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Disordered Identity in Marina Lewycka's Novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*: Imagological Explications and Metamodernistic Outlines

Disordered identity in Marina Lewycka's novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*: imagological explications and metamodernistic outlines. In this paper it is outlined that Marina Lewycka's novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* portrays Ukrainian identity in a special traumatic way. Ukrainian emigrant Mykola Majevskyi writes his own history of Ukrainian tractors through revising the history of the Communist ideology in Ukraine. By describing the history of Ukraine before the Revolution (1917), the storyteller creates an idyllic representation of Ukrainians living in a peaceful and rustically marked place. M. Majewski's *History* has an anti-communist orientation and connects all affections of Ukrainians with philosophical and economical postulates of the communism of the Soviet version. The specific features of the Soviet Communism which resulted in the traumatic process of the Ukrainians are analyzed in the paper. The paper also evaluates the imagological implications.

Keywords: M. Lewycka, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, metamodernism, post-postmodernism, imagology, anticolonialism, history as trauma

Травмированная идентичность в романе Марины Левицкой *Краткая история тракторов по-украински*: имажологические экспликации и метамодернистские контуры. В статье на материале романа Марины Левицкой *Краткая история тракторов по-украински* анализируется специфика репрезентации украинской идентичности, которая представлена в тексте как колониально

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травмированная. Украинский эмигрант Николай Маевский пишет свою собственную историю об украинских тракторах, параллельно пересматривая историю возникновения и функционирования коммунистической идеологии в Украине. Описывая историю Украины до революции (1917), нарратор создает идиллическое представление об украинцах, живущих в тихом и бесконфликтном пространстве. *История* Н. Маевского имеет антикоммунистическую ориентацию и объясняет взаимосвязь между философией украинцев и экономическими постулатами коммунизма в его советской версии. Специфические черты советского коммунизма, повлекшие за собой травмы общественного и исторического сознания украинцев, анализируются в статье. Результаты имагологического исследования представлены в статье.

Ключевые слова: М. Левицкая, *Краткая история тракторов по-украински*, метамодернизм, пост-постмодернизм, имагология, антиколониализм, истории как травма

Theory of metamodernism

Marina Lewycka's novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005) was published in the cultural period related to the end of the postmodernism. In the novel, the discourse of peace vs. ideology is exploited in the personal story of Mykola Majewski, an old immigrant from Ukraine who arrived in the UK and who now has an intention to write his own history of the Ukrainian tractors revising at the same time the history of the Communist ideology in his original country and demonstrating the dangers of Communism there. The story provides the representation of Ukrainians as a peaceful nation never encroaching on someone else's territories. Describing the history of the revolutionary period (1917), the narrator (in fact, there are two narrators on the novel: Mykola who is writing about the tractors and his daughter Nadya) portrays it as a sort of romantic idyll emphasizing that Ukrainians for a long time had been living in a peaceful rustic world emancipated from the wars and conflicts: "describing his early childhood, it was idyllic: long summer and the boys running among the bare fields and then swimming naked in Sula"¹.

Besides, the novel exploits some postmodern techniques (reliance on narrative techniques, irony, fragmentation of discourses, playfulness, etc.) it also demonstrates the features of the post-postmodern paradigm (the playfulness connected with present time disappears when the novel revises historic narration related to the Holodomor, the Communist history of the Ukrainian people, etc.). Post-postmodernism as a cultural and philosophical paradigm represents new vision of reality: text exploits narrator's irony and sincere emotionality of the characters, physics and metaphysics, etc. In this way, it is reasonable to analyze the proposed Marina Lewycka's novel as a text which combines postmodern and post-postmodern (or metamodern) features. As I previously stated in some of my papers², post-post-

¹ M. Lewycka, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, London 2005, p. 47.

