1958) is not a prolific writer; he does not write novels and prefers *novella*. Faithful readers usually have to wait for a long time for the arrival of his new works. However, since the 1980s, each of his works have never failed to attract great attention. He writes psychological prose with eccentric and unusual characters and good humour. Jandieri’s latest story, *Globalization*, is an irony towards those who have either entirely negative or entirely positive attitude towards these processes.

Ana Kordzaia-Samadashvili (1968) stands out with her incisive and picturesque depiction of literary settings and characters. She has an exceptional talent to paint psychological portraits, relationships, or personal problems of her characters. She has a great army of eccentric and dramatic characters scattered across a number of her novels and short stories. Her texts frequently cause convulsive or neurotic laughter, because neurosis, in general, is one of the major characteristics of her texts. Even the issues or activities that should be a source of pleasure to her characters (sex, for example) ultimately cause utmost trouble. To prevent “ordinary minds” from being crushed and destroyed by great emotions, Kordzaia-Samadashvili ridicules their passions. Lasha Bugadze (1977) has a wonderfully keen eye and inherent talent of humour, sarcasm, irony, and grotesque, which he employs in his writing to intensify and sharpen the faults, mistakes and general ignorance that are commonplace in public and political life. He attempts to combine all these vices in a feuilleton, composing a set of paradoxical and absurd images. Interpretation of historical events, mythological and biblical themes is characteristic of him, in the context of which he shows profound understanding of real problems and current issues. Hence, since the publication of his first work, he has always been attacked by faith, political or social institutions and groups. All this is

brilliantly reflected in his semi-autobiographical novel *A Small Country*, 2017. Zaza Burchuladze (1973) is one of the most scandalous authors in contemporary Georgian literature. His texts are mostly written in the style of stream of consciousness, and they belong to the genre of satire. For example, his novel *Adibas* (2009) concerns Russian-Georgian war of 2008, and, more precisely, its hidden side. Burchuladze grotesquely describes how élites continue in their usual consumption of goods while people are being killed as closely as within half an hour's drive. Aleko Shughladze's (1965) works appeared in the 1990s. He instantly won the readers with his style that naturally merges free humour, paradoxical worldview and existential problems. Shortly afterwards, he disappeared from the literary scene for the next fifteen years. His recent novel *Hiding* (2016) combines the entire experience of this period: all that he thought, went through, and saw. It is a book of contrasts. Shughladze maintains his usual style, while adding new shades. Characters of this novel fight against death and illness, they learn to support and stand by one another in the fight to free themselves from stereotypes and complexes. Archil Kikodze (1972) first stood out as author of short stories. In 2016, he wrote his first novel that became lauded since the day of publication. The main character of his *Southern Elephant* wanders through the streets of Tbilisi in the course of a single day, while the author paints the portrait of the entire city, with stories of particular places and extensive gallery of characters along the route.

This is a short outline of contemporary Georgian literary scene. In addition to the above mentioned authors, there are many other noteworthy authors with unique and distinguished styles and ideas. The presented overview should, however, provide a more or less complete picture of multiple voices and layers of Georgia's small, yet very old literary scene.

NEW LITERATURE IN MOLDOVA IN 2018

Moldova, a country that was subjected by and made part of the Soviet Union, is largely populated by ethnic Romanians and uses Romanian as the official language. At least in the early 1990s (shortly after the declaration of independence from the USSR), the evolution of literature went hand-in-hand with democratization of Moldova and the transition to a new socio-cultural paradigm. Yet, too soon two realities – cultural and political – came into contradiction. The Moldovan state increasingly acquired features of a mafia state led by oligarchic clans that merely pretend to aspire to European integration. In reality though, they aim more towards Putin's Russian authoritarian model. Nonetheless, literature followed its own path, increasingly following in the spirit of literature in Romania and European aesthetic models.

The new generation of Basarabian writers, who belong to the generation of 1980s and even younger generation carry the vision of reformation. The coming of age of this nonconformist generation occurred in the context of freedom and free exchange of ideas. From this point of view, the privilege that young writers of the 1980s generation enjoy is uncontested with their predecessors. Young writers present more advanced sensibility that is seen as postmodern.

The last two decades of literary development in Moldova are marked by critical reassessment and polemics between the postmodern and some “tribune-writers” from Moldova, with medals and state awards who sometimes respond quite violently and excessively to cultural debate. The polemic was also inadequately called intergenerational struggle and resonated widely in the media. It's actually a conflict between two different mentalities: the open-minded, European, and the dated, autarchic that seems to be stuck in the period of 1989–1991, hostile to the international models, denying “the synchronization at all cost with Romania and Europe”. In some cases, there is also the issue of a conflict between biographies.

