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VECTORS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE UKRAINIAN FANTASY NOVEL OF 2000-2020s. AND CREATIVITY OF DARA KORNII

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Annotation. Ukrainian fantasy prose of the first decades of the XXI century quickly develops and is generally organic to the trends of the global metagenre. Most of the basic vectors of evolution of the Ukrainian fantasy novel can be found in the works by Dara Kornii, the national “golden writer” whose prose constitutes a complete metaprose and testify to the logic of the evolution of the Ukrainian fantasy in 2000-2020s in genre, poetic, intertextual, sociocultural and historical planes. The actual problem of the evolution of the Ukrainian fantasy novel of the XXI century was not violated and could not be considered due to the lack of his comprehensive studies. Along with this, the need for such a study has matured in connection with the emergence of national fantasy on the world level, the transition in it from the active frontal reception of foreign experience to the formation of its own self-sufficient semantic core and facts of reverse reception, and in connection with the strengthening of its role in the world literary process. The identification and characterization of the main vectors of the evolution of the modern fantasy novel in Ukraine should be qualified as urgent tasks.

So, the purpose of this article is to define and characterize for the first time the key vectors of the evolution of the Ukrainian fantasy novel of the first decades of the XXI century and the degree of their expression in the artistic work by Dara Kornii as a representative national writer who creates within the metagenre. At the same time, we see our main tasks as the finding of significant progressive transformations in the planes of a) genre, b) poetics and intertextuality, as well as c) studying cultural narratives, in particular gender, in fantasy prose.

The main changes in the Ukrainian metagenre of the first decades of the XXI century concerns the transformation of the fantasy conflict from binary to the ternary principle of the interaction of good, evil and their compromise combination. Such a modification causes a metamorphosis of the image of the main character, who often becomes a woman. The new transitional state in the struggle between good and evil includes a different logic of

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the relationship between these principles and is ethically contradictory, manifested, above all, in urban fantasy. The close dialogue of Ukrainian and foreign artistic experience makes it difficult to determine the degree of traditional and innovative in the work, although in the plot plane it is closer to the criteria of mass culture. The leading vector of small and later large prose by D. Kornii is gender, which reveals regularities in its development and realization. Since the writer's works constitute a complete metatext, the accentuated female dominance acquires conceptuality in her prose, which is expressed in the plot, in the system of images, and on the metaphorical level. The figure of the main heroine is interpreted as the image of a metaheroine, and it is the first image of this level in Ukrainian fantasy prose. The consistent actualization of segments of ancient Slavic mythology is reinforced in D. Kornii by the reception of modern plot schemes from fantasy prose of Western samples. Although the author's myth of the writer is formed in a combination of Ukrainian (traditions of mythology and classical literature) and foreign fantasy experience, during her professional growth the author borrows much less formulas of mass Western European and North American culture. Similar interest in samples of Western fantasy can be found in other authors of Ukrainian metagenre of the XXI century, however, after the mid-2010s in Ukrainian fantasy, the processes of westernization are often replaced by the tendency of orientalization or are significantly leveled as such. Corresponding phenomena can be seen in the works by D. Kornii too.

A systematic approach to the study of the latest phenomena of Ukrainian fantasy of the XXI century allows us to objectively evaluate the progress of the national version of the metagenre and the reflection of the corresponding qualities in the work of its key writers. The principle of our research is perspective and opens up new opportunities in the study of Ukrainian fantasy of the XXI century as a part of the world.

Key words: fantasy, transformation, tendency, vector, metatext, intertext.

The relevance of the research topic. In the first decades of the XXI century in the Ukrainian literary process, the dominance of the fantasy metagenre is established, including manifestations of the fantasy principle in almost all genres. Such a tendency is observed in world literature as a whole, and it is important that the Ukrainian fantasy novel is not only organic to foreign trends in its development, but also structures its original features. Its conceptualization and focus on certain expressed ideological and thematic directions at this time becomes obvious when systematically reading the artistic works of leading writers and when comparing these works. One of such prominent figures in the modern fantasy of Ukraine is the "golden writer" Dara Kornii, her more than 20 novels and stories constitute a complete metaprose and testify to the logic of the evolution of the national fantasy novel in 2000-2020s in genre, poetic, intertextual, sociocultural and historical planes.