² D. Drozdovskyi, "Time after the End: New Frontiers for the Comparative Studies" *Expanding the Frontiers of Comparative Literature*, Korea 2010, pp. 152–158; D. Drozdovskyi, "Postmodern Literature:

modernism forces us to have not only cultural but also political transformations. Besides, the center of the post-postmodern identity is humanity with its true feelings (now we call this trans-sensuality) and not the sociopathic virtual identity that escaped from the "true" world with its cognitive, political, social, and economical problems. Post-postmodernism underlines that these days we need to form traditional human relations based on understanding and empathy with the help of technological innovations and applications. Raoul Eshelman analyzes the contemporary culture through the lens of performatism, a theory rooted in Eric Gans' generative anthropology. Metamodernism or post-postmodernism brings back beauty, wholeness and a whole slew of other metaphysical propositions, but only under very special, singular conditions that a text forces us to accept on its own terms.

One of the issues of American magazine *Adbusters* (No 88)³ discusses the post-postmodern situation analyzing it from political, social, and cultural modes. The issue is opened with rhetoric narration, e.g. "The current rupture moment has captured us. We are thoroughly jaded by the dreams of "progress" associated with modernity and capitalism, but unable to venture in another direction. Can we confront this situation? Can we be the ones that "we" have been waiting for?" After this, in the magazine, we have a set of similar questions like "Rupture or Rapture? (This millennium-long human adventure of ours may now be reaching an apex?)" ; "Is postmodernity slipping into something new?"

In 2009, an interdisciplinary conference *Writing History after Postmodernism* took place in Stuttgart, Germany. The aim of the conference was

to suggest methods for overcoming the uncertainties of the post-postmodernist academic environment. But Nottingham Trent University sociologist Mike Featherstone quotes a newspaper announcing in August 1977 that postmodernism is dead and that post-postmodernism is now the thing. Two years before Jean-François Lyotard said that he took postmodern to mean an "incredulity toward metanarratives" and gave Generation X its cogito ergo sum; four years before Jean Baudrillard unveiled the "precession of simulacra" [...]; and seven years before Fredric Jameson crowned postmodernism the "cultural dominant" of our time⁴.

Taking into account the discussion about post-postmodernism M. Epstein considers that "if in postmodernism even the language of feelings was subjected to the use of quotation marks, then at present quotation marks have penetrated the word so deeply"⁵. In the post-postmodern period, we have a true human emotional feeling

Ruined Aesthetics or New Frontiers", *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 2011, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 132–143.

³ For more information visit the online version of *Adbusters*, www.adbusters.org/magazine/88 (access: 27.05.2017).

⁴ A. Kirby, *Successor states to an empire in free fall*, 27 May 2010, <http://timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=411731> (access: 11.03.2017).

⁵ M. Epstein, *The Place of Postmodernism in Postmodernity*, 2012, http://www.focusing.org/apm_papers/epstein.html (access: 12.08.2017).

(not a trans-personal recitation of someone else's feeling) based on empathy and the presupposition of *I*.

More and more thinkers come to the conclusion that the situation of the present days can be featured as a return to *metamodernism* (the notion is provided by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin Van den Akker.) As we know from the Ancient times, *meta-* is normally used to mark something which goes further and after something. For example, we can name Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The original meaning of this title underlines that this sections goes just after the previous part *Physics* and is not a special spiritual section as we sometimes understand this term now.

Today, metamodernism is explained as a new philosophy and cultural paradigm based on new sensuality and emotionality. It reinforces sincerity and psychological adequacy which means that the reality is not perceived as a set of virtual transformations of various simulacra (Baudrillard). The hero of the postmodern novel cannot make any right logical decision; he or she represents the reflective mind that lives in the set of permanent transformations.

In 1980–1990s, Fukuyama's thesis about *the end of history* was recited by postmodernists. But now this idea does not work properly. In English/British literature of the 1990s (Byatt, Barnes, Lodge, Drabble, etc.) we have the new genre of the metafictional narratives (novels). What is more, the metamodernism is characterized by new understanding of reality. Helen Stühr-Rommereim (*Post-postmodernism-modernism* 2012) outlines that "Metamodernism takes a step past postmodern disaffection to seek out examples of oscillation (the 'meta' in metamodernism) between irony and sincerity, and the infusion of a tentative, somewhat self-conscious hopefulness into art." The scholar emphasizes this new type of oscillation between irony and sincerity in metamodernism. Metamodernistic reality provokes natural emotional responses, as in Shakespearean or classic texts that have a catharsis.

