



WHY IS THE HISTORY OF UKRAINIAN LITERATURE SILENT ABOUT THE WOMEN WRITERS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY?

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WHY IS THE HISTORY OF UKRAINIAN LITERATURE SILENT ABOUT THE WOMEN WRITERS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY?

Abstract: The article deals with the problem of avoiding women's literature of the 1920s and 1930s in the narrative of the history of Ukrainian literature. This period is called the Executed Renaissance and is the key to the nation-making narrative. It is seen as the time of the modern nation formation and the time of the greatest sacrifice in the name of the nation. Women's literature of that time is selectively discussed in this context, but the bulk of female literature of that period remains out of the attention of researchers, despite the fact that both the previous stage of development of women's literature and subsequent ones are present in the narrative of the history of Ukrainian literature. The article hypothesizes that the period of the 1920s and 1930s "fell out" because the women's literature of that time did not meet the needs of the nation-making narrative that dominates the Ukrainian humanities. The aim of the study is to show this discrepancy by analyzing the representation of gender practices in women's texts of that period. The theoretical basis of the work was the ideas by Anne McClintock, Yuval-Davis, Joane Nagel, Robert Connell, Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak. As a result of the study, it has been revealed that women's literature of the time has different topics and problems, which is due to different experiences. Describing the Bolshevik reforms, women attach equal importance to changes in management and forms of ownership, as well as to the new norms of family and maternal law. The women writers remind of the importance of women's work in enterprises and in agriculture, especially in the absence of men involved in the war. The literature reflects the rapid expansion of the range of characters' professions, but at the same time shows the complexity of self-realization, especially when it is necessary to combine profession and motherhood. At this time, women speak more openly about cathexis, challenging patriarchal norms. The image of a woman, in particular of a mother, created by the woman writers did not correspond to the symbolic image of the nation's reproducer, so the return of women's literature of the 1920s and 1930s did not meet the needs of the nation-making narrative in the post-Soviet conditions.

Key words: women's literature, nation-making narrative, Ukrainian literature, gender practices.

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The history of Ukrainian literature of the 1920s and 1930s is dramatic. According to the estimation of the diaspora literary association "Slovo" (Word), only 36 writers out of 259 writers who were publishing in 1930, continued to publish after 1938; the rest were repressed or were ousted from literature by the Soviet government. Some of those who were repressed

have been shot, others have not survived the cruel camp conditions; just a minority have returned to the literature (22 according to Bohdan Kravtsiv's calculations²). The works of the "disappeared" writers were restricted from publication, from lending in libraries, and from being kept privately. A large array of literature was removed from the cultural field in this

way. The rehabilitation of writers began only after 1956, but even then their works were sometimes censored. This period in Ukrainian literary criticism is often called the Executed Renaissance, after the title of Yuri Lavrinenko's anthology, edited in Paris by the Polish publishing house "Kultura" [Culture] in 1959. Ukrainian emigrants from the USSR wanted to preserve the works of their friends or teachers for the further future and distributed them from their preserved sources, and poems sometimes merely from memory. Lavrinenko has instead declared a value-based selection of texts for his anthology, he was concerned not about the completeness of the presentation of that extremely diverse time, but about showing the national modernism version. This anthology formed a thoroughly androcentric canon of the period: it includes the works of 26 poets, 7 prose writers and 2 playwrights to be accompanied by essays of 8 authors, but it does not feature a single woman. This canon became the basis for the curricula of school and university courses when Ukraine became independent.

Simultaneously, since the 1990s the expansion of scientific knowledge about this period and the publication of works of that time have taken place. Since 1999, 15 editions have been published in the "Rozstrilyane Vidrodzhennya" [Executed Renaissance] series of "Smoloskyp" Publishing House, which expanded and reevaluated the canon established by Yu. Lavrinenko in the anthology of the same name (for example, the series included works by Serhiy Pylypenko, whom Lavrinenko excluded and gave a negative characterization). However, neither was any woman writer published in this series, nor in the anthology. Another series, «Nashi 20-ies» (Our Twenties), proclaimed an orientation towards popular genres, appealing to the completeness of the literature. Since 2016, 7 anthologies (detective stories, love novels, fiction, reporting prose) and 3 author's collections have been published in the series. In this line, women's prose is presented by a separate anthology (12 stories and a novel) by 4 authoress of *Moya karyera* [My Career] (2017). In addition to the series, anthologies of works of that period are published, the most notable of which is the anthology *Nevidome Rozstrilyane Vidrodzhennya* [Unknown Executed Renaissance], edited by Yu. Vynnychuk. It presents the works of 6 repressed authoress (a total of 52 authors in the book, selected according to the archival principle). Thus, about 120 male authors and only 10 female writers returned to the Ukrainian cultural space together with these publications.

