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УКРАЇНОЗНАВЧИЙ КОМПОНЕНТ ЛІТЕРАТУРНИХ ТВОРІВ ПИСЬМЕННИКІВ США ЯК ДЖЕРЕЛО ФОРМУВАННЯ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ ДІТЕЙ ТА ЮНАЦТВА

Анотація. Художня література має великий виховний потенціал. Новочасна зарубіжна література, до якої прийнято відносити твори, написані від 90-х рр. ХХ ст. і до сьогодні, розмаїта за змістом і за формою. Певне місце у творчому здобутку письменників США становлять автори, які мають українське походження (Юрій Тарнавський, Аскольд Мельничук, Ірена Забитко, Олександр Мотиль, Аня Юрчишин, Марина Левицька, Орест Пелех, Олена Дженнінгс, Дзвіня Орловська та ін.). Їхні твори написані англійською мовою, проте тематично вони тісно пов'язані з Україною: українознавча проблематика виразно представлена в їхньому здобутку. Цей пласт діаспорної художньої літератури практично невідомий українському учнівству та студентству. А втім, він може слугувати ефективним засобом виховання духовності, національно-патріотичних почуттів, історичної пам'яті, оскільки порушує важливі й особливо актуальні з огляду на сучасні виклики, російську агресію проблеми національної ідентичності, усвідомлення свого національного «Я». Об'єктом вивчення стали твори американських письменників українського походження: Айрін Забитко (книги «Невміте небо», «Коли Люба покидає дім», оповідання «Зобов'язання»), Аскольда Мельничука «Будинок вдів» та ін. На прикладі роману А. Мельничука «Будинок вдів» та оповідання І. Забитко «Зобов'язання» (збірка новел «Коли Люба покидає дім») проаналізовано способи художнього відтворення історичної пам'яті, показано її зв'язок з травматичним досвідом насильства, втрати батьківщини й еміграції. Художню модель пам'яті І. Забитко створює через жіночу перспективу переживання минулого (твір «Зобов'язання»). Цих авторів об'єднує те, що вони народилися в сім'ях українців, які емігрували до США після Другої світової війни. Це покоління емігрантів цікаве з огляду культурної асиміляції, вони – носії подвійної ідентичності, і тому їм «треба бути дуже сильним, щоб жити з двома ідентичностями».

Ключові слова: сучасна зарубіжна література, американські письменники українського походження, українська діаспора, еміграція, майбутні педагоги, діти, юнацтво, історична пам'ять, національна ідентичність, патріотизм, художні твори.

UKRAINIAN STUDIES COMPONENT IN THE WORKS OF AMERICAN WRITERS AS A SOURCE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Abstract. The purpose of the article is to analyze the Ukrainian studies component in the literary works of selected American writers as a source for shaping the national identity of children and youth.

Fiction possesses a significant educational potential. Contemporary world literature, encompassing literary works created from the 1990s to the present, is diverse in both content and form. A notable contribution is made by American authors of Ukrainian origin, including Yuriy Tarnawsky, Askold Melnychuk, Irene Zabytko, Alexander Motyl, Anya Yurchyshyn, Marina Lewycka, Orest Pelekh, Olena Jennings, Dzvinia Orlovsky, and others. While their literary works are written in English, thematically, they are deeply connected with Ukraine, with Ukrainian studies prominently represented in their creative output. This layer of diaspora literature is virtually unknown to Ukrainian students and learners. Nonetheless, it serves as an effective medium for fostering spirituality, national-patriotic sentiments, and historical memory, addressing issues of national identity and the realization of one's national self, which are especially critical in the face of contemporary challenges, such as Russian aggression. This study examines the works of American writers of Ukrainian descent, including Irene Zabytko (notably «The Sky Unwashed», «When Luba Leaves Home», and the short story «Obligation»), Askold Melnychuk («The House of Widows»). The analysis highlights literary depictions of historical memory, illustrating its connection to traumatic experiences of violence, loss of homeland, and emigration, with Zabytko presenting her narrative through a female perspective. These authors share a common heritage, having been born into families of Ukrainians who emigrated to the United States after World War II. This generation of emigrants is notable for its cultural assimilation, bearing dual identities, which necessitates great resilience to live with such duality.

