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NARRATING THE WAR IN UKRAINIAN LITERATURE (2014-2023)

The article is dedicated to the analysis of contemporary Ukrainian literature, that was written during the war (since 2014), with a focus on the texts, that reflect the Russian-Ukrainian war of different periods (till 2023). Ukraine, after more than 30 years of independence de-jure, is trying to get rid of the impact of the colonizer de-facto, which is a rather unique case to be studied within the postcolonial methodology. The war, as a cataclysm, influences Ukrainian society and the authors choose several strategies to talk about it: from presenting the war as a result of irresponsibility, separation and inevitability to providing the therapeutic effect that is demanded by Ukrainian society and after-the-victory narrative (that is a very specific feature because of the still on-going war). The research is based on the works by Serhii Zhadan, Tamara Gorikha Zernya (Duda), Hanna Kostenko, Sofia Andrukhovych, Pavlo Korobchuk, Halyna Kruk, Ostap Slyvynskiy, Oleksandr Mykhed, Valerii Puzik.

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«...if literature is a mirror, which reflects the world, then (post)colonial literature is a reflection of the world in a broken mirror, the fragments of which are put by the writers together to arrange the coherent image» (...якщо література – це дзеркало, у якому відображений світ, то (пост)колоніальна література – відображення світу в розбитому дзеркалі, з уламків якого письменники намагаються укласти цілісний образ) (Галета, 2015, с. 465)

Statement of the problem in a general form and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks

The covers of relatively numerous contemporary Ukrainian books depict something broken (e.g., glass/ mirror/ face/ torn pieces of paper) rather frequently (in comparison to other periods of Ukrainian literature), e.g. the covers of the novels «*Oblivion*» (2016) by Tania Maliarchuk, «*Amadoka*» (2020) by Sofia Andrukhovych, «*Daughter*» (2019) by Tamara Gorikha Zernia, «*Call sign for Job. Chronicles of the invasion*» (2023) by Oleksandr Mykhed, anthology «*Poetry without shelter*» (2022). Why do the books with such covers appear?

On the one hand, it is clear that life is destroyed due to the cataclysm, the war, that broke the existing reality. On the other hand, and that is more important, it's a possibility to look at the fragments as a unity that can reflect the remained world, re-construct the reality, re-open the facts and re-think the historical processes. Re-thinking and re-claiming the past is “the first step for colonized people in finding a voice and an identity”, this thesis underlines Peter Barry, analyzing Frantz Fanon's work «*The Wretched of the Earth*» (Barry, 2009, p. 186).

Ukrainian colonial realia differ from the colonial situations of other countries. The process of colonizing was very specific: first, colonization moved towards the west – towards the European values and more developed culture, the colonizer needed the colonized country to fulfill its imperfection (as underlines Timothy Snyder (Snyder, 2022) in his lecture «*The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 22: Ukrainian Ideas in the 21st Century*»); second, Ukrainian

people were always trying to gain its independence (the entire XX century was aimed to rebuild the state); third, the rest of the world did not react on it because of the

«marginalization of national structures through the empire's appropriation of the cultural achievements of the colonized; attempts to assimilate Ukrainian identity into Russian, which was carried out with the help of Russification, hindering the development of Ukrainian culture, supplanting the Ukrainian language; formation and consolidation of the inferiority complex – 'being little Russian' with the help of creating a strategy of 'sisterhood'»

«маргіналізація національних структур шляхом привласнення імперією культурних здобутків колонізованого; намагання асимілювати українську ідентичність у російську, що провадилося за допомогою русифікації, перешкодження розвитку української культури, витіснення української мови; формування та закріплення комплексу неповноцінності – «малоросійства» за допомогою створення стратегії «посестринства»» (Юрчук, 2015а, с. 12) and influence of propaganda even up to 2022.

According to E. Said, the resistance to imperial hegemonic is revealed in two forms: first, related to the physical struggle and spiritual, connected with the cultural conformation. The second one he acknowledges as the most important, therefore it is

«cultural opposition that helps to preserve the national «I», to create the phenomenon of metaphysical independence, and catalyze the next struggle»

«культурна опозиція допомагає зберегти національне «я», створити феномен метафізичної незалежності, каталізувати наступну боротьбу» (Юрчук, 2015b, с. 22). E. Said underlines that after “the period of ‘primary resistance’ of the actual struggle against external invasion, comes the period of secondary, ideological resistance” (Саїд, 2007, с. 298). Olena Yurchuk points out that he also «draws attention to the tragedy of any resistance because it is necessary not only to build an anticolonial strategy but also to take care of the renewal of national forms deconstructed by imperial culture» («Звертає увагу Е. Саїд і на трагедію будь-якого опору, адже доводиться не тільки вибудовувати антиколоніальну стратегію, а й дбати про поновлення національних форм, деконструйованих імперською культурою») (Юрчук, 2015b, с. 22). From that point of view, the status of nowadays Ukraine is also unique: Ukraine is an independent country with a colonial past but at the same time it is waging a war for freedom, trying to get rid of Russian imperial influence.

Purpose, tasks and relevance of the research

Contemporary Ukrainian literature addressing the war since 2014 represents a significant area where a comprehensive analysis of narrative strategies is lacking. Despite the proliferation of literary works on this topic, there remains a noticeable gap in scholarly research regarding the specific techniques and approaches used by writers in depicting the complexities of war and its aftermath. Understanding these strategies is crucial for gaining insights into how Ukrainian writers navigate the complexities of war narratives thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the cultural responses to war and trauma.