However, Ukrainian women's literature of the 1920s and 1930s counts considerably more authoress. The only ones who published at least 1 book were 20 persons, another 23 were frequently published in literary journals. Thus Natalia Zabyla was the author of 7 books, Varvara Cherednychenko – 6, Oleksandra Svekla – 5, Halyna Orlivna – 5, Maria Romanivska – 4, Margaryta Sengalevych – 4. In total, there are at least 14 novels and stories, 19 collections of short stories, 12 collections of poetry. Some of these writers were repressed (for example, Orlivna, Svekla, Nina Yavolovska, Ladia Mohylyanska, Maryana Khmarka, Olena Zhurlyva, Myroslava Sopilka, Mariyka Dyka, Zinaida Tulub), a number of them were emigrated

(such as Tetyana Kardynalovska, Dokia Humenna, Lyudmyla Kovalenko), a few are focused on the children's literature (for example, Natalia Zabyla, Oksana Ivanenko, Maria Prygara), certain authors have adapted to the demands of social realism (such as Maria Romanivska, Agata Turchynska), some of them were no longer in print (Maria Halych, Lisa Kardynalovska).

From the beginning of the 1990s, poems by Olena Zhurlyva (1998) and Raisa Troyanker (2009) have been published in regional publishing houses, the works by Tetiana Kardynalovska (1992, 2005) have been republished with the diaspora assistance, and selected works by Varvara Cherednychenko (1971), Zinaida Tulub (1964, 1986, 1991), Myroslava Sopilka (1973) and Olena Zhurlyva (1966, 1974) were published in Soviet times, mostly in censored form (works by the last three writers were edited after rehabilitation). In the scientific discourse there are single studies devoted to Maria Halych in the context of the literary organization "Lanka-MARS", Raisa Troyanker referring to the self-identification of Jews in Ukraine, biographical prose by Oksana Ivanenko, late prose by Dokia Humenna, historical novels by Zinaida Tulub, children's, historical and biographical works by Varvara Cherednychenko, as well as some articles. Most of these studies either bypass the works of the 1920s and 1930s or consider them in the context of a nation-making narrative. But today almost nothing is known about many authoresses.

There is no information about the female writers and their works of this period in the survey works *Istoriya ukraïnskoyi literatury XX st.* [History of Ukrainian Literature of the Twentieth Century] edited by Vitaliy Donchuk (1993), *Modernisty, marksysty i natsiya: ukraïnska literaturna dyskusiya 1920–kh rokiv* [Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s] by Myroslav Shkandriy (1992, 2013), *Dyskurs modernizmu v ukraïnskiy literaturi* [The Discourse of Modernism in Ukrainian Literature] by Solomiya Pavlychko (1999) (although this work emphasizes women's literature at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the discourse of the 1920s and 1930s in it is entirely male). There are no Ukrainian women's texts in the works on the formation of the socialist realist canon in Ukrainian literature that have appeared since the late 2000s (by Valentyna Kharkhun, Ulyana Fedoriv, Natalia Ksiondzky).

This period is ignored even in studies on the history of Ukrainian women's literature. For example, Vira Ageeva, the author of the monograph *Zhinochyh prostir* [Women's Space] (2002) focuses on women's literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and then immediately turns to the texts of the late 20th century. In the new book of essays *Buntarky: Novi zhinky i moderna natsiya* [Rebels: New Women and the Modern Nation] (2020), only two authoress out of 12 writers, Natalia Romanovych-Tkachenko and Nadezhda Surovtseva formally relate to this period, but both belong to the older generation, their activities were connected with the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1920), and Surovtseva was not yet a writer, but a journalist and scientist.

At the same time, women's literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries, despite the fact that it is inferior in the number of authors, is presented in several conceptual studies (by Ageeva, Myroslava Krupka, Lyubov Tomchuk) and is studied



in educational courses. Also, the works of women writers of Western Ukraine (which was then divided between Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia) of that period – Iryna Wilde, Olena Teliha, Natalia Livytska-Kholodna, Oksana Lyaturynska, although are not comprehended as a whole, but presented in the *Istoriya ukrayinskoyi literatury* [The History of Ukrainian Literature] (1993), and in educational courses. That is, the period of the 1920s–1930s in the sub-Soviet Ukraine is a blank spot in the history of Ukrainian women’s literature.