Keywords: contemporary world literature, American writers of Ukrainian descent, Ukrainian diaspora, emigration, future educators, children, youth, historical memory, national identity, patriotism, literary works.



INTRODUCTION

The problem formulation. Literature is considered one of the oldest forms of art. Its role in the life of an individual pursuing education is significant, multifaceted, and multifunctional. Literary works act as a source of personal spiritual development, encouraging a deeper understanding of history and culture. Fiction has the potential to enrich the spiritual lives of children and youth, fostering a high level of cultural awareness and aesthetic taste. Moreover, it cultivates patriotism and civic responsibility, developing individuals with a strong sense of national identity. These functions are particularly relevant in the context of globalization, Russian aggression, and the mass migration of Ukrainians abroad due to war and other challenges arising from the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war.

The Ukrainian studies component of modern world literature, which represents a valuable resource for shaping the national identity of children and youth, holds immense potential. Scholars (e.g., Ageyeva, 2014; Bokshan, 2021; Nakashydzhe, 2020; Proskurova, 2009) define national identity as a priority factor in the preservation and development of nations. We believe the initial step in this direction involves incorporating works by modern international writers that explore Ukrainian themes into the curriculum of higher educational institutions. The interest of these authors in Ukraine, its history, and its present circumstances, alongside their examination of key issues of national identity and historical memory, serves as an incentive for students to read and analyze these works thoughtfully and critically.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Ukrainian science includes individual studies dedicated to the issue of national identity in the works of international authors. For instance, V. Ageyeva examines identity through the lens of modern Ukrainian literature (Ageyeva, 2014); I. Dumchak characterizes Ukrainian themes in the 20th century within the creative heritage of American writer Askold Melnyczuk (Dumchak, 2006); H. Bokshan analyzes the national identity problems in Melnyczuk's literary works (Bokshan, 2021); M. Koval studies memory and the legacy creation of mnemonic landscapes in Ukrainian-American ethnic literature (Koval, 2019); O. Vechirko explores national identity in the exotic short stories of Prosper Мїримїе (Vechirko, 2024); I. Nakashydzhe examines theories of national identity in diaspora literature (Nakashydzhe, 2020); and S. Proskurova investigates national identity discourse in Ukrainian and Polish humanities at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (Proskurova, 2009). Other contributions (Trukhan, 2022) further expand on these themes, yet the specific focus of this study remains largely unexamined in prior research, with few exceptions (Bokshan, 2021; Dumchak, 2006; Koval, 2019).

THE AIM AND RESEARCH TASKS

The purpose of the article is to analyze the Ukrainian studies component in the literary works of selected American writers as a source for shaping the national identity of children and youth.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employs general scientific methods, including analysis, synthesis, and generalization, as well as comparative analysis and historical retrospection. These methods were used to examine the representation of Ukrainian theme in the works of American writers of Ukrainian descent. The study also explores how these writers depict historical events in Ukraine during the 20th century within modern world literature. Furthermore, the research highlights educational issues touched by these authors, including national identity, historical memory, emigration, self-identification, human dignity, patriotism, high moral values, and the Chernobyl tragedy.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The issue of national identity has been a focus of attention for both Ukrainian and international scholars. Ukrainian researchers such as V. Ageyeva (Ageyeva, 2014), H. Bokshan (Bokshan, 2021), I. Nakashydzhe (Nakashydzhe, 2020), S. Proskurova (Proskurova, 2009), and L. Nahorna (Nahorna, 2002) have made significant contributions to this field. Similarly, international scholars, including E. Smith (Smith, 1994), have explored this topic. These authors argue that national identity in Ukraine is not merely a category of humanities but also a political and cultural reality, as emphasized by L. Nahorna, B. Savchuk, and others (Nahorna, 2002, p. 30–43).

