

## Science Fiction in Ukraine, 1920–2020

### *Part Two*

The Ukrainian authors of the 1970s focused on the search for the purpose of human existence, which led to the beginning of the Golden Age of Ukrainian science fiction (SF). In the 1980s, a national revival began, and SF developed greater local markets and themes. The economic crisis of the 1990s nearly destroyed SF literature in Ukraine. Subsequently, the Russification of the 2000s emerged, and, in the 2010s–2020s, an era of metamodernism began, resulting in a second wave of national revival.

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## The 1970s: Conformism and Postmodernism

The 1970s saw the start of a period of so-called stagnation that lasted for twenty years, until the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). At that time, society lost faith in the victory of communist positivism; all residents of the USSR chose pragmatism as their model and tried to obtain the best possible living conditions amid the destruction of the socialist economy. Pragmatism in Ukraine, among other things, was manifested in the fact that writers often chose the Russian language for writing and publishing their works. In this way, they could obtain a wider market and a larger circulation, because the Russian language was known in all the countries that made up the USSR. It was a kind of conformism: Writers no longer risked their lives for political statements; rather, they chose the path of least resistance for a successful career.

The path of the writer, Boris Shtern, is very revealing here. He sent his story to the Russian writer, Boris Strugatskyi, for positive feedback from him. With this feedback, he turned to the Russian magazine, *Chemistry and Life*, which had begun to publish science fiction (SF) in the 1970s. Publication in this magazine, the circulation of which reached 150,000 copies, practically guaranteed the rapid publication of books and mass popularity among readers. The same applied to the content of the work. To receive widespread popularity, it was necessary to avoid local Ukrainian topics and mainly write about what was happening in Russia. In this way, the impression was created that everything important and worthy of attention happened in Russia; Ukraine, as a colonized provincial territory on the outskirts of the empire, was mentioned only condescendingly and with demeaning humor. The hero of Shtern's novel, *Notes of a Dinosaur*, recalls that he literally fled from Ukraine to Russia because, in his opinion, Ukraine was a country of swindlers and petty thieves, and it would be impossible to make a career there (Shtern 2002, 7). This attitude was also quite noticeable in Shtern's short humorous play, *Zmiiny Island, The Fleet Will Not Let You Down!* (Shtern 1996). This work depicts a group of admirals from different countries of the world who would like to capture this Ukrainian island. Each admiral receives a set of vividly chauvinistic characteristics built on Russian stereotypes. Since this text was written in 1992, a special postmodern humor is noticeable in it. It is impossible to say for sure whether its author is truly a Russian chauvinist or whether he is simply playing the role of a chauvinist, keeping a certain distance from this image.

The history of Zmiiny Island is also noteworthy. Thirty years after the publication of Shtern's play, the Russian-Ukrainian war began, with hostilities taking place on the Ukrainian island of Zmiiny. Ultimately, Ukraine managed to regain control over the island after it had been captured by Russia.

If we look for analogies with other literature, the postmodern irony and humor of Boris Shtern are very close to those of Stanislaw Lem. This is especially true of the series of stories about Inspector Bel Amor, which resembles Lem's series about the pilot Pirx.

Similar to Boris Shtern's fate was that of the very talented Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Savchenko. He was born in Ukraine, but left to study and pursue a career

in Moscow before returning to Ukraine, where he worked at the Institute of Cybernetics. Savchenko wrote all his works in Russian, called himself a Russian writer, and defiantly left the Union of Writers of Ukraine. In 2002, in an interview with the writer Yana Dubynyanska, Savchenko spoke of his feelings about the collapse of the USSR:

It turned out that I am a very Soviet person. Although I was never a member of the communist party, I was close to illegal publishing and dissidents. But when I saw the results of the collapse of the USSR, I was somewhat despaired. I left the Writers' Union of Ukraine back in 1993 and I still don't miss them. An SF writer cannot write if he does not believe in the future. And it happened that I stopped believing. (cited in Dubynyanska 2002)

In the same interview, Savchenko quite clearly formulated the main creed of cyberpunk, which I call the "collapse of positivism": "The very fact that a person does not become better from the development of technology and service proves that something is wrong here" (cited in Dubynyanska 2002). The Russian writer Ilf, in his notebooks of the late 1920s, made an interesting point:

Earlier in science fiction, radio was the main thing. People expected happiness for mankind from the radio (Ilf 2021, 123). Now we have a radio, but we have no happiness. Since then, as soon as aviation and spaceships appeared, and laser and nuclear power, there was no general happiness, and there is none. Civilization does not work for man (Dubynyanska 2002).

Savchenko's novel, *Self-Discovery*, (1967) tells the story of Ukrainian graduate student Kryvoshein, who synthesized his own clone with extraordinary body capabilities with the help of a computer with artificial intelligence. After talking with his own clone, Kryvoshein-1 decides not to reveal what happened but to send clone Kryvoshein-2 to work at a university in Moscow. Meanwhile, the original Kryvoshein-1 makes his next clone, Kryvoshein-3, who turns out to be a psychopath and tries to kill Kryvoshein-1. Kryvoshein-1 decides to send Kryvoshein-3 to a remote region of Russia, and he himself begins to produce the next, even more perfect clones. During the experiment, Kryvoshein-1 decides to update his own body with the help of a clone synthesizer, but he dies. As a result, many copies of Kryvoshein-1 remain, but the original itself is now missing. In the philosophy of postmodernism, a copy without an original is called a simulacrum ("The simulacrum is never that what hides the truth—it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Baudrillard 1994, 1)); it is a key postmodernist term. However, Jean Baudrillard wrote his treatise, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Baudrillard 1994) in 1981 – twenty-four years after the publication of Savchenko's novel. The example of this book shows how the construction and the subject matter of Ukrainian SF became more complicated in the 1970s. The authors no longer sought to serve the Communist Party or to implement a propagandist directive, or even to escape from reality into "mystical abracadabra," as Oles Berdnyk did in the 1960s. Now the books solved

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the fundamental problems of human existence, which would soon be of interest to European philosophical thought. It is interesting that Savchenko's novel, written in Russian, was translated into eleven languages in twelve countries, including in the USA in 1979 in the Best of Soviet Science Fiction series, but there is still no Ukrainian translation.