In the family novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* we also have an oscillation between irony and sincerity. In this novel written by the contemporary British author of Ukrainian origin (he parents arrived in the UK from Ukraine) Marina Lewycka, Ukrainian identity is portrayed in a broad historical context. In this text, tractors become a symbol of Ukrainian origin. Besides, the tractors are the agents in Mykola's historiographic imagination — this is the key concept of the novel to tell a history through the narration about a historical, cultural, and political symbol in itself. The author uses irony writing a story about present times but she is precisely serious talking about Ukrainian past when people were struggling against Russian imperial colonization.

Nobrow literature

A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian is a novel that has features of a nobrow text. In contemporary literary criticism, the traditional division of texts into low and

high literature is now complemented by another notion — a *nobrow literature* which exists between pop literature/pop culture and a sort of literary snobism. The concept of nobrow literature was explained by John Seabrook in his book *Nobrow. Culture Marketing. Marketing culture*⁶ in which he states that the concept of “highbrow” and “lowbrow” represent two types of users: snob, intellectual — and poor cultural demands and tastes. According to Seabrook, the term “nobrow” means a culture that exists outside the old hierarchy of tastes. I argue that Lewycka's in her novel establishes a genre corresponding to nobrow literature. Thus, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* has the features of “lowbrow” literature; on the other hand, it is a text with special ideological and linguistic patterns which revise Ukrainian history of the XX Century.

David Johnson in his *Popular and canonical* (2005) summarizes the distinction between two types of literature: 1) “popular, philistine, trivial”; 2) “high, elitist, avant-garde, classical, serious”⁷. Marina Lewycka aimed at combining the inherent features of “popular” and “elite” literature creating a special literary symbiosis. Ann Halligan, in *Popular fiction, logic and practice of literary field* (2004), systematized the features of pop fiction: heteronomic (oriented to as many readers as possible; it follows the logic of the books markets)⁸. Such a cultural product can be easily converted into a series of stories (e.g. Lewycka's family novel can be easily transformed into the film and the film into the sequel based on various stories and narrations demonstrated in the novel; heteronomic fiction normally delivers two stories: one from the present time and one from the past.) In contrast, highbrow fiction is marked with the following features: “autonomous (indifferent to public tastes)”, “cultural products of high level”, “limited production”, “creativity”, “associated with individual creativity”, “complicated text” “intelligent”, “associated with the world of art”, “harsh, abstract”⁹. The features of both types are represented in the analyzed novel.

Traumatic narrations and peaceful tractors

In the novel it is stated that the communist ideology destroyed Ukrainian idyll having transformed its people into slaves and formed a special mentality of those people. In the UK, Ludmilla, Mykola's late wife,

would walk half a mile down the High Street to save a penny off a bag of sugar. She never bought what she could make herself. My sister and I (Vera and Nadya, who is the narrator in this extract — **D.D.**) suffered humiliation in homemade dresses stitched up from market remnants. We were forced to endure traditional recipes and home baking when we craved junk food and white sliced bread. What she

⁶ Дж. Сибрук, *Nobrow. Культура маркетинга. Маркетинг культури*, Москва 2005.

⁷ D. Johnson, “Introduction to part 1”, [in:] *The Popular and Canonical. Debating Twentieth-Century Literature. 1940–2000*, London-New York 2005, p. 8.

⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

⁹ С. Філоненко, *Масова література в Україні: дискурс / гендер / жанр*, Донецьк 2011, s. 22.

couldn't make had to be bought secondhand. Shoes, coats, household things — someone else had always had them first, had chosen them, used them, then discarded them¹⁰.

Mykola Majewski in his history demonstrates a specific representation of Soviet Marxism and Communism as two profound ideologies oriented to create slaves from the people. The ideology destroyed the process of nation-building and had a negative impact on the Ukrainian national identity which was formed under the Soviet colonial pressure. For Mykola, tractors — the key image in the text — from the very beginning were designed to help people realize themselves in peaceful labor which, in turn, is the basis for stable and successful economy: "The first tractor was invented by John Fowler, a Quaker, an intelligent old man"¹¹. However, the Soviet ideology transformed the tractors into the weapons.