O. Shostak, for instance, describes national identity in modern humanities as a literary category. She asserts that literature, as a cultural artifact, aims to reinterpret and preserve national collective and group behaviors, transforming into a systemic element of collective memory and serving as an ideological focus that connects cultural traditions, history, and individual self-awareness (Shostak, 2020, p. 5).

I. Nakashydzhe highlights that for many members of the diaspora, literary creativity became a means of expressing identity, with its essence revealed through the art of the word in the context of the author's, reader's, and character's national identity (Nakashydzhe, 2020, p. 137–138).

American writers of Ukrainian origin, such as Yuriy Tarnawsky, Askold Melnyczuk, Irene Zabytko, Alexander Motyl, Anya Yurchyshyn, Marina Lewycka, Orest Pelekh, Olena Jennings, and Dzvinya Orlovsky, represent a case where individuals maintain their ethnopsychological identity and national identity despite historical, military, or political disruptions that have severed their direct ties to Ukraine. Through their creative works in English, which serves as a global lingua franca, these authors aim to share Ukraine's narrative with the world.

Many of these authors belong to families that emigrated during the third wave of Ukrainian migration to the United States, which, according to researcher M. Kuropas, included about 85,000 individuals (Kuropas, 1972, p. 43). These were predominantly refugees who moved from European displaced persons camps to America during and after World War II. Kuropas identifies this diaspora as a group navigating dual identity and loyalty, shaped by factors such as political and cultural conditions in both Ukraine and the United States.

Writers such as A. Melnyczuk, I. Zabytko, A. Yurchyshyn, and others reflect these themes in their works. Their literary contributions are particularly relevant for Ukrainian youth—both in Ukraine and the diaspora—touching upon issues of national



identity, historical memory, and cultural connection to Ukraine. They inspire love for Ukraine, encourage exploration of historical roots, and highlight the enduring influence of Ukrainian heritage.

Irene Zabytko is an American writer of Ukrainian descent, a journalist, and an educator. Born on October 19, 1954, in Chicago, she grew up in a Ukrainian neighborhood known as «Ukrainian Village», where she attended St. Nicholas School. Despite her parents' wishes for her to become a doctor, Zabytko pursued a passion for writing. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1983 and later earned a master's degree in 1991 from Vermont College at Norwich University. She has worked as a journalist, literature teacher, and English instructor, including roles at universities in Vermont and Ukraine. Her literary works, including the novel «The Sky Unwashed» (2000) and the story collection «When Luba Leaves Home» (2003), received critical acclaim. Notably, «The Sky Unwashed» became a bestseller and was recognized as a Book Sense '76 Pick and Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection. This novel focuses on the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster and has been included on New York Times bestseller lists.

More information can be found on Irene Zabytko's website (Irene Zabytko) and in her interview with Andriy Horodysky at the Ukrainian Institute of America in the program «Books at the Institute» (2021). In this interview, the writer discussed her works, including «The Sky Unwashed», «When Luba Leaves Home», and her newly released collection of short stories, «The Days of Miracle and Wonder». These stories feature «well-known» and «infamous» figures with historical, political, spiritual, and even «sinister» ties to Ukraine. Most of the narratives are set in Ukraine, either shortly before or after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was the time when the country was suffering from severe economic and social challenges. Among the characters are a man aspiring to be Elvis, a disgruntled cosmonaut, an Olympic swimmer enduring hard times, and a brilliant actor working in a Siberian Gulag.

Zabytko's works often explore Ukrainian themes, such as in her short story «Obligation», which delves into historical memory and trauma. This story, translated into Ukrainian in 2007 by Ostap Dzondza.

Luba's story is a typical narrative of children of Ukrainian immigrants, where it is impossible to fully leave behind the «old world» and the Ukrainian environment. They can only feel comfortable somewhere in between: as both Americans and Ukrainians, that is, with dual identities (exotic Ukrainians to Americans and Americanized descendants to their Ukrainian parents) (Sokha, 2020). Irene Zabytko emphasizes that she is equally happy being both Ukrainian and American, though she notes that this is not easy: "One must be very strong to live with two identities" (Zabytko, 2003).