Postcolonial methodology is grounded in postcolonial theory, which tends to investigate the legacies of colonialism and imperialism on contemporary societies and cultures. In the context of this research, applying a postcolonial methodology involves examining Ukrainian war literature through the lens of postcolonial theory to uncover the ways in which narratives negotiate issues of power, collective trauma and memory and cultural identity. Extending the postcolonial methodology in this study entails adapting it to the specific context of Ukrainian war literature and exploring how narratives engage with questions of national identity, cultural resilience and historical memory. Moreover, it gives the possibility to underline the role of literature as a site of resistance in war times and contributing to a deeper understanding of Ukrainian cultural identity in the 21st century.

This article aims to define and analyze the narrative strategies in contemporary Ukrainian literature about the war (after 2014) by applying a postcolonial methodology.

The following tasks are to be fulfilled:

- define and analyze the narrative strategies utilized by contemporary Ukrainian writers to depict the war experience;
- assess the relevance of postcolonial methodology in analyzing Ukrainian literature about the war, elucidating its applicability in the context of a sovereign nation's struggle for independence and self-definition;
- examine the role of literature as a therapeutic medium in processing trauma and fostering resilience amidst conflict;

investigate the narrative shifts towards post-war and victory narratives in Ukrainian literature. The questions to be investigated are: what is Ukrainian literature about the war after the beginning of Russian-Ukrainian war? And how did it change after February 2022?

Analysis of recent research and publications. As a separate humanitarian discipline, postcolonial studies «gained currency through the influence of such books as: *In Other Worlds* (Gayatri Spivak, 1987); *The Empire Writes Back* (Bill Ashcroft, 1989); *Nation and Narration* (Homi Bhabha, 1990) and *Culture and Imperialism* (Edward Said, 1993)» (Barry, 2009, p. 185). In its development, it overcame several stages that, according to Peter Barry, move from criticism of the colonialist to the study of oneself (ibid.).

Considering Ukrainian literature as postcolonial was not common in the Western discourse up to recently. Ewa M. Thompson (2000) in her book «*Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*» proved that Russia should be considered an imperial state. Carrying out a trend analysis of the colonial presence of the Russian Empire not only in the Caucasus, but also in Poland, Thompson passes by the problem of the colonization of Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and other peoples, talking about it casually.

The perception of Ukrainian literature (e.g., XIX and XX century) as colonial is rather a new phenomenon; the inclusion of Ukrainian literature in the postcolonial discourse took place in the West as well as in Ukraine only in the 1990s-2000s. The new historical and political context (after Ukraine's independence and its continuous liberation from Russian influence) led to the application of the term «postcolonialism» in Ukraine's post-Soviet literature and culture.

The traumatic experiences of Ukraine are discussed in the works by Johan Dietsch («*Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Culture*») (Dietsch, 2006), Rebekah Moore («*A Crime against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History: Genocide and the 'Politics' of Victimhood in Western Narratives of the Ukrainian Holodomor*») (Moore, 2012). The work by Volodymyr Kulyk is dedicated to the historical memory: «*Nationalism against Sovietism: Historical Memory in Independent Ukraine*», 2015) (Kulyk, 2015). Dovile Budryte in «*Decolonization of Trauma and Memory Politics: Insights from Eastern Europe*» (2016) writes about post-soviet countries and Ukraine.

In Ukrainian postcolonial studies theory, several terms to define the current status of Ukraine can be found: «post-totalitarian consciousness» after Tamara Hundorova (Гундорова, 2005, 2012), «post-genocide state» after Volodymyr Morenets (Моренець, 2006), «postmodern postcolonialism» after Marko Pavlyshyn (Павлишин, 1996), «nationally oriented postcolonialism» after Petro Ivanushyn (Іванишин, 2005). In the Ukrainian historical situation, these different terms can be considered to describe stages of the formation of national consciousness within the framework of literature: postmodern postcolonialism (deconstruction of the imperial) and nationally oriented postcolonialism (the creation of a culture that should work for the Ukrainian national mythologeme for its own sake).

Results and Discussion

The aesthetic strategies, applied to the analysis of contemporary Ukrainian literature may differ from those that have been used for the postcolonial cultures of the Global South. The traditional narratives of postcolonial literary texts (e.g., national, racial, gender, class, generational subjugation) were supplemented by the Ukrainian realia (e.g., Holocaust,

Holodomor), «generation trauma, hybrid identity, the symptom of a ‘sick body’, the communicative gap between generations caused by the totalitarian past, the raping of a woman and the subjugation of a man” were defined by Tamara Hundorova (Гундорова, 2015) as “typical for post-Soviet post-colonial studies».

The most frequent narrative for Ukrainian literature after 2014 is concentrated around the war. Experiencing the war makes it necessary to think about its reasons and consequences as well as verbalizing traumatic experience in order to reach the therapeutic effect. Here are several narrative strategies of talking about the war, that can be distinguished in contemporary (2014-2023) Ukrainian literature.

1) Depicting the war as a result of losing. The problem of taking responsibility

One of the authors, whose novels about the war were highly demanded by the Ukrainian society, is Serhii Zhadan. His novels «*Orphanage*», «*Voroshilovgrad*» incorporate many common themes important for the postcolonial writing: homelessness, loitering, way/road, being a loser, history, memory, «skin of the motherland» (after T. Hundorova). Moreover, the novels discuss the questions of responsibility and defined attitude, that are very important for the war narrative.