The following question naturally arises: why did almost 40 authors of the Executed Renaissance literature remain forgotten, while many authors, not only of the first, but also of the second or third magnitude, of high and mass literature returned from oblivion? The potential answer that their aesthetic quality was lower is denied by the facts of publications (at that time the publications were undergoing editorial evaluation) and by reviews. Women’s works were also represented in the survey publications of that time, such as the *Antolohiya ukrayinskoyi poeziyi* [Anthology of Ukrainian Poetry] (1930) or the representative bibliographic work *Desyat roktiv ukrayinskoyi literatury (1917–1927)* [Ten Years of Ukrainian Literature (1917–1927)]. Therefore, the selective representation of the period is associated with the post-esthetical factor.

Representative practices of the past are associated with the formation of national identity. Anthony Smith emphasized the role of memory in this process: “[O]ne might almost say: no memory, no identity; no identity, no nation”³. Benedict Anderson regarded nations as a system of cultural representations where people start to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community⁴. But Anne McClintock, Yuval-Davis, Joane Nagel argue that the “shared experience” may not be. Describing nationalism⁵ as an ideology of belief in a single nation, Anne McClintock states: “Nationalism is thus constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse, and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power”⁶. Nira Yuval-Davis believes that the boundaries of nations aim at dividing people into “us” and “them”, and this division not only divides nations, but also occurs within it. Yuval-Davis claims that “gendered bodies and sexuality play pivotal roles, as territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities. Gender relations are at the heart of cultural constructions of social identities and collectivities as well as in most cultural conflicts and contestations”⁷. The main function of women in the discourse of nationalism is to take care of the nation’s reproduction. Therefore, women are mostly in the private sphere, which makes them politically irrelevant. This does not mean that women do not participate in public life at all, but they are subordinated to men who dominate the public domain. Joane Nagel believes that state power, citizenship, nationalism, militarism, revolution, political violence, dictatorship and democracy “are all best understood as masculinist projects, involving masculine institutions, masculine processes and masculine activities”⁸. It is not that women do not participate in the creation or destruction of states, but the scenarios in which they operate are determined

by men. Cynthia Enloe draws attention to the symbolic roles of women in nationalism: they become either valuable images that need protection and exaltation or trophies and booty that are disgraced and despised⁹. But one way or another, the main acting persons are men.

Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak in *Feminists despite Themselves. Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884–1939* (Ukrainian edition *Bilym po bilomu* [White on White]) offers a different perspective on the relationship between nationalism and women in Eastern Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, in particular in Ukraine. She argues that in colonized agrarian societies, the women’s movement correlates its tasks with the tasks of nation-making, aiming to contribute to the emancipation of the individual, the development of the economy and the modernization of society¹⁰. Analyzing the activities of women’s organizations, she discovers that they emphasized the family, which was a favorite symbol of the aspirations of the nation and women in particular, and called for heroic asceticism in the name of independence. To take a more significant place in society, women relied on recognized social values – family, nation, the educational role of the mother, philanthropic activity and conscientious work. Their motto was to serve the people. Bohachevsky-Chomiak attaches great importance to women’s organizations, arguing that they have played a crucial role in preserving Ukrainian society¹¹.

Maksym Tarnavsky, considering Ukrainian women’s literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, also points to the following paradox: the representatives of the feminist movement emphasize their national identity, the nation is more important for them than class and international women’s solidarity¹². Tarnavsky notes that “Feminism in Ukrainian literature at the turn of the century found its strongest advocates in men”¹³. This becomes clear when you consider that men writers and women writers were imbued with the task of serving the people. The women writers of that time were primarily concerned with the promotion of education among women and defended the right of a girl to choose her husband. Olena Pchilka’s story *Tovaryshky* [Comrades] (1887) is notable. Her character Lyuba from the Poltava region travels to Switzerland to study as a doctor, in Vienna she also masters a course in obstetrics so that, returning home, she will treat peasants, and at the end of the story she marries a like-minded doctor. Lyuba sees her vocation and self-realization in serving for the benefit of the real people, she does not strive for career growth or recognition, and the narrator values this highly. But her friend, who did not return to Ukraine, but went to work in the capital Petersburg and had scientific ambitions, is characterized by the narrator negatively. Olena Pchilka’s daughter, the most famous Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka, called by Ivan Franko “the only man in Ukrainian literature”, repeatedly portrayed her characters as symbolic representatives of nations (Oksana from the drama *Boyarynya* [The boyard’s wife], Cassandra from the drama of the same name, Nerisa from *Orhiya* [Orgy]).

The national struggle of the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in the Ukrainian People’s Republic (1917–1920) and

even the unification of Dnieper and West Ukrainian lands (1919). But after the defeat in the Ukrainian-Bolshevik war, the Ukrainian lands took shape in the quasi-state formation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. And the literature of the 1920s and 1930s is viewed precisely in this context.

