

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MODERN UKRAINIAN PROSE

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Summary

Modern Ukrainian literature is diverse and interesting both for the Ukrainian readers and for those who want to learn more about the development of Ukrainian society through the literature over the last century. Along with the digitization of human life in general, reading fiction remains today one of the ways to acquire knowledge, replenish vocabulary, study history, it's a part of meditative practice, etc.

Today, reading literary works by Ukrainian authors has the following features caused by age, the nature of professional activity, gender, etc.:

- according to age features of the person (the program of preschool educational institutions, high school, professional reading in high school);
- determined by the need of each individual to read (psychological characteristics, upbringing in the family, etc.);
- professional activities (literary critics, journalists, translators, scientists and others).

Often all these stages of readability are either ways to read throughout life, or the cause of spontaneous reading, which is often the result of excessive information in the world (social networks, Internet channels, etc.).

The works of Ukrainian literature have changed because the world and the authors of these works have changed as well. Socio-economic development of Ukrainian nation influenced the worldview of the authors and the quality of their works.

That is why Ukrainian literature is rich in its authors: world-known Lina Kostenko, philosophical and political Oksana Zabuzhko, patriotic and historical Vasyl Shkliar, universal Andrii Kokotiukha, humane and psychological Volodymyr Lys and many others who create modern Ukrainian literature.

Of course, in today's works one can find elements of zealous-apocalyptic, peasant-bourgeois, but all of them stem from those social phenomena that are still present in the life of Ukrainians. Reading works with such content, some are fascinated by them, and others are annoyed by putting aside the book, but everyone has a choice today.

Key words: Ukrainian literature, novel, prose writer, protagonist, psychologism, readership.

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1. Introduction

The development of the Ukrainian nation today (life, language, restoration of historical events) is reflected in the works of modern Ukrainian authors. Even a brief description of literary works, different in genre, style of writing, is a necessary component of understanding the social processes witnessed in them, and, consequently, is a source of knowledge of the Ukrainian ethnic group for any progressive reader.

Usually a separate work of the author or the work of the author with many of his works is analysed (for example, the work of Vasyl Shkliar is the object of such literary studies: Natalia Andriichenko (2013) “Archetypology of Vasyl Shkliar's Novel “Black Crow””; Solomiia Ushnevych (2015, Ivano-Frankivsk) “Understanding of National Identity in the Novel “The Remnant. Black Crow” by Vasyl Shkliar”; Vitalii Ponomarenko (2016, Kyiv) “Features of the Individual Style of the Novel “Marusia” by Vasyl Shkliar”), which does not allow to characterize the development of modern Ukrainian prose as a whole, thoroughly explore the main trends.

Ukrainian literature had a very difficult stages of development. In the past centuries Ukrainian language was prohibited to write and to use on the theatrical strategy. It was done by the power of Russian Empire, then by the regulations of Soviet power. Ukrainian writers had to use Russian language to publish their works. But only native language could and can truly show the soul of Ukrainian people.

Therefore, modern Ukrainian literature is a sign of language state too, it represents the diverse of styles, topics, different dialects (Western, Southern, Eastern, Kyiv-Poltava, etc.), society conditions, interests and development perspectives of Ukrainian people.

2. Analyses of the literary works

There is a brief analysis of the works of three contemporary Ukrainian writers (Vasyl Shkliar, Andrii Kokotyukha, Max Kidruk) to outline trends in literature and language, show thematic diversity, readers' preferences, progress / regress of Ukrainian society as a whole, show genre authorial features. Analysing the works, let's try to outline the basic principles of development of Ukrainian prose of the XXI century.

3. Strong spirit of Ukrainians in the Vasyl Shkliar's novels

The works of Vasyl Shkliar (in this study we are going to analyse only two novels “The Lone Wolf” and “The Black Crow. The Remnant”) were written with great love for the native language and people of Ukraine. The combination of simplicity of language with its beauty explains the extraordinary ease of reading.

The subject matter of the works is extremely wide – from the mode of life to philosophical and historical. Deep psychologism in the description of characters is achieved by using epithets that are clear to every Ukrainian, regardless of place of residence (the other Ukrainian dialects are understood). The highest pleasure from the simplest things, unpretentiousness in everyday life, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, indefeasible love for the native land, people – these are the features of the Ukrainian character, which generously decorated the works of Vasyl Shkliar.

In the novels about the insurgent movement in Ukraine, the author managed to show steel characters without excessive pathos at first sight of ordinary people (both girls and boys, men and women, adults and very young). (Nowadays, the steel people of Ukraine protect their Motherland from Russian invasion during the war).

The absolute truthfulness and realism of the events make it impossible for the author to be engaged: no matter how much you want a happy ending, life itself does not offer it (it means, sometimes, that our people are not ready for happy life, suffering is a lifestyle). It is this honesty that inspires confidence, a firm belief in the progressive development of Ukrainian society without clear appeals to it.