The main characters of both novels by S. Zhadan («*Orphanage*», «*Voroshilovgrad*») are people without belonging: without a home (in the literal and metaphorical sense), torn from their historical roots, they have no position of their own, no ‘inner core’. It is interesting that in both texts the main characters by profession are people who should have a clearly defined attitude/position and form (at least influence on) public opinion (Pasha is a teacher of the Ukrainian language, Hera is a historian) but they do not even try: Pasha does not teach his pupils to think, does not mentor them, speaks Russian outside the classroom, and Hera says that he has «an education that no one needs».

Literary critic Hanna Uliura in the article «‘*Orphanage*’: *How unlucky we all are*» underlines a quarrel between Nina and Pasha about the fact that the current war is a consequence of the inaction (intellectual and civil) of Pasha’s generation (Улюра, 2017). At the elections Pasha was one of the first to vote, but he, on the contrary, did not even remember his choice. Nina voiced the problems of an entire generation: “You’re so used to hiding. So used to staying out of things, letting someone else decide everything for you... Nobody’s going to decide for you, nobody’s going to take care of things. Not this time. Because you saw what was going on, you knew. But you kept silent, you didn’t say anything...don’t delude yourself – everyone’s going to answer for this. And those who aren’t used to answering for everything will be the worst off” (Zhadan^[ДБ4], 2021, p. 153).

The themes of joint responsibility and mutual assistance also sound in the novel «*Voroshilovgrad*». The presbyter says that there existed things even more important than faith, and they are gratitude and responsibility (Zhadan^[ДБ5], 2016).

Taking a responsibility is an act that a person has to choose and growing up is a step in this process. T. Hundorova points out that in the process of initiation as a stage of Pasha’s growing up, his nephew Sasha becomes the guide to the adult world. Usually, an adult man becomes a guide (Pasha’s father is a Soviet person; therefore, he is not suitable for this), but S. Zhadan assigned this function to a teenager who was born at the time of independence and has his own attitude/position: «The kid kept grilling Pasha, asking him whose side he was on, what he was going to do, who he was going to shoot at. Pasha reluctantly replied, like always, that none of this had anything to do with him, that he couldn’t get behind anyone, that he wasn’t on any one’s side. Then, completely out of the blue, the kid came back with something about not wanting anything to do with him, about being ashamed, about his uncle being a one-of-a-kind douchebag» (Zhadan^[ДБ6], 2021, p. 117).

The future of the next generation is clearly traced in the last lines of the novel «*Orphanage*». Pasha and Sasha found two puppies, one of them was already dead. Sasha decided to take the second one home so that it wouldn’t die: «He dead?» Pasha asks, now

obviously interested. «Yeah right!» I answer. «He'll be a badass when he grows up.» (Zhadan, 2021, p. 324).

The future power of the people is expressed by the image of the puppy that has to develop and to become strong.

2) Narrating the war and showing the importance of being united

In the novel by Tamara Gorikha Zernya (Duda) «*Daughter*» (2019) the motif of taking responsibility can be traced as well. This responsibility is not shown through the position of individuals (as in the texts by S. Zhadan), but through the choice of many people. In the novel the author explains, that all characters have prototypes and all dialogues, places, events are real, that underlines the presence of other people in the text and helps the readers to percept it from the collective position.

The prerequisites of the war are depicted as a scenario that was observed by everyone: «If someone is calling for war, threatening by war, training for war, and bringing soldiers into your territory, you will most likely have war» (Якщо хтось кличе війну, погрожує війною, тренується для війни та заводить солдат на вашу територію, – у вас, скоріше за все, буде війна) (Горіха Зерня, 2019, с. 72).

Nevertheless, the society reacted very specific: «When I am asked what Donetsk was like at the beginning of the summer of the 14th, the only analogy that comes to mind is the wife who is beaten and raped by her husband, but she does not open the door to the police. «Everything is fine with us, just leave us» (Коли мене запитують, яким був Донецьк на початку літа чотирнадцятого, єдина аналогія, яка спадає на думку, – це та сама дружина, яку б'є і гвалтує чоловік, але вона не відкриває двері поліції. «У нас все хорошо, уходите»)) (Горіха Зерня, 2019, с. 139).

That depicts the toxic relationship between dominant towards subordinate. The beginning of the war and the reaction of «ours» (Ukrainian people from Donetsk) is described as a typical behavior of the colonizers and colonized: «The city was flooded by buses with Russian license plates, the tourists with Russian typical pronunciation scoop up alcohol in supermarkets, drink and eat on the lawns, immediately urinate in the yards, while ours pass by without looking up» (Місто заповнили автобуси з російськими номерами, «акаючі» і «штокаючі» туристи вигрібають спиртне в супермаркетах, п'ють і їдять на газонах, тут же мочаться у дворах, а наші проходять, не піднімаючи очей) (Горіха Зерня, 2019, с. 54).

By showing the oppressed people and the growing feeling of self-identity, the reason of becoming united is emerging.