The 1970s and the 1980s in Ukrainian SF had a lot in common, not only because of the cynicism and conformism of the Soviet people but also because of the spread of the postmodern paradigm of thinking, which was consistent with conformism. If all models and samples are conditionally equivalent, as postmodernism claims, what is the point of victorious exploits for the benefit of the Communist Party? The postmodern model contributed to the avoidance of heroic pathos in literature; preference was given instead to refined logical exercises and literary games. One of the bright representatives of this style was Volodymyr Zayets. A doctor by education, he devoted his stories to paradoxical phenomena of the psyche and the philosophical problems of perception of reality. An excerpt from his story "Temponauts" follows:

He believed and knew that the past, present, and future exist on the same space-time axis. One thing worried him the most: To what extent is the future determined by the past? Should human will be taken into account, or is this will only apparent and subject to the same objective laws to which all nature, including living things, is subject? When that is the case, there is only one real future. When it is not, the outlines of the future are blurred; there are somehow incomprehensibly several equal and probabilistic realities in it (Zayets 1986, 17).

The writer's stories are distinguished by an unexpected course of plots and an often sharp humor. A sudden twist appears in the last lines of each story that changes the meaning of the entire text. Zayets' works are most reminiscent of the stories full of humor and paradox by American writer Robert Sheckley.

The Kharkiv writer Yevhen Filimonov wrote many stories that are difficult to call SF in the usual sense, although all the signs of this genre exist. For example, in "The Ophthalmologist" (Filimonov 1988, 212) a doctor in some strange way corrects the vision of a healthy patient during an examination, so that this man begins to see the world differently: He has good taste and interest in art, and the banality and the vulgarity that he used to like suddenly disgust him. In another story, "The Music Box," a rude worker asks a doctor to rid him of the memories of classical music melodies that are annoyingly ringing in his head. After this operation, he feels a painful emptiness and decides to heal himself by listening to more classical music. In a third story, "On the Road," a mother tries to explain to her little daughter that they have been racing through space for many years to reach a distant star because their own star exploded. But there is no certainty that the planets of another star are suitable for life. Therefore, wouldn't it be better to stop, to not spend energy on speed but spend it on more acceptable living conditions on a starship? Filimonov was interested in complex and ambiguous topics. There are no instructions, recipes, or propaganda in

any of his stories; he only suggests thinking about which of the proposed lifestyles is better.

However, even at the end of the 1970s, when most Ukrainian writers had lost faith in utopian political theories forever, some authors remained who seemed to still be living in the 1950s. For example, Anatoly Dimarov's fantastic novel, *The Second Planet*, ([1980] 2017) depicts the terraforming of Venus in the twenty-fifth century, which led to the development of fascism. Earthlings manage to significantly improve the climate of this hot planet with extraordinary pressure, but they still cannot live on it, so two new races are artificially bred specifically for the population of Venus: Venusians and Orangs. The first group are only an improved physical modification of people, while the second are significantly behind in development, resembling orangutans. The Orangs develop an underground totalitarian civilization, copying the German Nazism of the 1930s and 1940s. A delegation of Ukrainians goes to the planet to study the sociological and cultural consequences of the existence of the Orangs. In the depths of Venus, they find a city, and in the square there is a statue of an Orang with small antennae and the label "Adolf Hitler." All the Orangs shout "Heil" to each other when they meet, and march in columns. It is a militarized state led by the monarch Orang the Third, and it is based on the works of Hitler and Nietzsche. The main goal of the Orangs is to dominate Venus and exterminate the Venusian race. The language is human, only in reversed letters, so "water" becomes "retaw"; only the words "Adolf Hitler" and "heil" remain unchanged. The Earthlings are captured by the Orangs and have to create new creatures to fight the Venusians, but eventually they manage to escape and inform everyone about the danger of the Orangs. The novel ends like this:

Venus-Earth spacecraft launched in a month. During this time, great changes took place on Venus: the Orang state disappeared. The Venusians argued for a long time about what to do with the Orangs; there were even voices to declare war and destroy them to the ground, but the majority insisted otherwise. As all the Orangs are sick, they should not be killed, but treated. The reason for their degeneration was also confirmed. The artificial gene of intelligence, which put the Orangs on the same level as humans, turned out to be unstable, and the Orangs awakened animalistic tendencies. Huge hospitals were hastily built, and then armadas of helicopters took to the air with balloons filled with gas. This gas did not kill, but only put you to sleep.

So the Orangs were neutralized and gradually transported to the hospital, where a whole army of doctors was waiting for them. (Dimarov [1980] 2017, 85)

This whole story is shockingly reminiscent of modern Russian propaganda, which claims that allegedly Ukrainians have fallen ill with fascism and should be treated for it. Dimarov claims that fascism is the result of a genetic error, so it can be corrected by means of modern medicine. Such a practice was common in the USSR, where dissidents were treated with the help of punitive psychiatry.