The actual problem of the evolution of the Ukrainian fantasy novel of the XXI century was not violated and could not be considered due to the

lack of his comprehensive studies. Along with this, the need for such a study has matured in connection with the emergence of national fantasy on the world level, the transition in it from the active frontal reception of foreign experience to the formation of its own self-sufficient semantic core and facts of reverse reception, and in connection with the strengthening of its role in the world literary process. Given the fact that mythmaking, which is the core of the fantasy metagenre, is able not only to contribute to the productivity of the national culture, to serve as its mirror, but also to direct the literary process, the identification and characterization of the main vectors of the evolution of the modern fantasy novel in Ukraine should be qualified as urgent tasks. What has been said is reinforced, in addition to intraliterary factors, by the currently active virtualization of social and cultural life.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Pertinent to the problem of the conceptuality of the Ukrainian fantasy novel of the first decades of the XXI century there are individual thorough works on separate aspects of national metagenre. In the process of solving the questions of the theory of alternative history and the analysis of the geneology and poetics of the corresponding artistic array in an international perspective, A. Anistratenko partially traces the fantasy reception of the national socio-political reality, analyzing the artistic works with the upper time limit of the 2010s (Anistratenko, 2020). The consistent study of the mythopoetic code of the Ukrainian fantasy novel of 2000–2020s was carried out by A. Gurduz; among other things, he determined the cardinal changes in the construction of fantasy reality at the beginning of the XXI century in general (Gurduz, 2023). It should be noted that among national studies on the problems of the theory and history of fantasy, thorough works are few; in one of the last ones, a collective monograph of Center for Fantasy Literature Studies of Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, definitions, manifestations and functions of the magical in this metagenre were studied by O. Novyk, O. Filonenko, O. Tykhomyrova and others (Teoretychni aspekty doslidzhennia, 2024). Fundamental works here are mainly focused on the artistic creativity of individual personalities (the archetypal dimension of J. R. R. Tolkien's prose is studied by N. Sytnyk, the principles of modeling the world of this classic in context – by O. Filonenko, of T. Pratchett – by Ye. Kanchura (Kanchura, 2012), of H. Shton and H. Pahutiak – by O. Leonenko (Leonenko. 2010), of M. Atwood, J. Martel, Ch. de Lint and A. Mayet in separate novels – by N. Ovcharenko (Ovcharenko, 2018, p. 424–472), neomythology of H. Pahutiak is studied by H. Bokshan (Bokshan. 2017). Aspect articles dominate (by S. Leheza (Natsionalna svoieridnist literary fentezi, 2020, p. 30–38), N. Lohvinenko, D. Melnyk (Natsionalna svoieridnist literary fentezi, 2020, p. 14–24), S. Oliinyk, O. Tykhomyrova (Natsionalna svoieridnist literary fentezi, 2020, p. 7–13)), in particular on the questions of a row of writers (of J. R.R. Tolkien, P. Beagle – by T. Riazantseva; of D.W. Jones – by Ye. Kanchura; of R. Riggs – by V. Aleksenko, T. Kushnirova; of A. Sapkowski – by M. Krapyvnytska, of G. Martin – by S. Piven and others. In this way, it is important to move in national research from aspect analysis of the texts of separate personalities or of the metagenre as a whole to complex innovative comparative study with a properly motivated theoretical apparatus.

The research process of D. Kornii's novels itself is uneven and multifaceted, although the corpus of relevant articles allows differentiation of their types. The psychology of love relationships in her prose became one of the first areas of study (by O. Mizinkina, L. Romanenko); it was later joined by research on the reception by Dara Kornii of ethnocultural elements, in particular images and principles of Proto-Slavic mythology (by O. Mizinkina, V. Prosalova). In thorough works, the texts by D. Kornii were still considered aspectually and descriptively in panoramic reviews (S. Filonenko, O. Boiko), and N. Herasymenko could not do here without plagiarism, transferring the text of the article by A. Gurduz (Gurduz, 2012) to her monograph (Herasymenko, 2015, p. 164–166). Recently, even the inclusive aspect of the novels by D. Kornii has come into the focus of researchers (S. Sharov), although the systematic thorough development of her prose in a whole as a phenomenon of fantasy literature of the 2000–2020s so far belongs only to A. Gurduz (Gurduz 2023, p. 185–303).

Formulation of the purpose and tasks of the article. The purpose of our article is to define and characterize for the first time the key vectors of the evolution of the Ukrainian fantasy novel of the first decades of the XXI century and the degree of their expression in the artistic work by Dara Kornii as a representative national writer who creates within the metagenre. At the same time, we see our main tasks as the finding of significant progressive transformations in the planes of a) genre, b) poetics and intertextuality, as well as c) studying cultural narratives, in particular gender, in fantasy prose.