“Gradually, there was some agreement among writers of various literary movements... It arose on the basis of a common experience – the Ukrainian revolution, the common desire for national completeness and the desire to express national identity. This desire to define and affirm a sense of new identity was the thread that bound almost the entire creative intelligentsia. No matter how different Ukrainian intellectuals were, they were deeply influenced by the experience of statehood in 1917–1920: everyone perceived the new republican status of Ukraine as a result of not only a social, but also a national revolution.”¹⁴

Both the liberation movement and the assertion of a new power are considered masculine practices. And although women were also involved in these processes (for example, Svekla participated in hostilities, Cherednychenko was twice sentenced to death for public and political activities, Kardynalovska was married to the Prime Minister of the Ukrainian People's Republic, and after his arrest followed him to prison), nevertheless the women's experience of those times has significant differences. The fact is that the Bolsheviks adopted a number of regulations destroying the patriarchal system in the first decade of their power. The decrees *On Marriage Abolition, On Civil Marriage, Children and on Entering into the Acts of Civil Status* (1917), *The Decree on Childcare and Motherhood* (1918) abolished the rights of men to dependent family members and approved a woman's right to economic, social and sexual self-determination. A woman was allowed the right to choose her place of residence, a family name and a citizenship. Both children born in and out of wedlock were equal in rights and women received the four months paid holiday in connection with pregnancy, and the right to paid breaks for the feeding of a newborn. In 1920, abortion in a hospital setting was legalized, and in 1927 a civil marriage was recognized. However, the measures that would have ensured the adequate implementation of these norms were paltry.

A female worker had to fulfill the standard as well as the men, assume the public duties, perform the household chores and take care of her children. Under these circumstances, children often became social orphans, which fueled the already difficult situation with homelessness and juvenile delinquency. Inadequate perception of the introduced norms also caused an increase in the number of sexual crimes and, in general, the sexual exploitation of women. These consequences and Stalin's focus on strengthening the state, which began to be presented as a large family (Katerina Clarke)¹⁵, led to a sharp rejection of the women's emancipation in the second half of the 1930s¹⁶. The experience of the 1920s could only be remembered with condemnation. Later a woman in the Soviet Union was also perceived as responsible

for the reproduction and education of future generations and a symbol of the motherland.

Robert Connell considers gender as a method to streamline social practices, in particular, power, production and cathexis (practices that form and embody desires)¹⁷. According to these aspects, we will consider also the female literature of the 1920s and 30s to demonstrate its distinctiveness in the representation of women's images. The issue about power relations is primarily related to the comprehension of the military actions of 1914–1920, but also to the power in household or collective farms. The female works about the war are stories about women's participation in it (primarily the works by Margaryta Sengalevych, Luciana Piontek). Sengalevych's story *Nepomitna* [*Imperceptible*] tells about a woman who saved a surrounded Red Army detachment, having brought them bullets in a basket. The enemy did not pay attention to her, did not prevent her from passing and did not search her, because she was a woman. But she died in a shootout on her way back. The soldiers whom she saved were not interested in her fate and only a few days later they entered her house and found a dead child in the cradle. And the character of Nina Yavolovska's story *Maty* [*Mother*] pays the same price for participation in the struggle for power. Her son, injured while fleeing from Denikin soldiers, has died in hospital, and she freezes in this grief, unable to focus on the present. In the most famous text of the Executed Renaissance about the participation of a woman in the hostilities of 1917–20–ies *Kit u chobotyakh* [*Cat in Boots*] by Mykola Khvylovy, the death of a child is mentioned only in one sentence, but all attention is focused on the achievements and post-war status of the woman. Instead, these female texts take a problematic view of women's participation in the wartime and their emphasis is not on accomplishments, but rather on losses. Victory in hostilities does not make a woman a winner.

Female texts also contain some other perspective that is absent in male texts: hard work of women in enterprises and in agriculture in the absence of men participating in hostilities (in the works by Sengalevych, Cherednychenko). So, the character of Cherednychenko's novel *Za pluhom* (*Behind the Plow*) claims: “We, women, pulled the war on our shoulders, and they harnessed us to pull also the revolution”¹⁸.

Another aspect of power relations is represented by texts on the Soviet development of local governments and collective farms. Sengalevych's stories *Maryana vyryshyla* (*Maryana has decided*) and *Ne poshchastylo* (*No luck*) are agitations for a women's initiative: the organization of nurseries and kindergartens, entrepreneurship. Her not-so-fictional stories offer options for possible earning alternatives and show how achieving financial independence leads to the destruction of the power of the rich over the poor and men over women. Recent distinguishes these texts from the men's socialist realist texts (for example, *Yiyi karyera* (*Her Career*) by Ivan Le), where women do not assert themselves, but prove their loyalty to the Soviet regime.