All the human characters and destinies are described as successfully as the plot line of the work requires (not only appearance but also life, place of residence, human environment are written), which gives the reader a completely full picture of the personality of any hero.

The author's appeal to God is often noticeable during reading. Thus, some moments in life (happiness, despair, war, death, avoidance of massacre, etc.) are the result of God's guidance, which the author himself perceives as the highest measure of justice.

It seems that Vasyl Shkliar uses the Russian language for two reasons:

1) transliterates it into Ukrainian – mutilates it, makes it a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect, perhaps in response to how it once happened with the Ukrainian language (some state laws and regulations of the past centuries);

2) puts this language in the mouths of the commissars in order to identify the enemy (it is usual brutal, not normative, abusive).

4. Emotionality of Ukrainian prose

Vasyl Shkliar also acts as a romantic prose writer, who, despite life's troubles, sorrow and sufferings, finds a place in his works to describe moments of life in harmony, happiness and love. Such a path in the description of historical events difficult for Ukrainians gives time for emotional rest (often the tension from the described events reaches its highest point), instils faith in the fact that love is eternal and does not disappear from the party's decision, lack of home or constant waiting of death.

The openness of erotic scenes fascinates and lifts the spirit, leads the reader to something unearthly, Godly. Definitely, there is always a place for love, even in the most difficult times and under the most severe circumstances: “I listened to her breathe, blue her hair and wanted this night never to end” (*Shkliar, 2019*). Raising the feeling of love for a woman, adoring from her physical body in the novels of Vasyl Shkliar is a separate topic for further in-depth research.

Similarly, using the firm conviction that everything is God's will, Vasyl Shkliar shows the absolute ease of the URA (Ukrainian Rebellion Army) soldiers' attitude to death. Attention to this event is expressed only in fragments of the description of the burial of the brothers, which again emphasizes the piety of the Orthodox people. Most Ukrainian rebels had a calm attitude to death, only the youngest, very young boys did not want to die, while the more experienced seemed to play with death, putting a free Ukraine above that.

5. Serious writer for children and adolescents

Among prose writers Andrii Kokotiukha is distinguished by the fact that he skilfully satisfies the need for literature of both children and adults. This may be due to purely economic requirements: to reach as large a readership as possible, but on the other hand, a poorly written book will never be read. On the other hand, such versatility of literary work suggests that the author is interested, perhaps, not only in literature as an object, but also in the audience to which this literature is directed. The writer proved to be very talented in adventure, detective, historical genres (some of his works for children: “The Secret of the Cossack Treasure” (adventure detective), “Gymnasium Student and the Fire Snake”; historical-detective works:

“Secret Well”, “Exile and the Black Widow” (one of a series of books)), “Life on the Map”, historical and patriotic works: “Red (without the front line)”.

Important is the fact, that historical truth still confuses different generations of Ukrainian writers. Born during the Soviet era, Andrii Kokotiukha, like senior author Vasyl Shkliar, feels a kind of “hunger” for real history, delves into different eras, different territories of Ukraine, social strata, he does it with one goal - to find the truth that leads to justice.

The historical novels of Vasyl Shkliar and Andrii Kokotiukha thoroughly study the epoch: authentic nicknames of insurgent army soldiers, names of household items, geographical objects, nicknames of horses, citations of historical documents, etc.

In the novel “Life on the Map” the main protagonist is a woman, the wife of an investigator. In this way, the author implements the popular thesis of gender equality in the XIXth – XXIst century, where a woman investigates and has a masculine logic and analytical mind, revealing the crime. The detective story, which takes place on the ancient streets of Kyiv, is permeated with the author's etymological digressions about the origin of the name or the existence of a particular historical object. It is such digressions that help to immerse oneself in the epoch of the beginning of the XXth century, to nostalgia for the lost aristocracy, even to awaken in the reader the desire to study the history of both the local and the whole country (the author widely uses the description of the clothes, card games, historical names of the streets in Kyiv of XIX century).

Andrii Kokotiukha's detective-adventure prose often contains a historical opus (Soviet period, old Kyiv streets, old game names, descriptions of ancient things, defining personalities, a legend about a secret well), which combines epochs, events, generations of people. Such a system forms in the reader stable causal links, which helps to perceive the work, expanding its boundaries. The author's love for history is reflected in children's works (adventure-detective story “Gymnasium Student and the Fire Snake”, the legend of the Snake shafts).

Usually the image of the investigator in these works is a person selfless to his profession, honest and steadfast in his beliefs, but sometimes cunning and resourceful, loyal, or cruel and uncompromising, that is – different. There is no clear division into an absolutely positive investigative hero and an absolutely negative criminal hero.