The magazine *Contrafort*, founded in October 1994, represents aesthetically and ideologically the agenda of the new generation of authors in Moldova. Its

mission is to revive the critical spirit as opposed to that deformed by the decades of Soviet ideology, intoxicated with false values, blocked in mental inertia and provincialism. The magazine also aims to develop an authentic civil society.

The year 2018 was rich in book releases by authors from the new reforming generation who featured in *Contrafort*. A number of books of poetry and essay collections, and especially prose, have attracted the interest among critics and enjoyed popular success. The following part presents a few additional authors who tackle in their narratives current themes, as well as preoccupations related to human fate in the confusing age of transition.

Iulian Ciocan (born in 1968), literary critic, novelist and journalist at Radio Free Europe, published the novel *The Cup Lady* (Polirom Publishing House, Iași). It is a story of the fallout of a community, of a city, Chisinau (the capital of the Republic of Moldova), under the burden of corruption, lies, duplicity, hypocrisy, cruelty against the weaker and the helpless. The gap that opens overnight in the downtown (metaphysical projection), consumes cars, walls, gardens, houses, and parking lots. People also disappear without trace. It is a parable about guilt and punishment. Ciocan leaves the story open-ended and invites readers to think about the chances to salvage whatever can be redeemed.

Ciocan has specialized in dystopias. Three years earlier, in 2015, he published the novel *And Russians Will Come in the Morning*, where he presents a horror scenario: in a not so distant future, 2020, the Republic of Moldova is attacked by the separatist regime in Transnistria, aided by the Russian Federation; the Moldovan state collapses. The plane with which the corrupt leaders of Moldova attempt to escape the invasion is destroyed by Russian missile; convoys of refugees flee towards the river Prut to Romania; cities are destroyed everywhere, villages are emptied, pandemonium is omnipresent, gangs of criminals roam in the streets.

This scenario is not quite fictional: it did actually happen in 1940, when, following the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, USSR attacked Romania (the same way it attacked the Baltic States). It occupied Basarabia and North of Bucovina – Romanian territories – after the USSR participated with Nazi Germany, in September 1939 in the dismemberment of Poland. Ciocan's dystopia warns that, unless we learn our lessons, history has the habit to repeat itself, and not necessarily as a farce. Ciocan invites readers to think about the power of fiction to challenge the reality, particularly after the annexation of Crimea by Putin's vengeful Russia in March 2014, and the start of the war in Donbas.

Constantin Cheianu (born in 1959), playwright, journalist and television producer, published the novel *Cioran's Last Mistress* (Cartier Publishing House, Chisinau) about existential crisis. The protagonist is a chef who has an opportunity to cook in his restaurant for all sorts of people – from intellectuals and free artists to mobsters and different interlopers. His kitchen is a sort of observation tower, from where he studies physiognomies, characters, contemplates enamored couples and

extravagant get-togethers of political figures. The role model of the lead protagonist is the famous Anthony Bourdain, master chef and producer of documentaries for CNN, celebrity of American high-life, from whose book, *Kitchen Confidential*, the protagonist extracts life lessons.

Cheianu's storyline refers to the idea of suicide, an obsession of the protagonist. In this context, Emil Cioran is quoted as someone who also inspired the title of the book. The theory of the Romanian philosopher exiled to Paris, famous for his incurable scepticism and paradoxical thought, suggests that suicide, as seen as a supreme act of individual freedom, helps overcome one's despair, anxieties, phobias, it helps one go further. As long as one can commit such act anytime, everything is at his or her disposal. Next to Thanatos, Eros occupies an important place in the novel. Sex scenes, passionate and explicit, are a demonstration of expressiveness that only few readers are able to face.

2018 saw an emergence of a number of gifted voices in feminine prose from Moldova. The novel *End of Road* by Liliana Corobca (born in 1975), released by Polirom Publishing House in Iași, presents the drama of the Stalinist deportations that Moldova suffered during the Soviet occupation in 1940 and later after World War II. An 80-year old lady tells her niece about the inferno of her exile in the steppes of Kazakhstan. Long journey by train in a cattle wagon, where she was put along with thousands of innocent people arrested by the Russian NKVD only because they were Romanians. She spent ten years in the steppes of Asia during the war and famine, yet her faith in God and hope that she would survive and return home gave her the power to endure the testing ordeal.

A novel is based on real events, on an experience multiplied in hundreds of thousands of families in Moldova, who suffered from Soviet Communism. Preoccupied in her previous narratives by the children who became victims of the exodus, a plague that has hit brutally the Moldovan society within the last years, and also concerned by the literary censorship from the Soviet era, Liliana Corobca proves in *End of Road* her passion for elaborate and emotional historical recollections.