Male authority in the private households is strongly presented in Cherednychenko's novel *Za pluhom* (*Behind the Plow*). It is worth emphasizing that Ukrainian classical



literature mainly depicted economic oppression. The miserable fate of a woman was connected either with the exploitation and coercion of masters, or with the loss of her husband (death or conscription). The dependence of a woman on a man in marriage was out of the plot, couples were often portrayed in an idealized way, and the representations of unhappy marriages was limited as a rule to verbal confrontations. Horypna, the main character of the novel *Za pluhom* (*Behind the Plow*), is the wife of a lazy drunkard. Three children, himself and his old father are being maintained by the woman. She works hard for hire and in her own household, and her husband takes away what she earned, drinks it away, and violently beats her. Struggling with the future of her children, she appeals to the community for a divorce, but they deny her, even while knowing the details of the real situation. Husband's power in the family is unconditional, even if it is based only on tradition. Cherednychenko vividly depicts the powerlessness of women not only in the lord's yard, but also in her own family. Therefore, describing the changes in the countryside caused by the new system, Cherednychenko does not limit herself to showing the destruction of manors and the organization of collective farms (as is usually the case in men's texts), but includes episodes of explaining new laws on family relations. However, these episodes show that maternity leave was extended only to female employees of state enterprises, and the labor of rural women (whose farms produced food) remained unpaid.

Women's literature of that time marks a significant expansion in the range of the characters' professions. If earlier they were mostly teachers, artists, and singers, less often seamstresses or laundresses, now the professions of female characters are represented in the range from a miner (Sengalevych's *Odnoho zymovoho vechora* [*One Winter Evening*]) to an engineer (*Traktorobud* [*Tractor plant*] by Zabila). However, these texts are far from glorification, they focus on problematic issues. The disorientation of a young woman who was persistently acquiring a profession, but did not receive satisfaction from self-affirmation, because labor as well as uninteresting social work became forced in the new conditions is shown in Maria Halych's story *Drukarka* [*The Typist*]. Her desire to manage her life herself (embodied in the motive "I must certainly think about my life") is not realized, she lives in an amorphous time, in which the days "are so alike that you cannot understand which of them are past and which are future"¹⁹. The writer shows that the new social conditions, the proclaimed emancipation of women do not give the main thing, that is, the freedom to choose a life path.

Zabila's novel *Traktorobud* tells about the participation of a woman engineer in the construction of a utopia plant. Halyna Klynko is one of the 5 engineers entrusted with the most important calculations, so she works from morning till night, even though her son is ill. But the child has died and the mother, who restrained the expression of her emotions, makes a mistake in the calculations, which barely have time to correct. This sad story casts doubt on the possibility of a woman's simultaneous self-realization as a mother and a

specialist in conditions when women are left alone with their problems. (Similar motifs are present in the poems, in particular, by Raisa Troyanker). Zabila optimistically solves the problem of the state's careless attitude towards working mothers in the second part of the story: the characters working at the construction site of the plant on their own organize a nursery for their children. (The importance of this problem is evidenced by the data given in the publication *Zhinky u hornyli modernizatsiyi* (*Women in the Crucible of Modernization*): "As of April 1, 1931, there were 43 kindergartens with 1400 children, and 83 kindergartens were needed for 5400 children in Dnepropetrovsk; in Kryvyi Rih there were 7 kindergartens for 400 children, and 22 kindergartens were needed for 1,900 children"²⁰, a similar situation was in all industrial regions, but this situation is not mentioned in the men's texts). Ukrainian women's literature of this period for the first time depicts practices that form and embody desires. Some of these texts recorded the reception of the ideas of free Eros, discussed by the Bolsheviks in the first decade of their power. For example, the character of the etude *Berezovyy sik* (*Birch sap*), Gafiyka (the form of the name Agafya, which is related to the Greek word "love") convinces:

"Will I become worse when other guys love me? ... It is sometimes difficult, but we are the builders of communism... We don't recognize property... Aren't feelings a proprietary feeling? Human proprietary! Love must be free and pure... When I don't want to... When I don't need it, then it's good to have one or no one... is need."²¹

However, the text indicates that this conviction is formed as a result of trauma to the heroine – she had experienced a rape during her adolescence. In a patriarchal society, this would have condemned her to lifelong marginalization, while the Bolshevik way of life gave her more opportunities.