The importance of being united is highlighted in the scene of Donetsk Maidan: «For demonstration with the record flag gathered the whole families with children. The head of the police, a certain Romanov, personally guaranteed that the demonstration would be peaceful and that the patriots would be under guard. The news later reported that there were up to ten thousand of us... I know that it was a sea of people, and we hugged, shook hands, that my head was dizzy with relief. There were so many of us, here we are, all together, not afraid to voice, we are not afraid to sing our anthem. Young mothers and pensioners, students, heads of families, football fans and schoolchildren, men from the village and fashionable Donetsk women suddenly became relatives... We all became Ukrainians, and carried our Ukraine, as an athlete carries the Olympic flame, above the sky... Most of them had no idea who we were dealing with, did not know what a vile enemy we had. We went to the Maidan to convince, they came to kill, that's all» (На рекордний прапор збиралися сім'ями, з дітьми. Начальник міліції, такий собі Романов, особисто гарантував, що мітинг пройде спокійно, патріоти будуть під охороною. У новинах потім передавали, що нас зійшлося до десяти тисяч... Знаю, що це було людське море, що ми обнімалися, тиснули руки, що голова паморочилася від полегшення. Нас було так багато, ми ось тут, усі разом, не боїмося подати голос, не боїмося заспівати свій гімн. Молоді мами і пенсіонери, студенти, глави сімейств, футбольні фанати і школярі, дядьки з села і модні донецькі «штучки» стали

раптом рідними... Ми всі зробилися українцями, і несли свою Україну, як атлет несе олімпійський вогонь, вище неба...У більшості не здогадувалися, із ким саме маємо справу, не знали, який підлий ворог нам дістався. Ми вийшли на майдан переконувати, вони прийшли убивати, от і все) (Горіха Зерня, 2019, с. 56).

The main hero of the novel is a slim and tender girl who originated from western Ukraine, came to Donetsk and was admitted there, she does not participate in hostilities, but becomes a volunteer. Daughter (the way the other people called this girl) and her team took it upon themselves to get clothes, food, everything for Ukrainian soldiers. They managed to take responsibility and even more – they could form a unity. The real defense in 2014 was possible due to the volunteers and their united efforts.

3) Presenting the war as an obscurity and a kitsch

Traumatic narrative in Hanna Kostenko's text «*Tsurky-Hilky*» (2017) is revealed in the concept of separation (separated house from the rest of the city, separation of the family from the Jewish community and from Odesa city, divided country). The war is presented as inevitability for the divided society: «War has touched this house more than once, like a drunken port whore ...touches the new cadets. This war-girl knows which words to choose...; how exactly to touch... these boys, so that they remember her for the rest of their lives, feel like real men, even if they get sick with tripper... War gets its money (it always gets its money) even when it is arrested and publicly raped in the name of the law. But not much time passes, the prostitute is set free early, because one of the souteneurs needs her services again» (Війна неодноразово зачіпала цей будинок, як чіпляє зелених курсантів п'яна портова дівка... Ця дівка-війна знає, які саме слова підібрати...; як саме торкнутися... цих хлопчиків, аби вони запам'ятали її на все життя, відчули себе справжніми чоловіками, навіть захворівши на трипер... Війна отримує свої гроші (вона завжди отримує свої гроші) навіть тоді, коли її заарештовують і публічно гвалтують іменем закону. Але проходить небагато часу, повію достроково звільняють, адже комусь із сутенерів знову потрібні її послуги) (Костенко, 2017, с. 71).

The author calls the coming days an «era of great uncertainty» in her next text («*In the epicenter of deaf obscurity*», 2021), underlining the feeling of uncertainty and waiting for the horror of a new epoch. Hanna Kostenko underlines that kitsch «is already not only a lifestyle, but life itself, where everything is simplified, leveled, mechanized, devalued, ridiculed and certainly sold» (кітч, що вже є не тільки стилем життя, а самим життям, в якому все спрощується, нівелюється, механізується, знецінюється, висміюється та неодмінно продається) (Костенко, 2021, с. 25). She presents the society as props and war as the theatre. She points out that «...war is inside, and outside is a theater, but only human grief is lived on the stage in all the colors of despair. And he knew it from his own experience. He also added that at the end of this quasi-performance there is loud applause mixed with tears, but none of the actors is resurrected. None goes out to the audience... to receive flowers. Although flowers are the only thing that the dead get. So behind the scenes the loads of spoiled human flesh lie, the very that lacked the image and likeness of God..., lie disposable props, distorted Vitruvian people, who are only mentioned on special days of remembrance, in sad songs after add... not reaching thirty-three. They lie until a new prop is thrown on top, to which, perhaps, no one will bring flowers» (...війна всередині, а ззовні – театр, от тільки людське горе проживається на сцені всіма фарбами відчаю. Й він знав то на власному досвіді. Він додав також, що по завершенню цієї квазівистави лунають гучні аплодисменти упереміш зі сльозами, але ніхто з акторів не воскресає. Не виходить до глядачів... аби отримати квіти. Хоча квіти – то єдине, що отримують мертві. От і лежать за лаштунками гори зіпсованого людського м'яса, того самого, що мало у судинах своїх образ і подобу Бога, лежать одноразовим реквізитом, спотвореними вітрувіанськими людьми, про котрих згадують хіба що в особливі дні пам'яті, в сумних піснях після реклами... не доживши до тридцяти трьох. Лежать, допоки зверху не накидають новий реквізит, якому, можливо, і квіти ніхто не

принесе) (Костенко, 2021, с. 8).

The main hero is afraid of that new epoch, sees the monster from Bosch's painting in it and depicts it as an «era of great obscurity», that «has already unbuttoned its cloak to show bare knees and everything above them. But whether the ashes would become a fertilizer for new values, prejudices and habits, no one knew, not even the one who broadcasted the message» (Епоха великої невідомості вже розстігнула свого плаща, аби продемонструвати оголені коліна і все, що вище них. Але чи стане попіл добривом для нових цінностей, упереджень та звичок, ніхто не знав, навіть той, хто транслиував це повідомлення) (Костенко, 2021, с. 11). Overcoming trauma by means of creating kitsch is the way that was used by Hanna Kostenko.