Tatiana Țibuleac (born in 1978) is a former journalist, living in France, where she found her vocation as a writer. The two novels that she has published so far show her as a distinct, vigorous author, who prefers difficult themes, through which she reveals the relationship between parents and children, and also the uncertain trajectory of some women who have to face, at a very young age, the hardship and injustice of life.

After her first novel, *The Summer in Which My Mother Had Green Eyes* (Cartier Publishing House, 2018), Tatiana Țibuleac published her novel *The Glass Garden* (also at Cartier). Gabriela Adamesteanu, an acclaimed prose writer from Romania, characterizes the book by her younger colleague: "The orphan who discovers the multicultural Chisinau was adopted from a village orphanage by a solitary and

ambitious woman who wants to give her prosperous future, or perhaps she was bought as labor force and is exploited as cruelly as in Dickens novels? The questions continue to haunt us even after reading this coming-of-age novel about a girl who grows up between two languages and cultures, during the years when frontiers and the political systems change. *The Glass Garden* confirms the entering into contemporary literature of a writer both gifted and intelligent, who knows how to combine the cruelty of observation and the compassion with suffering, revealing the tragedy of destinies and the beauty of life.

The debut in the prose of the year 2018 is signed by Emanuela Iurkin (born in 1980), with the novel *The Bronze Dog*. Authenticity is the best description of Iurkin's epic vision and style. A miniature novel, in which the distance between life experience and its written projection is utterly reduced. The text is nervous, hurried, anxious, frustrated, as it were to imitate the uneven breathing of a teenager who walks up and down the stairs. The story comprises several confessions about an unhappy family, with a father who abandons them, starts a life with another woman, the mother goes to work in a foreign country, the teenager-children, forgotten at home, learning to manage their living by themselves, in an indifferent, rapacious, mercantile, insensible world. The book also has many cultural references to films and popular works. It is also textualist, as Iurkin clearly shows that the text is a work-in-progress.

The lyrical character says: "It has no name or it cannot be named. You understand what it is about. And the name is just a word. Silence is everything. I wish you would hear me. I cannot say some things aloud. They don't let themselves to be told. It only happens if you have developed your hearing."

Moldova in 2018 saw the presence of a number of fine authors worthy to be explored and translated elsewhere in Europe.

Lajos Pálfalvi

THE HUNGARIAN RECEPTION OF FELIX AUSTRIA
BY SOFIA ANDRUKHOVYCH

Felix Austria, the novel by Sofia Andrukhovych, the winner of the 2016 Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award, was translated into German, Polish, Czech, and Hungarian. Thus, we can study the reception of the book in Hungarian milieu and create the material for comparison of readers' reception in individual countries. Hungarian reviewers of the novel have emphasized familiar traits of the world portrayed: of the idyllic and terrifying atmosphere of small towns in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The book made Hungarians recognise their common cultural heritage with Western Ukraine. It is also interesting to revisit, in the Ukrainian novel, the golden age so familiar to Hungarians from literature and history. In spite of this, the commentators do not consider the novel nostalgic, as is illustrated by the title of one of the reviews: *We Believe Calmness before the Storm to be the Blissful Peacetime*.¹

On the other hand, reviewers compared the novel to the best traditions of the Hungarian psychological novels. They highlight the two contrasting female characters and their fatal interdependence – almost lesbian close relation. As Katalin Gyürky put it in one of the most influential Hungarian weeklies,² men in their environment try “to burst and replace it with healthy eroticism”. The reviews are appreciative; one blogger notes the book reminds of the Chekhov plays³ and

¹ Grozdits, H., A vihar előtti csendről hisszük, hogy boldog békeidő, *Typotex Kiadó*, 21. 3. 2017. [online: <http://www.typotex.hu/review/8915/3016/a_vihar_elotti_csendrol_hisszuk_hogy_boldog_bekeido>, cit. 2018-06-20].

² Gyürky, K., Félreértett végakarát, *Élet és Irodalom*, 10. 11. 2017. [online: <<http://www.es.hu/cikk/2017-11-10/gyurky-katalin/felreertett-vegakarata.html>>, cit. 2018-06-20].

³ Nemere, Szofija Andruhovics: Felix Austria (Kritikák), *Olvasóterem.com*, 25. 7. 2017. [online: <<http://olvasoterem.com/blog/2017/07/25/szofija-andruhovics-felix-austria/>>, cit. 2018-06-22]

calls it “a nice and sad book”; the blogger of Katherine’s Bookstore⁴ ranked it eighth on the list of their top books in 2017.