Often the protagonist is an unmarried or divorced man who has been “released” by his own life to perform official duties. Sometimes a personal line has a development – a meeting with love, but it is usually suffered, with obstacles, happy only after the end of the work. In some way it shows, reflects the real picture of modern Ukrainian life: young generation prefers not to have a family and children, but to have prestige work and career growth.

The work of another Ukrainian writer - Max Kidruk (Maxim Kidruk) deserves special attention. The age category of its readers is adolescence and older, which is especially pleasing in conditions of total illiteracy. His novel “Don't Look Back and Be Silent” miraculously combines life situations with such frosty mysticism, flavoured with horror and psychologism, that it involuntarily drives the reader to go to the finale in order to finally get the expected relief / disappointment / question / horror / satisfaction, etc.

Traveller Kidruk does not only travel the world, but also the feelings and consciousness of the reader. The usual chain of things – child-elevator-dream-tree – overflows with mystery and the feeling that you have never seen or felt it. It is amazing how such simple things can impress so deeply and cause a feeling of wonder, admiration, fear. Reading Stephen King's novels, a similar feeling arises.

The format of the work itself sometimes turns into an SMS chat, with a touch of English phrases, there is a game with numbers, geometric shapes, formulas, stickers, device diagrams – all this brings the work much closer to adolescence, the digital generation, and adds futuristic and mysteries:

«Sonya 02.44

Aha

Mark 02.44

why?" (Kidruk, 2019, p.81).

The author often uses famous English phrases to make the story more colourful, close to the young generation: "Have you ever talked to someone, And you fell you know what's coming next (*Iron Maiden. Déjà vu, 1986*)"; "NO REGRETS: LIVE YOUNG, DIE FAST" (Kidruk, 2019, p.38). Each chapter starts with English songs epigraph.

In the descriptions of the characters more attention is paid not to the appearance itself (portrait, height, build), and the reader's memory captures only certain elements: a dirty dress, a frail body ("thin bony arms", "pimple-covered bird's face"), which leads to the first place of action performed by man. So, the focus is on efficiency, whatever it may be (speed of problem solving, fight, creation of a tool, device, etc.).

Child aggression as a way of life at a certain age is also part of the work, densely flavoured with brutal words that only deepen the drama of the situation: "Bi-i-i-tch! How I hate him!" (Kidruk, 2019, p.429); "Fuck! – Sorry. – Go to ass" (Kidruk, 2019, p.377); school bullying: "Morozovych could now rest his whole body and tighten his neck. He strangled so hard that Mark snorted in fright" (Kidruk, 2019, p.298).

But, on the other hand, the novel has enough positive events: friendly relationship between grandson and grandfather, friendship in school society, sympathy to the unusual and strange girl, etc.

Knowledge acquires great importance for solving the practical goals that the main characters (Sonia and Mark) face. For physical survival in a parallel world for adolescents become necessary Mathematics, Physics, Geometry, Botany, etc.: " $V_I = V_{II} + V_{III}; S_I = S_{II} + S_{III}$ " (Kidruk, 2019).

Thus, the mixture of the mystical, the otherworldly, the digital, the domestic, the scientific – everything that makes up human life - is the feature of Max Kidruk's novel that explains its wide popularity.

6. Conclusions

The works of three authors (Vasyl Shkliar, Andrii Kokotiukha, Max Kidruk), who are different in age and life experience, were characterized by the following: the departure from the traditions of Ukrainian classical literature is noticeable in accordance with the decreasing age of the artist obligatory awareness of oneself as a representative of the Ukrainian nation.

Modern works of Ukrainian literature are distinguished by thematic diversity (history of Ukraine, adventure, fiction, politics, law, psychology, etc.), where often one work contains a mixture of genre styles (adventure-fiction-life-history).

The tools for the authors are: historical events, the life of Ukrainians, the psychology of relations between different generations, gender equality, which indicates a wide range of choices.

Many of the authors of modern prose are not forced to adapt to the strict requirements of censorship, free to present human images, historically true events. Usually it hurts the mind and the heart of the reader, but to find the equilibrium between the truth and the censorship is a very complicated problem.

In an effort to find historical justice, the authors used archival data, legends and legends are involved in the works.

The focus of the three authors - a strong hero/heroine, is a strong personality, interesting for the writer and reader, which is indicative of the development of Ukrainian society today - only a strong person can win, be successful in the profession, overcome life's difficulties and resist injustice. Weak traits, if shown, are only as a means of "humanizing" the hero, they are the background for the development of strength.

Literary works of modern times are able to satisfy the need to read different age groups, they are different in themes, means of description, style.

Thus, it is also the point for psycholinguistic and linguistic, sociological studies, etc. The most features described in this investigation show the real Ukrainian mentality, that stuck in the past and can't move freely in present. It can be used as a supplement materials of other subjects conducting.

This article is considered to be only the first small step for the deep investigation in the field of modern literature of Ukraine as one of the European country. The students, lecturers and young researchers can use it for the further investigation.

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