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## The 1980s: Reconstruction and National Revival

In the 1980s, the futility of the existence of the USSR finally became clear, and its collapse became only a matter of time. All spheres of life in Ukraine were rapidly liberalized; Ukrainian writers who wrote in Russian decided to switch to Ukrainian in order to support the national culture. These were rather short times of national romanticism, when it seemed that independence from the USSR would solve all problems by its very fact. Such an exalted state also affected SF. Many new authors appeared, and experienced authors published new books, some of which became iconic.

Natalie Haydamaka's story "Only Three Steps" (Haydamaka 1990) is about existential choice. A woman sees a boy in the road who is about to be hit by a truck and she rushes to save him, but suddenly some unknown creatures stop the flow of time. They inform the woman that in three steps she will save the boy but she will die herself, and in their opinion the young woman's life is more valuable than the boy's. The creatures advise her not to take the last three steps but instead to save herself. Then they start time again. The woman manages to survive and to save the boy.

Ihor Rosokhovatskyi's (1989) short story collection, *The Last Signal*, became iconic in the 1980s. This author consistently dealt with the topic of artificial intelligence and wrote a trilogy about the "syhom" Yuri (synthetic homo – artificial man): *The Guest* (1979), *The Possibility of an Answer* (1984), and *The Last Signal* (1989). Syhoms in Rosokhovatskyi's books are almost identical to Philip K. Dick's androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Rosokhovatskyi's earlier story "Syhom and the Dictator" (Rosokhovatskyi 1977) depicts a situation where logic and freedom defeat evil will. Syhom is built by the head of a business corporation known as the Dictator, who deliberately restricts Syhom's access to information. The Dictator seeks to build a world based on strict rationality. Syhom gets his energy by consuming adenosine triphosphate, which can only be obtained from living things, and this causes death in people or animals. When his energy level decreased and there was a need to restore it, Syhom goes to the hospital, where he finds a dying patient. This person is a professor of biochemistry who asks Syhom who he is and why he came to see him. Syhom replies that his energy resources have dwindled, so he had come to pump adenosine triphosphate from the professor. Without a shadow of fear, the scientist says, "I understand," and offers to help Syhom complete the formula for a new type of artificial protein that might come in handy when building "new organs" for him. When Syhom replies that he cannot stay, because the Dictator has ordered him to conquer the world, the professor remarks that he should read in books how all previous attempts to conquer the world have ended. Syhom replies that the Dictator forbids reading books in libraries. Then the professor declares: "You must do what people always do – break the ban." (Rosokhovatskyi 1977, 231) Syhom has not been in contact with the Dictator for six weeks. When he returns, he reveals that he has created new organs for himself that allow him to feed on solar energy, and he no longer needs to kill people or animals in order to survive. In addition, Syhom says that he does not intend to conquer the world, as he was ordered. Hearing this, the Dictator commits suicide. Syhom responds, "That's reasonable." (Rosokhovatskyi 1977, 234)



In Rosokhovatskyi's story, "The Missing Link," Syhom rebuilds his body in such a way that it now consists of plasma. There is nothing human left in him, so he does not feel any emotions toward a human, and does not want to help him because he does not see any practical sense in it. Syhom wants to explore space and discover the fundamental laws of the universe, but he lacks one link to understand these processes. After talking with the cosmonaut, he understands that this link is compassion.

In these two works, it is noticeable that Rosokhovatskyi considers syhoms to be inferior, without emotional intelligence and other traits that are inherent in a person. However, such an attitude is clearly anthropocentric. The author simply wants the "missing link," some missing brick of another non-human mind to belong to man, because the human mind, according to Rosokhovatskyi, is perfect. There is no evidence to support this assumption. We do not know exactly how artificial intelligence will work, or whether a human will be interested in it.

One of the most interesting SF writers of the 1980s, Viktor Polozhiy, is known for his collection of short stories *Solar Wind*. The author's thinking is paradoxical and unexpected. The story "Coroboro" is about the cautious inhabitants of the planet Coroboro who, wanting to check the intention of aliens from other worlds, first turn into heroes of their memories. Distinguishing phantoms from real people is very difficult, but some small details can give away the truth. In the story "Planet with a Hole," a housewife is worried about the burnt meat, but suddenly finds out that it is not her fault. A beam of transgalactic communication of a distant civilization had just passed through her pan. However, later it turns out that not only was her pan affected, the entire planet became "leaky," and one little boy figured out how to use a flashlight battery to establish contact with an extraterrestrial mind. Then, in "The Center of the Universe," which is more of a programmatic essay, there is an interesting segment that illustrates the current state of thinking.

In the dark gorge, the brain collapsed: three thoughts are fighting. One philosophizes, the second became in opposition to her, and he deliberately drove the third into a gorge so that it would not destroy the shaky tranquility of the first. So, this is the fourth. Long live the fourth! The one that won't let a sober thought out of the gorge. (Polozhiy 1989, 29)

There is no place here for the propaganda of communism of the 1930s or for the unequivocal perception of the reality of the short-sighted fiction of the 1950s or even for the anarchic protest of mysticism of the 1960s. The 1980s marked the beginning of a multi-cognitive existence, when knowledge of the world was conducted simultaneously by several competing streams of consciousness, and it was never possible to say which of them was leading or which should be given priority. An advantage is something temporary that can be quickly lost under adverse conditions.