The theme of violence against women is presented in a completely different way in women's texts. In the men's texts of that time, women are mostly victims of rape by enemy forces (*Narechena* [*The Bride*] by Mykola Khvylovy, *Tretya revolyutsiya* [*The Third Revolution*] by Valerian Pidmohylny), which had a symbolic meaning. The women writers instead tell about the characters' forced relations with "their" men. There are episodes of sexual abuse (up to beating) in wed lock in the stories *Emihranty* [*Emigrants*], *Ilishva* by Orlyvna, the novel *Za pluhom* [*Behind the Plow*] by Cherednychenko, and harassment in an orphanage is described in the story *Manivtsyamy* [*Roundabout Ways*] by Oksana Ivanenko (but in men's works the orphanage is portrayed sublimely: as the place of a new person formation, for example, *Prybluda* [*Newcomer*] by Stepan Vasylchenko, *Divchynka z shlyakhu* [*The Girl from the Path*] and *Inzheneri* [*Engineers*] by Andriy Holovko, *Vurkahany* [*Bandits*] by Ivan Mykytenko, *Zemlya obitovana* [*The Promised Land*] by Leonid Pervomaisky).

But depicting of the habitual relationship has its own specifics. The "conquest" of a woman in men's literature of that time had a symbolic meaning. Traditionally, the woman

went to the winner, because it gave him the opportunity to establish himself in the future: the next generations. However, such a prospect is rare in women's literature. For example, the characters of the novel *Traktorobud* Halyna Klynko and Leta Azarova do not find new husbands and they focus on self-realization in work. The character of Orlivna's story *Ilishva*, crippled by her husband, unable to be united with her comrade-in-love, Komsomol member, so the new order does not win either in her life or in her community of Syrian migrants: the husband for the abuse of his wife is not punished in any way.

The story of Horpyna from the novel *Za pluhom* is indicative: when her husband died in the war, she couples with her first love, Karpo, despite the fact that she was a Bolshevik activist and he was the ataman of the detachment of irregular troops of the Ukrainian People's Republic. Her state is expressed by the words: "despair, passion and remorse"²², but, as she explained to her friend earlier, she distinguished between personal female happiness, politics (revolution) and motherhood, and refused to sacrifice love for the sake of the revolution or for the sake of children (however, as well as vice versa). Karpo has been shot by the Bolsheviks right in front of her, and she avoids arrest because of a severe nervous illness. In the end of the novel, the German Karl, who worked for Horpyna as a prisoner of war during the First World War, returns to her and joins the commune. This international unity is quite uncharacteristic: mixed marriages between the peoples of the Soviet Union, often with Russians, were promoted in Soviet times, which was due to the policy of assimilation. And marriages with foreigners became the reason for arrest and concentration camp in Stalin's times. Therefore, a symbolic victory could not belong to foreigners in literature. But Karl does not defeat the warring parties, and Horpyna's feelings are caused by his care and kindness, qualities uncharacteristic for the then understanding of masculinity.

The portrayal of women's protest against oppression and the humiliating position of women in the new state became the reasons why these works or authoresses were removed from the history of Ukrainian literature by the Soviet regime. These texts undermined the idea of the significant achievements of the Soviet government in the issue of gender equality, as it was officially proclaimed. But this anti-Soviet component did not help to return these texts to cultural circulation in the post-Soviet period, because it also contradicted the national narrative, in particular, in terms of portraying a woman as responsible for the reproduction of the nation. In the men's texts of that time (Khylyovy, Ulas Samchuk, Stepan Tudor), there is often a character Maria, who represents the Mother of God and Ukraine at the same time. The birth of children symbolizes the reproduction of the nation or the creation (birth) of a new society. Women's texts are less inclined to give a symbolic meaning to motherhood,²³ but they significantly problematize it, in particular, women raise the issue of conscious motherhood. The characters of the analyzed works want to decide for themselves whether to give birth to a child or not. Zably's character Halyna Klynko [*Traktorobud*] plans

her life herself: having married during her student years, she terminated her pregnancy to complete her studies. But having decided to give birth, she even breaks up with her husband, who wanted to focus on work and have no children. The trauma from the child's death destroys her desire to have any children and she tries to find solace in her work in the Far East. The paradox of the situation is that the character's motherhood was a deliberate choice, not a coercion of circumstances, but at the same time she neglected self-realization in the role of a mother, shifting the care of the child to her mother, Halyna's motherhood was deprived of emotional experience. Halyna is not given the role of guardian of the cultural and value heritage of tradition and she is outside the nation-making narrative.