4) The war as a catalysator of previous traumatic experience

Another way of narrativization the trauma is acknowledging it (after Craps, 2012, p. 3). The war, that started in 2014, performed the role of catalysator in depicting epochal traumatic periods in Ukrainian history. The example of such a text is the novel «*Amadoka*» (2020) by Sofia Andrukhovych. Using the metaphor of amnesia that was caused by the injury during the Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas, the novel voices the most painful tragedies and events, that happed to Ukrainian families and destroyed three generations and entire cultures (Holocaust, Shot Renaissance, Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas). The text is focused not on the war itself but on the possibilities of human's memory in traumatic periods. It turns out, that memories could be recorded by all means of media (in letters, diaries, sculptures, audio and video recordings, museums, archives and cemeteries, they are even on the body of all (!) characters as scars), the author convinces that a traumatic experience can hide them (under the ground literary), forget them (forgetting as a result of blocking painful emotions), change them (as a result of Secondary memories or Screen memory, which arise due to painful emotions). It corresponds with the idea of Dovyte Budryte «there is a crucial distinction between surviving a trauma and receiving its memory or representation of memory» (Budryte, 2016, pp. 153-154).

The novel can be read as a novel of transgenerational trauma (transgenerational path of trauma transmission by Freud. He argued, in particular, that the original traumas witnessed by the first people absorbed into human psychology largely determine the nature of the behavior of subsequent generations. Modern studies of trauma especially emphasize the fact that trauma does not mean such a painful event as its transmission – an echo, transmission through generations, to other places and other times). In the novel by S. Andrukhovych the painfulness from the transmission of the traumatic experience within the family is underlined. Moreover, that pain caused a gap between generation that could not be vanished. Noone of the three generations saw «normal» predecessors, the children saw their parents (or those who replaced them) traumatized both in the literal sense – with mutilated bodies, with scars on their bodies, cuts on their veins, and in a metaphorically – parents and children did not communicated, never told the truth about the past, about their parents. Mothers are constantly absorbed in themselves, have cyclical dreams about past events, are withdrawn, as if they live in their own world, far from reality, are unable to express emotions, are mostly silent, cannot love, do not pay attention to their children. Sofia Andrukhovych underlines, that the children of women who survived during the war, suffer from the fact that they have to «bear the full weight of an unknown past, in which there was not even a hint of your existence, but with which you, from the very moment of your birth, is forced to reckon» (втримувати на собі всю вагу незнаного минулого, в якому на тебе навіть натяку не було, але з яким ти від самої своєї появи на світ змушений рахуватись) (Андрухович, 2020, с. 105). Each next generation went through the same circle (not telling truth to their children to get them rid of traumatic experience). Children feel «as if they had survived the same catastrophe and then suffered the consequences, although their memory was not even erased – it was completely absent» (ніби пережили ту саму катастрофу і тепер потерпали від наслідків, хоча пам'ять про їхні причини була навіть не стертою – вона була відсутня цілком) (Андрухович, 2020, с. 107), since this is not their trauma, but

their mothers', which they still have to live with because they inherited it.

5) Talking about the war in order to gain the therapeutic effect

Ukrainian contemporary literature (after February 2022) has changed by focusing on instant recording and articulating. One possible approach is given by Joshua Pederson in the article «*Trauma and Narrative*», he points out that in the face of catastrophe, silence might indicate not an inability to describe, remember, or integrate but rather an intentional decision to gather one's strength and memorialize loss (Pederson, 2018, p. 107). But Ukrainian literary prose moved in another direction – it is especially important to talk in order to perform a therapeutic function. So the authors are not silencing emotions, but voicing ideas, thoughts, beliefs and dreams. Even the desire of soundlessness is expressed by words, e.g., the poetry of Pavlo Korobchuk about words and lives (translated by Anastasia Rohoza):

не можу говорити не хочу говорити	I cannot speak, I do not want to speak
бо слова продовжують існувати	Because the words, they still exist
а вбиті російськими покидьками люди – ні	While people killed by 51 literat scum, they don't
як виміняти слова на тих людей	If only we could trade some words for them
щоб вони знову почали жити	So that these people live again
а ми – не говорити деяких слів	As soon as we give up the words
я готовий замінити на людей найкрасивіші слова, наприклад:	I'd gladly trade the ones most beautiful, like
прикраса	amaranth
акупунктура	harbinger
жимолость	serendipity
астролябія	astrolabe
пестоші	petrichor
бо нащо нам слова	Who needs the words
коли нема кому їх казати	When you have got no one to say them to

хочу радісно говорити до ожилих так:

Joyous, I'd meet the people coming back to life with

.....

.....

Pavlo Korobchuk not only creates the poetry but also meets with people, organizes performances, as many other Ukrainian writers (S. Zhadan, T. Duda, H. Kruk and others). This is a way to be together, to outlive, to percept, to re-think and show the Ukrainian originality to the rest of the world. The example of such an openness to the world is the project by Mystetsky Arsenal – an album «*Ukrainian Songs of Love and Hate*» - that consists of 10 tracks of musical and poetic performance. It was created by Ukrainian poets Hryhorii Semenchuk (and his hip-hop alter-ego BRAT), Liuba Yakymchuk, singer and author Irena Karpa and Berlin-based musician and producer Yurii Gurzhy. «Abroad, I am often asked about the feelings this war causes, and then I talk about anger that gives strength and about tenderness or love for everything. These are the feelings shared by Ukrainians and embodied in our album», – Liuba Yakymchuk wrote on her Facebook page. The album includes the songs «*Losing Our Homes*», «*Black Swan*», «*Never (Again!) (International version)*», «*Dim Dim*», «*Bavovna (Ukrainian Lullaby)*», «*I Have a Dream (Moscow's Burning)*», «*I'm from Ukraine*», «*Rocket*», «*Black Swan Returns*», «*New Saints of Ukraine*». The main anchors for psychological condition of the Ukrainian society – home/house, bavovna, Ukrainian dream, rockets, Moscow motto «never-again» – are depicted in this album.