Anyway, the tractors in M. Lewycka's novel represent a symbol of peace and a sort of industrialized Ukrainian village; they seem to be a kind of metaphor of the Ukrainian identity represented in the novel mainly as rustic and peaceful. The tractor is a special tool for industrialization and a form of private property. However, it is important to underline that the tractors are not only the symbol of industrialization and modernization as a positive transformation of the society but also a Soviet symbol of human "colonization." The novel has a Russian doll-composition ("text in the text" like "matryoshka") as besides the novel about Mykola and his problems with a new wife (Nadya is a narrator in this part of the text) we also have *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, written by 84-year-old Mykola Majewski. His *Short History* demonstrates the peacefulness of Ukrainians represented in the novel as victims of ideologically oriented political games. In this story, Ukrainians never had a desire to fight for the land of other peoples. On the contrary, they have been exploited by *Red* (the *Communists*) and *White* (the *Denikintsi*) armies in a struggle for their own independent country in 1917.

Moreover, the famine (*Holodomor* in 1932–1933) is represented as a great tragedy in Majewski's story of Ukrainians. In his theory (which is proved, by the way, by contemporary historical interpretations provided by T. Snyder in *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*¹²), this phenomenon was initiated by Stalin who deliberately sought to destroy completely the Ukrainian nation. The narrator outlines the Ukrainians as a nation of farmers who are far from any ideology. However, this desire to be far from any ideology pushed Stalin and his regime to organize an artificial famine (*Holodomor*) against Ukrainian people. "Mother (Ludmilla) knew the nature of the ideology and what a hunger was. When she was twenty-one, Stalin discovered that hunger can be used as a political weapon against the Ukrainian *kulaks*"¹³.

¹⁰ M. Lewycka, op. cit., p. 18.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 51.

¹² T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010.

¹³ M. Lewycka, op. cit., p. 17.

She knew — and this knowledge never left her throughout her fifty years of life in England, and then seeped from her into the hearts of her children — she knew for certain that behind the piled-high shelves and abundantly stocked counters of Tesco and the Coop, hunger still prowls with his skeletal frame and gaping eyes, waiting to grab you and shove on a train, or onto a cart, or into that crowd of running fleeing people, and send you off on another journey where the destination is always death¹⁴.

Schopenhauer and post-romantic madness

Besides, I would like to note that it is emphasized that Mykola is influenced by Schopenhauer's ideas, in particular the relations between madness and genius. Nadya, the narrator, demonstrates Majewski as a completely romanticized Ukrainian man who flaunts his romantic dreams. However, this daydreaming gets into a dead-lock in relations with Valentina because the protagonist refuses to believe in deceit intentions of his wife. Mykola's new wife is portrayed in an ironical and, moreover, satirical way in the novel, e.g.:

She is an educated woman, by the way. The Ukrainian community in Peterborough has disowned her. They, too, are narrow-minded. They are not impressed with her views on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. "Nothing wrong with peasants. Mother was a peasant"; It is my father's great regret that both his children were daughters. Inferior intellectually, yet not flirtatious and feminine, as women should be, but strident, self-willed, disrespectful creatures. [...]

They will discuss art, literature, philosophy together in the evenings. She is a cultured woman, not a chatterbox peasant woman. He has already elicited her views on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, by the way, and she agrees with him in all respects. She, like him, admires Constructivist art and abhors neo-classicism. They have much in common¹⁵.

Valentina (new Mykola's wife) and her post-communism generation are immune to Ludmilla's (previous Mykola's wife) sufferings and what her generation had to undergo, "Ukraine is not a heaven and the Ukrainians are still troubled by lack of resources, scarcity of food, fall of hryvnia, national currency of Ukraine, outbreak of cholera, diphtheria, robbery, radioactive disaster, uranium smuggling, and religious abuses"¹⁶.