The main event of Alexandra Svekla's story *Nadlomleni sertsem* [*Broken by Heart*] is a meaningful rejection of lonely motherhood. The main character Iryna, the "new woman," who is independent of men both financially and emotionally, decides to give birth to a child and bring him up according to her own views. But during pregnancy, she understands that the child cannot be regarded as her private property, especially as a means of self-realization. She understands that she will not be able to raise a child outside of society, which has its own view of children from single-parent families. The fates of familiar women, dependent on patriarchal upbringing, turn pregnancy into a "dull, nagging pain" that, characteristically, went out of the head and spread throughout the body. Unable to withstand the internal conflict between ideology and practice, she terminates pregnancy in a barbaric way, killing an already formed healthy child. The authoress asserts a woman's right to make decisions about her own body and her future in such a wild way. The ending of the story, however, is a happy one: the main character gets married to someone dear to her and gives birth to a child, but pregnancy and motherhood are already out of the plot. Thus, the story criticizes the model of motherhood, promoted by the Bolsheviks, according to which all the care of the child should be taken over by the state (Iryna is not going to give up her role as an educator and considers it to be the main one). It also criticizes the patriarchal model in which a mother and children were dependent on a father and criticizes the national model in which a mother was passing on the cultural and emotional heritage of the community:

"He was singing doina (lullaby – S.Zh.) [...] and it was telling about the eternal humility and longing of the former Moldovan slave, who had worn it for centuries and had still not got rid of it, it was absorbed by him *with his mother's milk*, it entangled his brain with a net, *and to the sounds of the doina-lullaby that his mother had sung, he froze in this obedience to someone* (italics mine. – S.Zh.)"²⁴

The Moldavian doina in the Ukrainian text testifies to the Svekla's understanding of maternal experience as universal. And in other texts of this period, the national experience is inferior to the gender one: motherhood becomes the basis for mutual understanding between the Ukrainian peasant-woman Sekleta, who came to the city in 1905 to profit from the



Jewish pogroms, and the Jewess Beylychka, crippled in those pogroms (Cherednychenko's *Pohromshchysya* [*The participant in pogroms*]). Sympathizing with Beylychka as a mother, Secleta offers to take her and her children to Secleta's home for the winter. And Beylychka, in turn, influences Secleta's decision to send her children to school. Maternal experience also initiates understanding in family conflict in the poem by Troyanker: the traditional Jewish family does not accept a granddaughter who is not like them ("Mene tato prohnay I prokliav" [Dad drove me away and cursed me]): "And Dad cannot forgive that I have a child from a "goy". Well, my mother said: "And you would come someday with 'that'."²⁵

The representation of motherhood by women writers of the 1920s and 1930s outside of ideologies contrasts with the way it is portrayed by women writers in Western Ukraine at the same time. Olena Teliha sharply criticizes the traditional image of a mother focused on interests of the family rather than the nation in her article "Yakymy nas prahnete?" [Which one do you want us to be?] (1935). Instead, the poetess claims that her contemporary woman strives to be "an equal and loyal ally of men in the struggle for life, and most importantly, for the nation"²⁶. The influence of these ideas is tracked in the artistic discourse of Iryna Wilde's trilogy *Metelyky na shpylkakh* [*Butterflies on Pins*] (1935–1939). Its character Darka Popovych participates in the national movement and persistently receives education, but she sees her mission in the birth of children and upbringing of new citizens. She refuses the groom because she does not see him as a partner in raising a "strong race". At the same time, her desire to have a child is conveyed in comparisons with nature (flowers, fruits), and devoid of any hints of desire, which is characterized as sinful or shameful. Thus, motherhood is shown to be subservient to the needs of the nation, and women are made responsible for the upbringing of citizens.

Conclusions

Seeking to distinguish between memory and myth, Duncan S.A. Bell introduces the concept of mythscape – "the temporally and spatially extended discursive realm wherein the struggle for control of people's memories and the formation of nationalist myths is debated, contested and subverted incessantly. The mythscape is the page upon which the multiple and often conflicting nationalist narratives are (re)written; it is the perpetually mutating repository for the

representation of the past for the purposes of the present"²⁷. It seems that the history of Ukrainian literature of the 1920s and 1930s is just such a discursive field that has replaced the reconstruction of the past. The independence of Ukraine made it possible to review the history of literature of the 1920s and 1930s, and determined the principle of its reevaluation. In the conditions of state creation, the nation-making narrative was an effective instrument of consolidation, so the main theme of this period was the national liberation struggle and the formation of a modern nation. From this point of view, the literature of the 1920s and 1930s has been considered in educational courses since the 1990s.