6) Recording the war

Recording in order not to forget, to anchor the thoughts, emotions and body reactions is fulfilled in the forms of diaries, essays, poetry. Ukrainian PEN published a selection from Halyna Kruk's diary «*Body of War*», “about everyday life after February 24, about feelings and emotions that we've all forgotten a bit, but it's a good thing I wrote them down...”. The diary depicts the ideas, reactions and observations, that replaced each other during the first six months, e.g.: «One's children will never be born. War borrows the future and never gives it back» (Чийсь діти ніколи не народяться. Війна бере в борг у майбутнього і ніколи не віддає) (Крук, 06.06.2022), «About four o'clock I run out of energy to live and unfortunately the day doesn't end. And I'm not at the front, not under occupation, not under fire, I have everyone alive. There is a whole country like me... A day goes by in two, three and for some

even in a lifetime. And I haven't mentioned anything about the nights yet» (Приблизно в четвертій у мене закінчуються сили жити, а день, на жаль, не закінчується. І це ще я не на фронті, не в окупації, не під обстрілом, у мене всі живі. Нас таких – ціла країна... День іде за два, за три, а декому – за все життя. І це я ще про ночі не згадувала) (Крук, 15.07.2022).

The feeling of very intensive reality is another reason for recording. Ostap Slyvynskyi in the interview explained: «I've had the feeling since the start of the full-scale invasion that reality is very saturated. It is filled to the brim with experiences, emotions, events, news – and there is no room for imagination. All that can be done is to document» (Національна спілка письменників України, 2022). His project – the «*Dictionary of War*» - where he has a role of a Listener and a Compiler also has a therapeutic function. The fragment of Bohdana Romantsova's story called «Sugar», which reminds a stimulus-response approach, shows how very ordinary things cause unusual reaction: «Time in war is measured differently, now I measure it by eating... I used to think that I knew a lot about time, but it turned out that I knew almost nothing... 120 pancakes is 3 minutes and 5 seconds... A 12-liter pot of tea is 25 minutes... A large pot of oat porridge, 15 liters, is a whole hour. Sweet rice porridge – only half an hour... 20 liters of soup is one and a half hours if poured into open plates. And only an hour, if in closed, craft plates. Here, as in literature, the form IS important... Severodonetsk started coming to us a month ago... We were struck by how much they need something sweet. They put three tablespoons of sugar in a small cup... We eat sweets when we are afraid. Or if we don't know when the next meal will be. We eat sweets because we want to return to the safe time of childhood when rockets did not fly overhead. (Bohdana Romantsova)» (Час на війні вимірюється по-новому, я тепер його міряю їжею... Раніше я думала, що знаю про час дуже багато, але виявилось, що не знаю майже нічого... 120 млинців – це 3 хвилини і 5 секунд... 12-літровий баняк чаю – це 25 хвилин... Велика каструля вівсянки, літрів на 15, – це ціла година. Солодка рисова каша – лише півгодини... 20 літрів супу – це півтори години, якщо наливати у відкриті тарілки. І лише година, якщо в акуратні закриті, крафтові. Тут як в літературі – форма має значення... Місяць тому до нас почав приїжджати Северодонецьк... Вразило те, як сильно їм хочеться солодкого. Вони клали по три столові ложки цукру у невеликий стаканчик... Ми їмо солодке, коли нам страшно. Якщо не знаємо, коли наступного разу буде їжа. Ми їмо солодке, бо хочемо повернутися у безпечний час дитинства, коли над головою не літали ракети...) (Pen Ukraine, 2022).

The footprints of the people's mental state, depicted in these dictionaries are important in working out the strategies to survive the war.

7) After-the-war/victory narrative

The unique feature of the Ukrainian literature after the full-scale war is talking about after-the-war Ukraine and world (while living still in the war). Pavlo Korobchuk starts almost each line of his poem «*When the war is over*» (translated into English by Peter Campbell Bensted) with «I will», and many voices of «I» are dreaming about peace, but this peace is not deprived of war symbols – shot beach of the seaside town, tripwires in the forest, damaged tram lines, assault rifle, names of alive and dead. The last line turns the readers to the reality – one is dreaming about future the most desperate, while being still in the war. Nevertheless, all those voices will act after the war and move forward.

Коли закінчиться війна

коли закінчиться війна я буду малювати картини
на обстріляному березі приморського міста
а я буду в поліському лісі збирати малину
обережно, щоб не було розтяжки, розгортатиму
листя
я буду виховувати дітей — світлими і цікавими
а я буду відновлювати пошкоджені трамвайні лінії
а я як і раніше буду баристою готуватиму каву

When the war is over

When the war is over I will paint, and I will draw
On the beach of a seaside town, next to the empty shell
casings.
I will pick raspberries in the forests of Polissya
Carefully. So that I don't disturb the leaves.
I will have children. Bright, interesting children.
I will repair the damaged tram lines
I will be a barista, making coffee