Marina Lewycka constructs her narration around the theme of Mykola's madness both as obsession and a clinical category (mental disorder: multiple sclerosis). Meanwhile, it is emphasized that he is the bearer of memory of the communist's crimes and anti/postcommunist traumas. The novel conveys Ukrainians as a non-aggressive nation that can only resort to quarrels within their community. What is more, these quarrels openly have a household orientation and are not lined to any ideological confrontation.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

Anyway, M.Lewycka focuses on the stereotypical descriptions and situations iterating the theme of the Ukrainian hunger in 1990s. A. Nejat Töngür, Y. Çevik state that

the 1990s were distinct with the transformation of Ukraine from a communist economy to a liberal system as an independent country. Although Ukraine had withdrawn behind an iron curtain in the 1940s, the country began to strive for adapting its monetary and economic systems to those of the Western European countries in the 1990s. Between the reconstitution of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945 and Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991, emigration from Ukraine to the Western European countries was minimal. The Ukrainian Diasporas mainly consisted of migrants and their descendants who had left the country in the interwar years and after the Second World War as refugees. Emigration gained pace in the 1990s, after Ukraine lifted restrictions on migration and eased the visa regime¹⁷.

The scholars outline that there is a lack of understanding of what happens in Ukraine after the Second World War. The immigrants who in 1939 and before 1945 left their native territories in Ukraine due to political reasons have a simulacrum (to some extent false) vision of contemporary Ukraine that achieved its political independence in 1991. The members of the Ukrainian Diaspora still have a pain as a result of the traumatic experience from the past, e.g.:

Ludmilla's bitter experiences during the Second World War, Nazi occupation, Stalin's purges, the labor camps, depravation, collective husbandry-kolkhoz, the famine, persecution, terror and destitution led her to life-long providence, frugality and tightfistedness. Especially, Stalin Era had long-lasting pejorative effects on her¹⁸.

The immigrants did not become the members of the new society in European countries and they live with a traumatic desire to be with Ukraine (that they lost drastically) and the fear that makes this desire impossible in real life. The immigrants are ready to help those who live in Ukraine now but they do not know how to rebuild the economy of the country and they have the inner fear of any close contacts with Ukrainians. Mykola supports Valentina in the UK but he has no idea of her real life in Ternopil and he even has no desire to get involved in deeper understanding of the reality in the independent Ukraine.

Nietzsche and the resentment

The Soviet society is depicted in the novel as a society of fear, terror, and total hatred. The Communist ideology sought to bring people against each other cultivating in the society the ideas of the permanent enemies, spies, deserters, etc. Thus,

¹⁷ A. Töngür Nejat, Yi. Çevik, "Migration to a consumer society: A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian by Marina Lewycka", *The Journal of International Social Research* 2013, vol. 6, issue 28, http://www.sosyalarastirmalar.com/cilt6/cilt6sayi28_pdf/tungurnejat.pdf (access: 8.09.2016).

¹⁸ Ibid.

all this created in people's minds the feeling of fear living in a *false reality* based on simulacra implemented in the ordinary people's lives (media propaganda through the official newspapers, messages from the bosses/directors, etc.):

In 1937, when his father returned to Kiev from Lugansk, the whole country was bathed in a miasma of paranoia. The paranoia was everywhere, in the most intimate slits of life: they poisoned relations between friends and colleagues, between teachers and students, between parents and children, between spouses. Enemies were everywhere¹⁹.

Ukrainian scholar Tamara Hundorova whose academic goals are related to contemporary culture (post-postmodernism) and the exploitation of Nietzsche's ideas (will to power, eternal recurrence/return, etc.) in literature texts points out that

the traumatized consciousness creates a traumatized body which is, however, not only a repository of new meanings but also a threat to consciousness. Then a traumatic neurosis destroys the normal perception of time, the past cannot be assimilated to the present moment of time. So the traumatic event returns the symptoms recurring dreams, gestures, stigmata. The traumatic transgressive past is present in our time; vindictive, it dominates over the present. Modernism was fixed on the past, could not get rid of it, the sick traumatic past²⁰.

Home cruelty in Mykola's family is connected with the attempt to protect his private territory from the *alien* associated with Valentina. She arrives to the UK (Peterborough, England) from Ternopil (in telephone conversations with her family and friends in Ukraine the lady often speaks Russian which is not typical for that part of the country). In Europe, she was seeking a better life for herself and her son. Moreover, she does not want to return home to Ukraine.