Vasyl Holovachev wrote his first short story in 1969, but even in 2022 he has not lost fans; there are still those who are waiting for his books. In total, Holovachev wrote more than twenty novels, and more than sixty short stories. Currently, the total circulation of his books exceeds twenty million copies. However, by the end of the 1980s he had stopped publishing in Ukrainian; in 1995 he moved to Moscow

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and became a de facto Russian writer. The main theme of his novels is the collision of Earthlings (Emergency Rescue Service) with extraterrestrial intelligence. But since the 1990s, Holovachev's works have combined space fiction with esotericism, national-patriotic orientation, and Russian neo-paganism. In his novel "Non-Russians are Coming" (2009), Holovachev paints a large-scale picture of the struggle of freedom-loving "pagan Slavs" against the forces of evil. According to the author, the ancestors of the Slavs were natives of Arctic Hyperborea. He criticizes historical scholarship for disagreeing with this point of view. Positive heroes are "modern Russian pagans" who choose freedom and a world without evil. In the author's works, the Freemasons and the Christian Church serve the dark forces, and these forces themselves are led by the Galactic Knesset and the Sanhedrin. Many of the antagonists' names are Hebrew names written from left to right. Antagonist rituals require the use of blood. The evil forces are helped by Americans and people from the Caucasus and Central Asia. In addition, the threat to Russians in the author's works comes from China. In the end, Holovachev's works serve to zombify Russians, to form a distorted conspiratorial picture of the world in them, and to strengthen militarism in order to provoke military aggression.

### **The 1990s–2000s: Economic Crisis and re-Russification**

By 2000, the publication of literary SF in Ukraine had significantly decreased. Despite the fact that more than thirty SF writers lived in the country, their works were mostly published in Russian, becoming a part of Russian literature. The main reasons were the publishing crisis in Ukraine, the more developed Russian publishing market, and the writers' desire to find a wider audience. For this purpose, Ukrainian SF writers often resorted to the exploitation of techniques that resonated with Russian chauvinists and revanchists.

Students and later teachers at Kharkiv State University, Dmytro Hordevskiy and Yana Botsman were fond of fantasy and the USSR. This dangerous mixture very quickly led to the fact that they lost all contact with reality and went mad on the soil of Russian imperialism. In the early 1990s, they came up with the pseudonym Alexander Zorych and wrote twenty-three novels. One of them, *No Mercy*, contains the following statement:

In 2079, the last twenty US dollar bill, brought to the State Bank of Russia by the unfortunate heir of some half-mad hoarder, was purchased for one ruble and twenty-three kopecks. The green twenty was handed over to the Historical Museum – where it is to this day, anyone can see. (Zorych 2005, 37)

Depicting life on Russian space cruisers, Hordevskiy and Botsman are certain that in the distant future they will arrange an Orthodox prayer service before battles. In the novel *Moscow Time!*, Alexander Pushkin, a cadet at the Military and Space Academy, explains the superiority of a Russian human over a non-Russian one in this way:



We were never ashamed to be idiots. When everyone around believed in the Market, we believed in God. When everyone believed in the Law, we believed in Love. When everyone believed in Order, we believed in Purity and Grace. We've never been afraid to be a little ... crazy. Ivanushka the fool always goes hunting on a bad and flimsy horse, dressed in a holey caftan, in a crooked old hat, and returns with the tsar's daughter and a chest of gold. And all because Ivanushka is a fool of the humblest opinion about himself. He does not demand victories from the world and does not even hope to win. He does not care about success, justice and even a tsar's daughter. But the heavens entrust victory to him. Because they know – only Ivanushka the fool will dispose of this victory correctly. And the tsar's daughter will like him, she will definitely like him. (Zorych 2007, 112)

Dmytro Hordevsky is convinced that really talented authors can only appear in Russia; he considers Ukraine a countryside where no great culture can exist. After the death of the postmodernist-imperialist, Kharkiv writer Yevgeny Savenko (Limonov), he wrote, “We, the people of Kharkiv, are especially sad today – we, in the countryside, do not produce as many writers as in these capitals of yours.” (Hordevsky 2020)

It is very difficult to write about Ukrainian fiction at the beginning of the twenty-first century. At times it appears that it might be better to skip this period and go straight to the 2020s. A significant number of Ukrainian authors in those times literally went crazy, existing in a bizarre world of fantasy, space operas, and conspiracy theories. One of the most vivid examples is Donetsk SF writer, Fedir Berezin, who became the deputy of Russian terrorist Igor Girkin, who was personally responsible for the murder of the passengers of flight MH17. Berezin also fought in a tank battalion of terrorists of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR; the Ukrainian city of Donetsk was captured by Russian terrorists), who received weapons and money from Russia. The following is a typical excerpt from Berezin's novel *Red Stars: Nuclear Dawn*:

One of the Russians, who has been in the biological module for the third day and is officially investigating how the AIDS viruses behave in weightlessness, was listening in on the conversation of American physicists, as well as spying on them. Information was received into his biomodule through a masked eighty-meter light guide from a micro-camera assembled in Kazan from Swiss components. (Berezin 2013, 24)

The plot of the novel is as follows:

Coming from nowhere the aircraft carrier formation caused a terrible defeat of the invincible USA navy and disappeared, literally dissolving in the fog. Who dared to challenge the only superpower of the planet? The special services of the United States and Russia begin a joint operation to find the location of the mysterious enemy. Russian secret police (FSB) officer Roman