коли поверну автомат і якщо кав'ярня вціліє
а я лишуся у благодійництві а я продовжу в логістиці
а я і далі повертатиму людей у нормальні психічні
стани
а я буду молитися в мені молитва за кожного
поміститься
всі ми бачимо себе після війни всі ми — одностайні
а я буду дивитися на мою улюблену країну з небес
а я — з глибини століть а я — з зали слухань Божого
суду
а я — з купальських багать а я — з прадавніх словес
а я колись народжуся виросту і теж — буду
а я буду повторювати прізвиська та імена
дякуючи героям які вижили і які ні
про те що буде коли закінчиться війна
найвідчайдушніше мріється на війні

Turning on the machine. If the coffee shop survives.
I'll carry on my charity work, doing the logistics.
I'll carry on helping people get back to reality
I will pray a prayer, that there'll be room for all,
That we'll all see ourselves, after the war, as one and the
same.
I will look down on my beloved country from heaven
From the beginnings of time, from God's court of
judgement,
From the fires of Kupala, and with ancient words
I will be born again, re-born.
And I will name them. ALL their names, and ALL their
surnames.
I'll give thanks to the heroes who survived, and those
who did not.
All this will happen when the war ends,
These desperate dreams of war.

This poem is one of those which were published in Pavlo Korobchuk's book of verses «*Navii*» (2023) (Коробчук, 2023). The word «*navii*» (Ukrainian «*навій*») means a beam in the loom on which the warp is wound. The book contains 77 texts written since 2017. The title is a metaphor that underlines that the whole life consists of separate paths that are to be intertwined to form a unite, like threads of several colors from a cloth with a unique pattern. «*Navii*» has the following structural components: Opening verse, Warp thread, Breast beam, Flying Shuttle, Back beam, Final verse and contains the illustrations of the parts of the loom. The book contains poems about childhood and youth, bright and gentle verses as well as painful texts about the war.

After-the-war narrative shifts towards after-the-victory one in the book of Oleksandr Mykhed «*The Cat, the Rooster, the Cupboard*» (2022). This book is a kind of session with a psychotherapist, where one can let the emotions go. This short story, which the author presented as «a fairy tale for adults» shows three generations, each one with its own experience and in varying degrees ready (if one can be ever ready) for the war. Grandmother Liza remembered the Second World War and her desire was to protect «... the last seconds of the peaceful life of a child [her granddaughter] who did not know the war. Liza knows that as soon as Sonia wakes up, her whole life will be torn into «before» and «after». And Lisa is afraid that a new war will steal their lives “before”: everything will be destroyed – every happy moment, every evil hour» ([Дитина Великої війни береже] останні секунди мирного життя дитини, що війни не знала. Ліза знає – шойно Соня прокинеться, все життя її розірветься навпіл – на «до» і «після». І Ліза боїться, що нова війна вкраде їхнє життя «до»: все буде знищено – кожна щаслива мить, кожна лиха година) (Михед, 2022, с. 23). The next generation, Liza's infantile son Andrii, always “lived his life as if in an energy-saving mode under the slogans: «Keep a low profile», «Don't hurry» and most importantly – «Somehow it will happen» ([Андрій] проживав життя, ніби в енергозберігальному режимі під гаслами: «Не вилазь», «Не висовуйся», «Не поспішай» і найважливіше – «Якось воно буде») (Михед, 2022, с. 14). But he was one of the first men to go to defend Ukraine. The war made it clear for him what he finally wanted. The granddaughter Sonia was an ordinary girl, who lived her ordinary life with her granny, inconspicuous uncle Andrii and her favorite friends – the Cupboard, the Rooster and the Cat until the war came. The real events, situations and heroes are themed in the text. The red cat, the cupboard and the ceramic rooster from Vasylykiv that survived after the destruction of a house in Borodianka, Kyiv region, and became symbols of Ukrainian resistance in the war are illustrated in the book. Russian soldiers are described as those, who «grab washing machines, sneakers, mobile phones, laptops, and anything they can carry. But they leave their wounded and dead. They run away and die, leaving devastation and memories of violence that cannot be comprehended, because it is beyond the limits of evil» (Росіян женуть. Вони хапають попід пахви пральні машинки, кросівки, мобільні телефони, ноутбуки й

усе, що можуть потягнути. Та вони залишають своїх пораних і загиблих. Втікають і гинуть, лишаючи розруху і спомин про насилля, яке не досягнути, бо воно за межами зла). (Михед, 2022, с. 59) The end of the book grants hope which is the most important in therapy: «And the Cat says that everyone will come out of that war different, with wounds that cannot be healed. But nevertheless, the laughter will be heard, and the heart will be filled in with hope and warmth, and even after endless horror, a new life will come. A life that will keep the memory about evil. A life that will cherish the memory about kindness, love and friendship. We don't know how this tale will end. But this war will definitely end with our Victory» (І Котик каже, що кожен з тієї війни вийде іншим, з ранами, яких не залікувати. Та все одно пролунає сміх, від якого серце сповнюватиметься надією й теплом, що навіть після безкінечного жаху настане нове життя. Життя, що берегтиме пам'ять про зло. Життя, що берегтиме пам'ять про добро, любов і дружбу. Як закінчиться ця казка, нам не знати. Але ця війна точно закінчиться нашою Перемогою) (Михед, 2022, с. 66)

Valerii Puzik in his book-in-letters «*With love – dad!*» (2023) raises very important problem of the society – the pain of torn families. The father, who is in the army, writes letters to his son and wife, who are in a safe place, and is dreaming about their leisure time after Ukraine's victory. His letters are very tender, full of love and desire to protect a child from suffering and negative emotions, from the difficult realities of war. The father underlines that there are lots of people to protect their land: «We've stayed and we will not give up a single piece of our coast, we will not give up the sea, the streets and, certainly, we will not give up our bookstores (I know which is the most important for you, and it is under reliable protection). This is our city, our country, our land and our sky. All this is worth loving and protecting. We've stayed and will fight. Remember: this country is invincible.