The phenomenon identified as spatial turn has taken place in Hungarian literary history as well. In her monograph *The Poetics of Space – Space for Poetics* (*A tér poétikája – a poétika tere*) Klára Ágnes Papp examined literary representations of small towns in the late 19th and early 20th century. Characteristically, at the time, the towns had not at all been portrayed in novels in favourable light. Papp argues that literary characters perceived the towns as quite unbearable and worthless environment, as opposed to metropolises. Therefore, in works such as *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert, it was the peripheries that appeared as a counter-myth to metropolitan lifestyle. Contemporary individual characters experienced there feelings of isolation and depression. It is due in part to this experience that the *topos* of small towns also became a representative of modern lifestyle and attitudes.

We would not automatically reckon how miserable provincial life is in comparison with that of the metropolitan *flâneurs* when we, having experienced the historical events of the 20th century, look back at the depiction of these towns and their residents. Instead, we tend to subconsciously look for values in their world that have been lost by now. The rich and prosperous cultural, religious and linguistic world of the bygone Stanisławów and the pre-war civilisation of the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would undoubtedly be among such values. Nevertheless, we must not indulge in nostalgia, since the title *Felix Austria* not only emphasizes all this, but also ironically undercuts it at the same time. Thus, the novel cannot be regarded as an organic part of the cult of West Ukrainian Galicia. All the more so, because we get to observe this world from the perspective of Ukrainian maid Stephanie. By growing up together with Adela, a daughter of local physician, she gets clear insight into higher social milieus. Yet she still retains her down-to-earth perspective and principles. By doing so, she constantly exposes the illusions and mentality of provincial community life.

These characters do not at all feel that they have got stuck in the periphery. What would be the centre for them anyways: Vienna? No, it is Stanisławów. For them, the latter is not only a bustling place, but also one where everything that they consider necessary is readily available. At the same time, in quite a few of the melancholic parts of the novel, we may sense imminent disaster. Andrukhovych does not only tune in to the Monarchy’s myth, but also plays with the literary codes that made it great in Central Europe during the last decades of the 20th century to be then re-interpreted in the independent Ukraine. According to

⁴ Két nő a Monarchia peremén – Szofija Andruhovics: Felix Austria, *Katherine’s Bookstore*, 13. 7. 2017. [online: <<http://katherines-bookstore.blogspot.com/search?q=felix+austria>>, cit. 2018-06-22].

Anna Zagórska, interpretation possibilities of the novel expand, if we also take into consideration key texts such as *Homo Poeticus* by Danilo Kiš and *The Troubles of Central Europe: Anecdotes and History* by Josef Kroutvor.

However, what Andrukhovych seems to be really concerned about is her prime theme: female identity. The storyline is narrated by Stephania in first person singular. She maintains a special symbiotic relationship with her lady, Adela. Even though she can see everything as an omniscient narrator, she still seems to be an outsider. Their relationship hardly fits any social pattern. Instead of relative inferiority and superiority, it is characterized by interdependence, and mutual defencelessness and vulnerability.

This may vaguely resemble of Gombrowicz's *A Kind of Testament*, where the author portrays the intricate games between a young master and peasant children. The difference between the two works lies in the perspective. *Testament* emphasizes the young master's point of view, reflecting how he cannot come to terms with his own system of cultural codes, while Andrukhovych focuses on the maid's perspective and position. Adela cannot even get dressed without Stephania's assistance, who, in turn, is unable to exist without her lady. Hence, she must remain part and parcel of Adela's life. Stephania thus accompanies her even on her honeymoon in Budapest and Vienna.

Stephania attempts to explain this interdependence by saying: "We are neither friends nor sisters" but she cannot find the right words to describe their relationship properly. Since she cannot define her position within the family, she struggles with severe self-assessment disorder and suffers from monomania. She only accepts her own perspective. It seems as if everything had been decided at the very beginning when Stephanie misinterpreted her foster-father's will. His last words were not meant to ask Stephanie to serve Adela in perpetuity, but to encourage her to live her own life. This tragedy seems to serve as a unique frame for the entire story.

The novel enjoyed major international success. Still, it seems to have been better received in countries that used to be part of the former Monarchy. It is quite remarkable that the translator changed the original title (*Der Papierjunge*, 2016) when the novel was published in Austria. Apparently, because there are no such nostalgic feelings towards the Monarchy in Austria as are in the neighbouring countries which, during the Soviet occupation re-assessed this chapter of their history. By all appearances, the myth is more vivid on the peripheries. Hopefully, screen adaptation of the book will also come out soon. Hence, even more people will have a chance to become acquainted with both the story and the former Stanisławów.