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Panin penetrates the ‘enemy’s lair’, but ... is it the enemy? After all, the inhabitants of World-2 are not to blame at all, that their story is somewhat different from ours and on the Eiffel Tower a USSR red banner proudly flies. (Berezin 2013, 12)

All of Berezin’s other books are far inferior to this one, in both the literary and the political sense, but it is also impossible not to mention him at all. For example, *The New Yorker* magazine devoted a long article to Berezin, calling him the “Russian Tom Clancy” (Hitt 2016, n.p.). In addition, Berezin corresponded with the founding father of American cyberpunk, Bruce Sterling, and told him that the flag of the fictional Moscow-based “Novorossiya” (a separatist enclave in eastern Ukraine captured by the Russian army) resembled the Confederate flag during the American Civil War. But one passage from the interview in *The New Yorker* is the most telling for this Ukrainian writer. In it, he says that he believes in the Matrix, because a terrorist from the DPR managed to kill five Ukrainian soldiers with his last five cartridges, although the soldiers all had automatic weapons. So gradually, from the Russian neo-paganism of Vasyl Holovachev, through the Russian chauvinism of Alexander Zorych, Russian-speaking Ukrainian writers reached terrorism.

The duo of Russian-language writers Serhiy and Maryna Dyachenko are extremely popular in Ukraine. What they wrote is hard to call SF, though; this is fantasy. The Dyachenkos themselves call their style “m-realism,” obviously alluding to magical realism, and there is some truth in this. The events of some of the Dyachenkos’ books take place in the modern world with all its everyday details, but witches and demons operate among ordinary people, as in the novel *Obsessed*. The authors’ texts are quite stereotypical and completely within the limits of popular culture.

The novel *Wild Energy: Lana* (Dyachenko and Dyachenko 2006) is based on an image from a video clip of popular singer Ruslana and exploits the genre features of dystopia and fantasy. The book depicts the society of the near future during an energy crisis. Energy is needed not only for devices but also for synthetic people who are charged through wires. They also depict inhabitants of the upper floors – the “wild ones” who fly on self-made wings and are able to generate life energy themselves. In addition, there is the Factory, where life energy is extracted from the wild and transferred to the synthetics in the city. The plant once used the energy of natural elements, but after taking too much, it crashed. Subsequently, the Factory can no longer use the elements but instead draws energy from wild people who have the will to live. The main character, synthetic Lana, unexpectedly learns that she is “wild” and gets acquainted with a tribe of “wolves” from whom she learns a special dance that allows her to generate energy. Together, the wilds and the wolves try to destroy the Factory, but eventually Lana becomes a part of it and begins to produce energy for all the synthetics.

The Ukrainian–Russian gas conflict of 2005–2006 between the Russian company Gazprom and the Ukrainian company Naftogaz, regarding the conditions of the gas supply to Ukraine and gas transit to European consumers, gave *Wild Energy: Lana* special relevance. In March 2005, the Russian gas monopoly Gazprom demanded that Ukraine pay for gas starting in 2006 at prices close to European prices (about

\$250 per 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>). At the same time, Gazprom itself bought gas in Turkmenistan at a price of \$44 per 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>. The Ukrainian leadership was not ready to pay more until the last moment, and Gazprom stopped the supply on the night of January 1, 2006. Gazprom made accusations that Ukraine “started to take unauthorized gas” intended for European consumers. Representatives of Ukrainian Naftogaz denied these accusations.

The Dyachenkos are the authors of more than twenty-five novels and more than eighty short stories. At the Eurocon-2005 congress in Glasgow, Maryna and Serhiy Dyachenko were recognized as the best fiction writers in Europe. Most of their works were translated into Ukrainian and were often published simultaneously with the Russian version.

In 2009, the Dyachenkos moved to Moscow and wrote the scripts for seven films and TV series, four of which are banned in Ukraine, because they show contempt for the Ukrainian language, people, and statehood. Furthermore, they distort and rewrite certain facts of history in favor of Russia and popularize the bodies of the aggressor state.

The writer Henry Lion Oldie is actually a literary duo of two authors – Dmytro Gromov and Oleg Ladyzhensky. All of Oldie’s works (several dozen novels) were written in Russian and intended for the Russian book market. Oldie is incredibly popular in Russia, where they have received about fifty literary awards. Stylistically, the works feature postmodern fantasy and alternative history. In the novel *We Have to Live Here* (Oldie and Valentinov 2005), a man-made disaster occurs in the Institute of Applied Mythology. Employees of the institute claim that in order to eliminate the consequences of the disaster, the residents of the city need to pray and make sacrifices not only to Christian saints but also to poltergeists and other mythical creatures. Gradually, fairy-tale creatures become a part of real life, but they fall into the hands of the mafia, which is greatly strengthened. Because of this, the government decides to destroy the entire population of the city.

Oldie, the Dyachenkos, and Andriy Valentinov formed a certain literary alliance. They wrote several novels together and all of them are presented together on Oldie’s website, “Oldie World” (Oldie 2024). They have a lot in common. The novel, *We Have to Live Here*, is an urban fantasy written in Russian, which has its roots in the novel *The Master and Margarita* by Russian Mikhail Bulgakov (Bulgakov 2024), as does the novel *Monday Begins on Saturday* by the Russian Strugatsky brothers (Strugatsky 2016). All of them exist in the Russian cultural space and can be considered Ukrainian only conditionally, but still they have many supporters in Ukraine.