Women's literature of those times was actualized partially in accordance with the needs of the national narrative: attention was mainly paid to 1) historical prose; 2) repressed women writers – victims of the Bolshevik regime; and 3) local women writers in the regions. In scientific discourse, episodes in the history of women writers are considered as part of the history of the national struggle or the formation of a modern nation. Of course, women writers also contributed to this, but such representation greatly limits the female experience of those times. An analysis of female literature from the 1920s and 30s reveals quite different topics and issues from male ones, which is determined by the distinct experiences. The women writers problematize the participation of women in hostilities, remind of the importance of women's labor in enterprises and in agriculture in the absence of men involved in the war. Describing the Bolshevik reforms, women attach equal importance to changes in management and forms of ownership as well as to the new norms of family and maternal law. Women's initiative in the organization of nurseries, kindergartens and entrepreneurship is becoming an important topic. The literature reflects the rapid expansion of the range of characters' professions, but at the same time shows the complexity of self-realization, especially when it is necessary to combine profession and motherhood. At this time, women speak more openly about cathexis, challenging patriarchal norms.

The literature of this period undermined the idea of Soviet achievements in the field of gender equality and contradicted the national narrative of women's responsibility for reproducing the nation. This is probably why it fell into double oblivion: first within the Soviet canon, and then within the national one.

Notes:

1. Yuriy Lavrinenko, "Vid uporiadnyka" [From Editor], in *Rozstriliane Vidrozzennia* [Executed Renaissance] (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2004), 12.
2. Bohdan Kravtsiv, *Na bahrianomu koni revolutsii* (New York: Prolog, 1960), 30–32.
3. Anthony Smith, "Memory and Modernity: Reflections on Ernest Gellner's Theory of Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 2, no. 3 (1996): 383.
4. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.
5. I use "nationalism" only as one of the key projects of modernity, not as radical movement.
6. Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race, and Nationalism," in *Dangerous liaisons: gender, nation, and postcolonial perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 90.
7. Nira Yuval-Davis, "Nationalist Projects and Gender Relations," *Narodna umjetnost* 40, no. 1 (2003): 16

8. Joane Nagel "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21, no. 2 (1998): 243.
9. Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 45.
10. Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Bilym po bilomu: Zhinky u hromadskomu zhytti Ukrainy 1884–1939* [White on White. Women in Ukrainian Community Life, 1884–1939] (Kyiv: Lybid, 1995), 27.
11. *Ibid.*, 14.
12. Maxim Tarnawsky, "Feminism, Modernism, and Ukrainian Women," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, no. 2 (1994): 31–32.
13. *Ibid.*, 32.
14. Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernisty, marksysty i natsia: ukrainska literaturna dyskusia 1920–h rokiv* [Modernists, Marxists, and the Nation: Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s] (Kyiv: Nika-Centr, 2013), 256.
15. Katerina Clark, *Sovetskij roman: istoriya kak ritual* [The Soviet Novel: History as a Rite] (Ekaterinburg: Izd-vo Uralskogo un-ta, 2002), 102–103.
16. See Kate Millett, *Seksualna polityka* [Sexual Politics] (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1998), 277–285.
17. Robert Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 67–92.
18. Varvara Cherednichenko, "Za Pluhom" in *Chervony Shliah* 10 (1926), 70.
19. Maria Halych, *Drukarka* (Kyiv: Masa, 1927), 54.
20. *Zhinky u hornyli modernizatsiyi* [Women in the Crucible of Modernization], ed. Oksana Kis (Kharkiv: Klub simejnoho dozvilla, 2017), 138.
21. Varvara Cherednichenko, "Berezovyi sik" [Birch Sap], in *Moja karjera: Zhinocha proza 20-h rokiv* [My Career: Women's prose of the 1920s] (Kyiv: Tempora, 2017), 291–292.
22. Varvara Cherednichenko, "Za Pluhom," *Chervony Shliah* 10 (1926): 83.
23. See more in S. Zhygun, "Ребенок – это моя беда и радость, это нерешенный вопрос в моей жизни": материнство в творчестве украинских писательниц 1920-х – первой половины 1930-х годов," *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* (2020): 27–57.
24. Alexandra Svekla, "Nadlomleni sertsem" [Broken by Heart], in *Moja karjera: Zhinocha proza 20-h rokiv* [My Career: Women's prose of the 1920s] (Kyiv: Tempora, 2017), 386.
25. Raisa Troyanker, *Poesii* [Poems] (Cherkasy: vyd. Chabanenko Y, 2009), 80.
26. Olena Teliha, *Vybrani tvory* [Selected Works] (Kyiv: Smoloskyp., 2006), 101.
27. Duncan S. A. Bell, "Mythscapes: memory, mythology, and national identity" *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2003): 66.

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