Love you.

Kiss mum.

I'll try to write more often.

With love – dad!

P. S. After victory, we'll listen to our favorite Kalush songs and we'll dance until we fall off our feet» (Ми залишились і не віддамо жодного клаптика нашого узбережжя, не віддамо море, вулиці й, тим паче, не віддамо наші книгарні (я знаю, яка для тебе найважливіша, і вона під надійною охороною). Це наше місто, наша країна, наша земля і наше небо. Усе це варто любити і захищати. Ми залишились і битимемось. Пам'ятай: ця країна — непереможна. Люблю вас. Цілуй маму. Старатимусь писати частіше. З любов'ю — тато! P. S. Після перемоги ми ввімкнемо наші улюблені пісні Kalush і будемо танцювати, поки не попадаємо з ніг) (Пузік, 2023, с.14).

Victory is strongly desired and it enables to reunite families, help to re-think past and present, create future and open Ukrainian national values to the world.

Conclusions and prospects for further investigations

Ukrainian war since 2014 has become one of the crucial topics to be depicted by the contemporary Ukrainian artists. The writers (Serhii Zhadan, Tamara Gorikha Zernya (Duda), Hanna Kostenko, Sofia Andrukhovych, Pavlo Korobchuk, Halyna Kruk, Ostap Slyvynskyi, Oleksandr Mykhed, Valerii Puzik and many others) tried to re-think and acknowledge its consequences as well as reflect the existing reality and provided different possibilities of talking about the war.

This war of the sovereign country is actually being fought for the possibility to define its own way independently, without asking for or/and getting a permission of the country-colonizer. Therefore, analyzing the contemporary Ukrainian literature as postcolonial is very important, as gives not only the possibility to analyze the broken world due to the war, to reflect the war present, but also to have glance on the opportunities that Ukraine will have in future.

Acknowledging the inevitability (in the works by Hanna Kostenko) of the war, analyzing the reasons, that caused it, like irresponsibility, being separated, being dependent and used to

toxic relationship, showing infantile attitude towards own future (in the novels by Serhii Zhadan, Tamara Duda, Hanna Kostenko), the Ukrainian literature changed after the full-scale invasion in February 2022. The narration of the full-scale war shifted to implement the therapeutic function predominantly. The recording of thought, emotion, desires and states is obviously the main narrative. The unique feature of the contemporary Ukrainian literature is future-shifted-narrative – the ideas concerning after-the-war period of Ukrainian history, the emphasis on its victory and opening to in the world.

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НАРАЦІЇ ПРО ВІЙНУ В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ЛІТЕРАТУРІ (2014-2023)

Стаття присвячена аналізу сучасної української літератури, яка була написана під час російсько-української війни (з 2014 року), й досліджує спроби письменників опрацювати й наративізувати досвід війни. Україна після понад 30 років де-юре незалежності намагається позбутися впливу колонізатора де-факто, що є досить унікальним випадком для дослідження в рамках постколоніальної методології. У статті пропонується розглядати українську літературу як постколоніальну, наголошуючи на важливості аналізу не тільки травматичного досвіду, зумовленого війною, а й особливостей українського культурно-постколоніального контексту, можливостей та перспектив українського майбутнього.

Метою цієї статті є визначення й аналіз наративних стратегій у сучасній

українській літературі про війну (після 2014 року) шляхом застосування постколоніальної методології. Естетичні стратегії сучасних українських літературних текстів відрізняються від тих, що використовувалися для постколоніальних культур Глобального Півдня, оскільки традиційні наративи (напр., національне, расове, гендерне, класове, генераційне підкорення) доповнюються українськими реаліями (напр., Голокост, Голодомор, трансгенераційний розрив, гібридна ідентичність, «пошрамованість»), які є типовими для пострадянських постколоніальних досліджень (за Т. Гундоровою).

Дослідження базується на текстах Софії Андрухович, Тамари Горіха Зерня (Дуди), Сергія Жадана, Павла Коробчука, Ганни Костенко, Галини Крук, Олександра Михеда, Валерія Пузіка, Остапа Сливинського та інших.

Війна, як катаклізм, впливає на українське суспільство, й письменники обирають різні стратегії для її наративізації. Визначаючи неминучість війни (наприклад, у текстах Ганни Костенко), автори аналізують причини, що призвели до неї: безвідповідальність, суспільна розрізненість, залежність і звикання до токсичних стосунків, демонстрація інфантильного ставлення до власного майбутнього тощо (у романах Сергія Жадана, Тамари Дуди, Ганни Костенко). У статті розглядаються зміни письменницького фокусу після повномасштабного вторгнення (після 24 лютого 2022) від представлення війни як результату безвідповідальності, роз'єднання та неминучості до надання необхідного українському суспільству терапевтичного ефекту та наративу після-перемоги (що є дуже специфічною рисою з огляду на те, що війна й досі триває). Запис думок, емоцій, бажань і станів стає основною оповіддю й фіксується переважно у щоденниках, словниках, поезії (тексти Галини Крук, проєкт «Словник війни», створення перформансів як для українського суспільства, так і (пере)відкриття України закордоном). Унікальною рисою сучасної української літератури є зміщений у майбутнє наратив – уявлення про повоєнний період з акцентом на перемогу та відкритість для світу.

Ключові слова: травма, пам'ять, терапія, ідентичність, сучасна література, постколоніальні дослідження, постмодерна література.