Russian-speaking Ukrainian writer Yana Dubynyanska is the author of approximately twenty books in the style of urban fantasy. One of her most interesting novels is *Your Own Time*. (Dubynyanska 2016) It is a novel with a key, where real people are hidden behind fictional names. The action of the novel takes place during one of the two main literary events of Ukraine – the Forum of Publishers in Lviv (the other is the Book Arsenal in Kyiv). According to the author:

There are two lines in the novel – one is realistic, the other is futuristic. In a futuristic, fantastic line, the concept of time is literalized: each person, in

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addition to his own space and residence, also has his own time. A person can control it: either speed it up, or, conversely, slow it down, or stop it altogether. This leaves an imprint on the life of society: when people do not have a common dimension of time, society is atomized, individualized, people need strong motivations to meet and communicate, work or personal. There is a subculture of party people who do it for the fun, but most people do not need that. Therefore, to some extent, this is a society of lonely people. Actually, 'your own time' is, among other things, also a metaphor for loneliness.

The second story line of this novel takes place in our time – but here too people can do a lot with their time. For example, Arna, a young poet and musician, lives very quickly: everything is on time, she can go around the whole country in a few hours, overtaking astronomical time. And the poet Vira, an elderly woman, meets her last love and her time stops, is conserved. (Dubynyanska 2017)

Yana Dubynyanska's novels, although written in Russian, do not contain compliments to Russian chauvinism, yet it is difficult to call them rooted in Ukrainian culture, because they are largely cosmopolitan.

However, in the Ukrainian literature of the time another current of purely Ukrainian fantasy, based on mysticism and mythology, emerged. One of the brightest representatives of this approach is Halyna Pahutyak. She has created a legend out of her biography, claiming that she was not accepted into the university's archaeology department because she was not a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. She also considers herself to be a descendant of Count Dracula. Halyna Pahutyak's novel, *The Servant from Dobromyl*, describes the events of 1949 and the previous 800 years in the town of Dobromyl and its surroundings. The servant from Dobromyl is a dhampyr (son of a vampire and a witch). The master and mentor of the servant is the vampire Merchant from Dobromyl. They and their like-minded "bees that do not lose their sting in battle and do not sleep at night" (Pahutyak 2012, 117) protect people from evil, from external and internal enemies. *The Servant from Dobromyl* (Pahutyak 2012) is a Gothic fairy-tale written in the aesthetics of modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century. One feature of the novel is the complete absence of flirtations with Russian themes. The Russians are portrayed as clearly evil. As literary critic Tetyana Trofymenko noted,

In the 20th century, evil in Pahutyak's novel takes on the unambiguous features of the Soviet empire, whose servants are identified with the image of the antichrist (for example, the Soviet Secret Police (NKVD [Narodny komissariat vnutrennih del - The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs]) captain, who derives purely vampiric pleasure from blood and murder). (Trofymenko 2008).

The author contrasts the evil of the Soviet empire with the infernal mystical evil from ancient mythology, which, in her opinion, has greater power due to ancient

traditions. For this book, Halyna Pahutyak received the National Shevchenko Award for Literature.

### **The 2010s: Metamodern Revolution, Literary Associations, and Special Studies**

In the 2010s, inexpensive mobile internet connection appeared in Ukraine, which allowed millions of people to be online almost continuously. This had significant cultural consequences in that the era of metamodernity began. Ukrainian writers gained access to the latest treasures of world culture in greater volume than they ever could have imagined. In addition, many of them already knew English and other languages fluently, so they could quickly learn about literary and scientific news independently, without translation. At that time, a visa-free regime with EU countries was introduced, so writers from Ukraine began to travel a lot and to attend international literary events.

One such author is Maksym Kidruk, who has visited more than thirty countries, received a degree in software engineering in Sweden, and writes books that can be called multimedia collections. Along these lines, his recent novel, *Colony: New Dark Ages*, (Kidruk 2002) was created together with a designer of three-dimensional objects who recreated in detail the Martian colony where the events of the book take place. According to the plot, humanity on Earth has not yet recovered from Clodis disease, which led to the largest pandemic in half a century, when a new pathogen appears that infects pregnant women exclusively. A group of immunologists is trying to determine what it is and whether its appearance is related to the neutrino bursts recorded around the planet. The population of the Martian colonies exceeds one hundred thousand inhabitants, a third of whom were born on Mars. They lose out to specialists from Earth in the race for jobs in the knowledge-intensive economy of Mars and are forced to work in low-skilled manual jobs. *Colony* is the first book from the fantasy series *New Dark Ages* about the world in the twenty-second century. This is a story about man, who despite all the achievements of civilization, does not change, and neither increasing life expectancy nor even transforming into a two-planet species will guarantee humanity's salvation.

The urban fantasy dilogy that comprises *Do Not Look Back and Be Silent* and *Until the Light Goes Out Forever* also adheres to the principle of multimedia. A mobile application was especially created for each novel with additional details: cover animation, stories, and even a chatbot for the main character. According to the plots of both books, teenagers unexpectedly encounter the existence of a parallel reality that can both help solve problems and create new troubles.