Presentation of the main research material. A panoramic study of the Ukraine fantasy novel of 2000–2020s reveals its consistent conceptualization and programming. In general, the mythmaking by Ukrainian authors of the XXI century becomes more conceptual and independent compared to the 1990–2000s, which are important in this context, the intensified manifestation, protest rhetoric against Soviet bans, etc., are leaving. The authors' systematic appeal to acute social and cultural problems becomes a prerequisite for the transformation of a number of such topics into cross-cutting ones, contributes to the discursive nature of the relevant ideological and thematic vectors and their evolution. Changes in the national fantasy novel of the beginning of the XXI century mainly relate to the construction of its main plot conflict, where we record the transformation from binary to trinity organically to world practice (Gurduz, 2023, p. 214–215). Such a transition is philosophically motivated and formally productive, as it contributes to the removal of the traditional tension between the opposition of good and evil. The new, third, link of the changed model of this conflict is convenient in the context of the Ukrainian fantasy writer's tendency of the return to his pagan roots. At the same time, the vector of a return to natural forces, a certain denial of the achievements of man-made civilization determine the actualization of the feminine principle and are organic to the global feminization movement of the end of the XX – the first third of the XXI century in literature and art in general. When systematically research the

Ukrainian fantasy novel of this period, we identify these markers of a new stage in the development of the fantasy metagenre.

Prose by Dara Kornii (Myroslava Zamoiska) as a phenomenon of Ukrainian literature of the XXI century deserves a comprehensive study in view of a number of factors: the writer's contribution to the development of national literature, in particular fantasy; influence and participation in the formation of a generation of younger authors in the metagenre (she initiated a personal award in the nomination "Ukrainian Modern Fantasy" within the International Literary Competition "Coronation of the Word" since 2015; this writer is the author of recommended forewords in literary publications of colleagues, etc.); her role in the popularization of national culture as a separate line of activity articulated by the writer. In addition, from 2010 to the beginning of the 2020s, the basic stage of creativity by D. Kornii, by her own admission, is taking shape.

The leading vector of small and later large prose by D. Kornii is gender (mainly feminist), which reveals regularities in its development and realization. Since the writer's works constitute a complete metatext, the accentuated female dominance acquires conceptuality in her prose, which is expressed in the plot, in the system of images, and on the metaphorical level. The figure of the main heroine is interpreted as the image of a metaheroine, and it is the first image of this level in Ukrainian fantasy prose. By genre sense, D. Kornii mainly creates in the ethnographically marked fantasy plane ("Lords of the Clouds" diology (2010–2024); "Immortals" tetralogy (2012–2016), "Trojan Potion" (2020), etc.) and quasi-fantasy ("Mavka's Diary" (2014)); at the same time, she installs the elements of detective (in "Trojan Potion") and retro detective (in "Maiden of the Moon" (2019). In the plot plane, the author's calling card is a love fantasy, to which an education fantasy novel is added over time ("Immortals") – a young subgenre that S. Meyer in "Twilight" (2005–2020), S. Green in "Half Life" (2014–2016), R. Yarros in "Empyrean" series (from 2023) and others master in parallel.

With the publication of the "Constellation of Virgins" (2018), D. Kornii announced her departure from the fantasy metagenre and the search for a new creative profile, entering other genre horizons (Kornii, 2018). At the same time, the textual analysis allows us to establish that this novel is genre- and structurally typical of the writer's novels, it forms a unity with her next "Maiden of the Moon" (2019) – also a characteristic fantasy text. "Constellation of Virgins" differs in this author's work in that it synthesizes most of the artistic models and plot solutions developed or outlined in D. Kornii's previous works, and on the material of this novel, for the first time, we trace the method of crystallization of the writer's metaprose concepts (Gurduz, 2023, p. 250–257). In terms of ideological content, a synthesis of the figurative models and poetic techniques developed by D. Kornii before, the "Constellation of Virgins" complemented and marked the end of starting phase of the evolution of the author's prose about a modern, creative and strong Ukrainian woman, her balancing on the border of reality and unreality, the search for oneself, in particular in love, as well as about her

reconstruction of the masculine for herself against the background of chaotic transformations of the surrounding world.

The books published in the following years showed stability for D. Kornii's fantasy-dominant manner, in contrast to the genre flexibility of J. K. Rowling after leaving the series of novels about Harry Potter. Nevertheless, the said declaration of D. Kornii became a marker that marked completion of the first, basic stage of her creativity. Signs of a stage interval after that manifestation of were a decrease in the author's productivity (which is also due to objective reasons), steps to experiment with retrostylistics, distraction to non-artistic attempts of a popularizing nature (series of publications "Magical Creatures of Ukrainian Myth", Kharkiv, 2017–2020), etc. The writer actively theorizes about the problems of ancient national culture and, with the fate of subjectivism, confirms the trend of fantasy novels of the first decades of the XXI century that we have deduced; she resorts to the concept of *balance*: "Once upon a time in Ukrainian mythology there was no clear division between good and evil... [...] Then the world was balanced. Now there is a division between evil and good. In our world, this border is being erased" (Bondar, 2016, p. 19).