In the novel, Lewycka sheds light on the Civil War between the Russian White Army and the Soviet Red Army, the occupation of the country by the Red Army of Soviets, the White Russian Imperial Army, the Polish Army and the German Army consecutively in the 1910s and 1920s; the purges, the Soviet invasion, their seizing of the entire harvest in Ukraine, the subsequent famine and the death of 7–10 million Ukrainians, the Soviet Labour Camps in the 1930s; the World War II, the Nazi occupation, German Labour Camps in the 1940s²¹.

Thus, Ludmilla, Nikolai's late wife in the novel, is demonstrated as a woman who had to endure and survive all these miseries. Her lifestyle in the UK was shadowed by unpleasant memories and experiences. The past traumas revealed in her mind determine her physical and mental isolation in the Ukrainian Diaspora of Great Britain. She needs Ukraine and has a strong desire to return to Ukraine; however, her memories based on the visions of the constant confrontations between different armies in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s make her return to Ukraine not possible. As a result, she dies in the novel. Ludmilla's narration represents the discourse of Ukraine

¹⁹ M. Lewycka, op. cit., p. 160.

²⁰ Т. Гундорова, *Транзитна культура. Симптоми постколоніальної травми: статті та есеї*, Київ 2013, с. 16.

²¹ M. Lewycka, op. cit., pp. 45–46, 58–60, 181, 216–217, 245–249.

based on the psychological traumas that cannot be healed and that lead a person to the mental and physical death.

Ukrainians, due to Mykola's point of view, are excellent innovators in various spheres of technology. However, when the tractors were used with military intentions, when they were transformed into tanks (this metaphor is revealed in the *History* written by Mykola), then, up to the character's opinion, the history of Ukraine and Europe (because there is a great number of Europeans and, first of all, Britons, among the inventors of the tractors) generally turned the wrong way. In the Soviet times, the tractor was transformed into the weapon, and this transformation took place not at the Ukrainian factories but in Leningrad (the Russian city renamed as St.-Petersburg on September 6th, 1991). Thus, the covert militarization of the Soviet space is stressed. Unlike Soviet Russia, such situations connected with the usage of the technologies against people did not happen in Ukraine:

The first tractor manufacturers wanted to forge swords into plows but dark times came and it transpired that plows have to be forged into swords. In order to meet the needs of New Economic Policy, Kharkiv locomotive factory, which once produced 1000 tractors per week, was transported to Chelyabinsk, over Ural area and, in accordance with the decree of K. Voroshilov — the National Commissar for Defense — was converted to produce tanks. The Chief designer was Mykhaylo Koshkin who graduated Leningrad Institute and worked at Kirov factory till 1937. It was a discreet, intelligent man whose genius was brutally used by Stalin to create a Soviet military power. The first tank of Koshkin, A-20, had the original wheel-caterpillar, 45-mm cannon and armor that could withstand a large-caliber bullet²².

Anyway, it should be noted that one of Mykola's daughters participates in the anti-military demonstrations in the UK. She opposes hydrogen bombs and proclaims peace: "*I believed I couldn't reach my maturity if we didn't get rid of those hydrogen bombs*"²³. Mykola's daughter is associated with the anti-military actions realized by young people who belong to the migrants of the second level. Such protests cannot happen in Ukraine as in the result of a seventy-year Soviet ideological colonization people there have no efforts to organize anti-military demonstrations.

According to Mykola, the communist ideology pushed the people to remodel tools into weapons and the economic system made them slaves:

It was Marx who says that the production relations are included into production structure. For example, let us consider the tractor. In the 19th century, the first tractors were produced in the workshops by the artisans. Now they are produced on assembly lines and the end of which stands a man with a stopwatch in his hands. He measures the process — (Father stresses the word "process" with pleasure.) — in order to increase the efficiency, the worker must work harder²⁴.

In addition, M. Majewski emphasizes that there are new ways to cause a painful and slow death. Imagination, perverted by bloodthirstiness, resulted in previously unseen tortures and the neighbors of the past became the real enemies whose mercy

²² Ibid., p. 124.