Svetlana Taratorina's (2019) novel *Lazarus* is very interesting. This is a mystical fantasy detective story written in a pseudo-retro style. Such a whimsical combination gives the author the opportunity to present completely realistic problems behind the fairy-tale backdrop, the main one being Russian chauvinism. According to the plot of the novel, detective Oleksandr Petrovich Tyurin, from the capital of the empire (a fancy version of Tsarist Russia before the First World War), comes to

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Kyiv, the capital of Mezha (a whimsical version of Ukraine, called “the country from the edge or near the border”), in 1913. The border is inhabited by various fairy-tale characters who were literally transferred into reality from folklore and have the common name “unclean force” or simply “evil.” All the representatives of the evil force are of different nationalities from the inhabitants of the capital of the empire, and, therefore, a certain parallel arises: The people are Russians, while Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, and other non-Russians are evil. People constantly fight with evil spirits, organize pogroms, publish chauvinist newspapers, and the investigator himself has to investigate a crime that was probably committed by evil spirits against people: They killed a human boy whose mother married a merman (an evil spirit, the embodiment of the water element as a negative and a dangerous phenomenon), and therefore, an “interracial” marriage took place. The events that take place in *Lazarus* share many historical parallels with real events. Each of them has its counterpart; for example, the pogrom of the unclean in *Lazarus*, dated 1892, is clearly the Jewish pogrom in Kyiv in 1881. However, the author herself claims that direct parallels cannot be drawn because this fictional world is not real. The border is not Ukraine, and the empire is not Russia. Such a distance allows her to always be in the space of metamodern uncertainty, where there is a constant flickering, a fluctuation of fiction and reality, seriousness and humor, primary and secondary.

Maxim Gah’s (2016) novel *The Fifth Park* is also a certain stylization of SF that constantly flickers between different genres. In this clearly metamodern text, we see the reality of the post-Soviet city with all its dilapidated artifacts of the USSR, which now have a rather decorative role. At the same time, however, modernity is presented, much like a cyberpunk text in the tradition of Bruce Sterling. This is seen when the technocratic utopia fails to bring the desired happiness, positivism collapses, the heroes are part of the delusion of ghostly fantasies, and the imaginary saves them from the real. This novel is distinguished from pure SF by the absence of such genre features as a clear plot and rapidly unfolding events. In *The Fifth Park* there are many poetic fragments that paint a picture of the character’s consciousness, descriptions of architectural structures, and features of technical devices.

Oleh Shynkarenko is a representative of the Ukrainian metamodern in SF. The novel *Kaharlyk* is a dystopian work written in 2012 (Shynkarenko 2015) about the consequences of the Russia–Ukrainian war a hundred years after its end. The text is not only about the destruction of infrastructure and the depopulation of territories, it is also about the destruction of language and semantic spaces. As a result, a very bizarre reality appears before the reader in which the main character, Oleksandr Sahaidachny, exists in three variations:

- as a person who lost a part of his individuality along with his memory and is in search of it, traveling through the Kyiv region of Ukraine;
- as a copy of Sahaidachny’s consciousness, which is part of a rebellious Russian satellite-opponent; and
- as a second copy of Sahaidachny’s consciousness in another satellite, which has almost nothing to do with him because it is infected with the virus of Russian propaganda.



The original Sahaidachny is trying to regain his memory by communicating with the residents of Kyiv and the surrounding villages, some of whom are also copies of long-dead people recorded on morphons – special devices for making an instant copy of consciousness. A continual analytical study of the structure of individuality takes place in the novel, as well as the consequences of the impossibility of the evolution of its copy.

The novel *First Ukrainian Robots* (Shynkarenko 2015) is an attempt to assess the consequences of the coexistence of artificial and natural intelligence. In the answer to this question, one cannot be sure that these two types of minds will understand each other. The book is a series of humorous sketches in the manner of Monty Python, built on the lack of common views and goals between robots and people. Robots become certain “others,” a new race that people perceive only as their corrupted copy and not as personalities. Robots, in turn, do not see people at all, perceiving them solely as a temporary deviation of the algorithm.

The novel *Skull* (Shynkarenko 2017) explores the roots of Russian resentment and chauvinism, which led to external aggression against Ukraine. It is full of fantastic episodes with elements of satire. Thus, in one of them, the archetypal couple of a maniac and a girl in love with him, traveling through the fabulous Russian territories, unexpectedly fall into the captivity of a hut on chicken legs, a kind of walking drone, which was developed by the Ministry of Defense and is now heading up a whole battalion of huts to conquer the countries of the West. Trying to escape the shack, the couple studies the manual, *How to Rule a Shack on Chicken Feet*, written in a fanciful Church Slavonic slang and offering no practical advice.

Translator and publisher Oleksiy Zhupanskyi is the author of several fantastic novels, one of the most interesting of which is *God Bless You! Black GenSec!* (Zhupanskyi 2017). This is a rather original postmodern urban fantasy. Zhupanskyi's novel, which differs from the typical urban fantasy, is quite well known in Ukrainian literature. It keeps a constant ironic distance from the image, which gives the impression that the author wanted to write a book in some other style and on some other topic, but was forced to hide behind popular genre templates and juggle stereotypes, using them as a mask.

The novel, *God Bless You! Black GenSec!*, serves as a haunting chronicle of mystical quests. It commences in eastern Ukraine, traverses the protagonist's childhood, which is revealed to be vastly different from his previous perceptions, and concludes in the capital with a foreboding climax involving an otherworldly game. Though the exact stakes are unclear and ambiguous, they are undeniably of the utmost significance. The heroes immediately find themselves in a whirlwind of extremely confusing events. They collude and betray, carry out dark corruption rituals, obtain scarce goods, blackmail and kill, revive the dead and conduct meetings of the parliament. As a result, the “soft irrational” is removed from the deputies, and the rest are killed. They get to the mysterious Red Collector, and then to the Vernadskyi Library vault, where they study the secret archives of the Tablets of Power, and get the keys to the last door. Behind this door, perhaps, the grand prize awaits them, which no one really knows anything about, other than the fact that it is the most desirable for everyone.