Let's note that the opposite principles in the first and second cases are named in the writer's phrase in a different order, that is, D. Kornii does not single out the power of good as a priority. In sorcerer's reasoning from her "Maiden of the Moon" about the need for a balance of light and darkness, we find even an indirect indication of the greater power of the dark principle: "Light cannot destroy darkness – it only stops it, binds the will. And that's why light creates shadows. [...] But when the night is black and lightless, you will not see light in it" (Kornii, 2019, p. 330–331).

Our conclusion regarding the logic of outlining the stage of the author's work is confirmed by the publication in 2024 of her long-announced continuation of the debut "Lord of the Clouds" – "Mistress of the Clouds", which testified to the cycling of imperatives declared by the writer about certain signs of a creative crisis (plot tautology without a clearly defined role in the writer's metatext, an unobvious appeal to foreign analogues, etc.). It is noteworthy that in the fragments of D. Kornii's artistic works, where the confrontation between good and evil is articulated, the bearers of the pagan worldview can somewhat paradoxically (based on the general concept of this writer) become the exponents of the corresponding struggle. Thus, in "Mistress of the Clouds" the archetypal Grandfather quarreled with the heroine, because she "[c]onvinced that although darkness is evil, sooner or later the time will come for good and evil to come to an understanding" (Kornii, 2024, p. 11).

In turn, the grandmother-healer in the "Lord of the Clouds" shares wisdom: "There is power in every smallest blade of grass, flower, leaf. No recipe will teach you how to separate good from evil, evil from helpful" (Kornii, 2010, p. 68). Certain similar inconsistencies are characteristic of the writer, although they are noticeable only when analyzing the type of close reading.

The consistent actualization of segments of ancient Slavic mythology is reinforced in D. Kornii by the reception of modern plot schemes from fantasy prose of Western samples; this was once noted by critics and exaggerated in early assessments of her prose. Although the author's myth of the writer is formed in a combination of Ukrainian (traditions of mythology and classical literature) and foreign fantasy experience, during her professional growth the author borrows much less formulas of mass Western European and North American culture, and this is demonstrated by the intertextual analysis of her novels. Similar interest in samples of Western fantasy (by J. R. R. Tolkien, S. King, S. Meyer, G. Martin or R. Riggs) can be found in other authors of Ukrainian metagenre of the beginning of the XXI century, however, after the mid-2010s in Ukrainian fantasy, the processes of westernization are often replaced by the tendency of orientalization or are significantly leveled as such. Corresponding phenomena can be seen, in particular, in the works by D. Kornii.

Apologizing the feminine principle in fiction as a regularity of the currently prevailing urban fantasy (Ekman, 2016) is also a characteristic feature of the development of Ukrainian fantasy with its distinct gender accents (V. Hranetska, O. Pechorna, A. Rohashko and others). D. Kornii's prose is revealing here as well, because in it the first consistently developed image of a metaheroine for Ukrainian fantasy emerges. Its presence, development and main characteristics are proven, first of all, by the intertextual (and autotextual) analysis of her novels.

Conclusion. Ukrainian fantasy prose of the first decades of the XXI century quickly develops and is generally organic to the trends of the global metagenre. Most of the basic vectors of this evolution can be found in the novels by D. Kornii, and this, first of all, concerns the transformation of the fantasy conflict from binary to the ternary principle of the interaction of good, evil and their compromise combination. Such a modification causes a metamorphosis of the image of the main character, who often becomes a woman. The new transitional state in the struggle between good and evil includes a different logic of the relationship between these principles and is ethically contradictory, manifested, above all, in urban fantasy. The close dialogue of Ukrainian and foreign artistic experience makes it difficult to determine the degree of traditional and innovative in the work, although in the plot plane it is closer to the criteria of mass culture. A popular work today at the same time has characteristics familiar to the reader and seems to complement the previous metatext of a work by a certain author (as in D. Kornii or S. King) or/and complements the fantasy metatext as a whole. A systematic approach to the study of the latest phenomena of Ukrainian fantasy of the XXI century allows us to objectively evaluate the progress of the national version of the metagenre and the reflection of the corresponding qualities in the work of its key writers. Prose writers of the younger generation, in imitation of previous examples, sometimes come close to the individual qualities of the authorial myth of D. Kornii or foreign S. Meyer, A. Sapkowski, or J. Červenák, but they rarely demonstrate complete conceptual analogues.

The principle of our proposed research is perspective and opens up new opportunities in the study of Ukrainian fantasy of the XXI century as a part of the world, contributes to the systematic assessment of metagenre tendencies and raises the problems of transformation of the consciousness of the modern reader and society as a whole.

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