Her most recently published book «The Days of Miracle and Wonder» also ties back to Ukraine and the author's Ukrainian roots. The events unfold in Ukraine, Russia, Siberia, Bethlehem, and Tuva. The book consists of nine fascinating and captivating stories, many of which have happy endings and reveal the historical era—the post-Soviet period, as well as the socio-political, cultural, artistic, and economic life of Ukrainians against the backdrop of a complex epoch (Zabytko, 2021).

Scholar M. Koval (Koval, 2019), using the example of A. Melnychuk's novel «The House of Widows» (2008) and Irene Zabytko's short story «Obligations» (from the short story collection «When Luba Leaves Home») (2003), analyzed the ways in which historical memory is artistically portrayed. She demonstrated its connection to the traumatic experiences of violence, loss, and emigration. The artistic model of memory is created through the female perspective of experiencing the past (in the work «Obligations»). At the center of the narrative are two heroines: Khrystyia Leskiv, an immigrant who arrived in the United States from a German displaced persons camp and became a self-sufficient American citizen, and the homeless, mentally unstable Anya, who wanders the streets and train stations, dirty and hungry. Anya once saved Khrystyia when her mother died under mysterious circumstances in the camp, protecting her from loneliness, starvation, and death, and later brought her to the American continent. Anya remembers a Virgin dressed in a uniform, holding a child in the German displaced persons camp, whom «the German guards buried to death», and she embroiders a towel to decorate an icon of the Virgin. Khrystyia Leskiv is determined to learn the circumstances of her mother Maria's death, aiming to «reconcile the present and the past» (Irene Zabytko, 2007).

Another notable writer, Anya Yurchyshyn, represents a younger generation of American authors with Ukrainian heritage. Her memoir, «My Dead Parents» (2018) (Yurchyshyn, 2018), was recognized by Esquire as one of the best nonfiction books of the year. In the memoir, Yurchyshyn explores her complex relationship with her parents after their deaths, uncovering hidden aspects of their lives and her Ukrainian heritage. Through letters and conversations with family and friends, she investigates her father's move to Ukraine during the early 1990s and his mysterious death. Yurchyshyn's work reflects the struggle of diaspora children navigating dual identities, capturing the tension between their American upbringing and Ukrainian ancestry.

These authors illustrate how diaspora literature serves as a bridge between the Ukrainian homeland and its global community. Their works foster a deeper understanding of national identity, historical memory, and cultural continuity.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Fiction holds significant educational potential. Modern world literature, encompassing works from the 1990s to the present, is diverse in content and form. American authors of Ukrainian descent, such as Yuriy Tarnawsky, Askold Melnyczuk, Irene Zabytko, Alexander Motyl, Anya Yurchyshyn, Marina Lewycka, Orest Pelekh, Olena Jennings, and Dzvina Orlovsky, have made notable contributions to this field. Although written in English, their works are thematically intertwined with Ukraine, prominently featuring Ukrainian studies. This layer of diaspora literature is virtually unknown to Ukrainian students but offers valuable tools for fostering spirituality, national-patriotic sentiments, and historical memory.

The exploration of Ukrainian themes by international authors serves as a powerful motivator for students to engage with these works critically and analytically. These authors address the complexities of identity and memory, often



shaped by the historical experiences of their immigrant families, such as emigration during and after World War II. By depicting these narratives, they emphasize the challenges and resilience involved in maintaining dual identities.

The research analyzed the Ukrainian studies component in the literary works of authors like Irene Zabytko, Askold Melnyczuk, and Anya Yurchyshyn. Through literary analysis, the research highlighted how the works of these authors reflect historical memory, trauma, and the challenges of emigration. Female perspectives, such as those portrayed in Zabytko's works, enrich the understanding of historical and personal identity.

The second generation of immigrants provides a unique perspective on cultural assimilation and dual identity. Their narratives intertwine personal memory with collective historical experience, creating a complex cultural and historical amalgam that contributes to the broader discourse on national identity.

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