²³ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

was shot".²⁵ His story demonstrates how new technological inventions became more and more expropriated by the militarists as the means of warfare. Mykola reasserts that the history of the 20th century differs from the history of the 19th century by the key fact: the human beings paid more and more attention to the military technologies. The history of technologies which were supposed to be used for the good of the entire mankind became the history of the militarization of the human space. In fact, Mykola writes not about the tractors but about the history of peace and war in Europe. Mykola says that

Despite earlier promises to free humanity from the unbearable labor, the tractor brought us to the edge of the abyss because of the negligence and the abuse. It happened many times during the history but the most vivid example is what took place in America in 1920s. I wrote that the tractor allowed upturning the soils of the great prairies of the West America²⁶.

Valentina protects her space in the UK and in Mykola's house; she pragmatically and sometimes cynically uses the benefits of other people. Valentina's maneuvers seem to be tragicomic. She is a victim and a citizen of the country in the transit period of economic and socio-cultural collapse. In the Soviet times, Ukraine was a raw supplement to Russia that wanted to impose the collectivization policy presupposing the infringement of the private property. The UK is a European country for which the concept of private property is crucial and Mykola considers it as the most distinctive difference between modern Ukraine and Britain.

Valentina is a character with Nietzsche ressentiment features. T. Hundorova, basing on ideas of Nietzsche emphasizes that

Nietzsche indicates that ressentiment in the modern era as an important and vivid action. German philosopher considers ressentiment as a feature of creatures that are not capable of real reaction; they reward themselves with an imaginary revenge [...] The ressentiment becomes the concept that Nietzsche endows as one that has a great impact on transformations of cultural periods²⁷.

Valentina is a victim of tragic Ukrainian history described by Mykola. Although she is skeptical towards his paperwork, the text provides the key to understanding the behavior and the psychology of the characters. During 70 years of being a part of the Soviet system Ukraine was deprived of the right to private property. This phenomenon had a great impact on human behavior, consciousness and psychology. T. Hundorova emphasizes that

Nietzsche indicates that the ressentiment is a special action and emotion. Ressentiment generally, according to the German philosopher, is a kind of property of the creatures that are *not capable of a real reaction; they reward themselves as apparent retaliation* [...]. The key of this process is a creation of an

²⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

²⁷ T. Гундорова, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

enemy; thus, creativity, imagination plays a particularly important role. Thus, a person of the resentment imagines his or her *evil enemy* in order to use this object as an image which can be repelled²⁸.

Valentine's personality is endowed with the Nietzsche's resentment. It is pointed out in the novel that the Soviet policy was aimed at leveling national identity and construction of artificial history which would describe peaceful coexistence of different nations and ethnic groups within Soviet Union. On the contrary, the *History* of M. Majewski demonstrates the artificiality of such history. Ukrainians are a marginalized object of Soviet policy who suffered terror resulted in traumas. Famine of 1933 was called artificial in a result of Stalin's deliberate intervention.

Therefore, the history of M. Majewski does not describe tractors — it is the Soviet ideological project that included the extermination of the Ukrainian nation. Mykola's attitude towards Valentina is also caused by the tragedy of those Ukrainians who were picked off their land and were not able to create a European country. The behavior of modern Ukrainians is determined by the history of Ukraine.

Conclusions

According to Mykola Majewski's history, the Communist ideology pushed Ukrainian people to transform such friendly agriculture tools as tractors into weapons. Mykola's history develops a story of how new technological inventions resulted in a formation of an intensive military processes and became the tools of warfare (not welfare). The protagonist argues that the history of the twentieth century differs from the history of the nineteenth century. Mykola convinces that the mankind began to pay more attention to the technologies of the war in the twentieth century. The history of technologies were used for militarization of people and resulted in the destruction of human nature and the surroundings. In the novel, it is emphasized that the Soviet historians was aimed to destroy the Ukrainian identity and construct false history that describes peaceful coexistence of different nations and ethnic groups in the USSR. However, Mykola's history demonstrates the artificiality of such phenomenon. Ukrainians have become a marginalized subject of the Soviet policy suffering from the colonization and terror. Hence, M. Majewski seems to be a voice that in the post-colonial multicultural Britain seeks to tell the truth about Ukraine. His history is a private story, in fact, not about tractors but a postcolonial narrative that provides a revision of the Soviet ideological history of colonialism.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 48–49.

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