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Oleksiy Dekan became one of the first authors of fantastic mash-ups in his novel *The Kaidash Family Against Zombies* (Dekan 2021). The novel is a realistic social and everyday novel by Ukrainian writer Ivan Semenovych Nechuy-Levytskyi, written in 1878. In the story, through a series of tragicomic situations from the life of the Kaidash family, the damage from spiritual disunity is demonstrated, which leads to selfishness, discord, and inept use of the legacy of previous generations. In this work, the problems of the peasantry, which were pressing at that time, were artistically reproduced, including the impoverished life of farmers, the destruction of the patriarchal system, and the ignorance and superstition of the peasants. Dekan depicted in his mash-up novel the struggle of the Kaidash family against an influx of zombies, which in the text are called the “living dead.” The word “zombie” is a special term for the cover, apparently to increase the appeal of the novel. Such an absurd combination, on the one hand, completely destroys the original intention of Nechuy-Levytsky, and on the other hand, gives birth to a completely new logic when a typical genre novel about zombies suddenly acquires an additional dimension in the space of classical Ukrainian literature of the nineteenth century. The novel is also in a certain sense anti-colonial, because it addresses the struggle of Ukrainian peasants with the remnants of the inhabitants of the Russian empire, where everyone turned into the living dead because they played with black magic. Such a picture is a vivid illustration of the Russian–Ukrainian war, which is an anti-colonial war, and the Ukrainians are forced to repel the attacks of Russians zombified by Russian propaganda (the modern equivalent of black magic).

A very important author of the 2010s was Yuri Shcherbak, a representative of the literature of the “sixtiers.” He should probably be considered in the section next to Oles Berdnyk, especially since they share many common stylistic and worldview characteristics, the main one of which is religious mysticism. Both Berdnyk and Shcherbak distrust the idea of technological progress, which, in their opinion, will lead humanity to a dead end. Instead, they propose focusing on the search for an irrational mystical insight that has no scientific or logical basis, not noticing that such “insight” is a real dead end because there are no recipes for its achievement and it is a purely speculative hypothesis.

In the 1960s, Shcherbak did not write SF and abandoned literary work as soon as Ukraine gained independence in 1991. He began to engage in politics and for many years worked as the ambassador of Ukraine to the USA, Mexico, and Canada. However, by the end of the 2000s, Yuri Shcherbak sensed the approach of catastrophic events for Ukrainian history and created a trilogy of apocalyptic and dystopian novels, the action of which takes place in the second half of the twenty-first century.

The first novel in Shcherbak's trilogy, *The Time of the Dead-Christ: Mirages of the Year 2077* (Shcherbak 2020), describes the world shortly after the Third World War. A number of large cities, such as Detroit, Seoul, and Jerusalem, were destroyed by nuclear explosions. Nation-states have either collapsed and are in decline, or have joined unions. The world currency globo has been introduced, and the real power belongs to corporations. The formation of the Black Horde began in Mongolia, a union of Muslim and Islamized states that gradually took over Central Asia,

Siberia, and the countries of the Near East. This led to termination of the latter's oil exports. Russia disintegrated into separate states, most of which were part of the Black Horde, the Chinese Celestial empire, and Japan. In 2076, its part, known as the Empire of the Double-headed Eagle with its capital in Moscow, fell into the course of a huge Muslim uprising and became a component of the Horde. Ukraine remained outside the Unions, but it remained a valuable partner for many supranational entities. In 2048–2052 there was a Romanian–Ukrainian war, and in 2068–2070 there was a Moscow–Ukrainian war, both of which were won by Ukraine. Neighboring countries prepared for raids on Ukraine to capture food, the lack of which was felt more and more acutely. The Black Horde seeks to assimilate the Slavs in order to oppose other alliances and eventually achieve world domination. The Horde has numerous agents among the powerful of Ukraine, and, in order to disunite the state, it uses the teaching of the death Christ sect that Christ died and did not rise again. Therefore, people have lost their connection with God and are free from traditional Christian morality.

The continuation of the trilogy, *Time of the Great Game: Phantoms of 2079* and *Time of the Tyrant: Epiphany of 2084*, have all the shortcomings of the first part. They both contain an extremely confusing illogical plot, built on popular conspiracy theories and geopolitical thrillers. For example, it says that the World Government allegedly planned the Third World War in order to establish a new world order. Its goal was to eliminate all nation-states, replacing them with unions, to introduce a single English language and a new world religion – the worship of space and time. According to the plan of the World Government, for the survival of humanity, it is necessary to reduce the population to 1 billion–1.5 billion and to divide it into the castes of the wealthy and the debtors. In 2084, Ukraine remained the last stronghold of Orthodoxy, after the Islamists captured Istanbul. Pope Clement XV plans to unite the Catholic and Orthodox churches to oppose the Global Jihad led by Omar al-Bakr. Creating aggressive Muslim movements around the world, he was defeated by the Black Horde, which quickly disintegrated after the Great Flash, but did not abandoned its plans for world domination. The third novel ends with a description of the results of an expedition to a space object called Heavenly Jerusalem. Only one astronaut admits what he saw there—a repository of the souls of all living and non-living things, in the center of which was God. After the death of the bodies, they are purified in this heavenly city and returned to be reborn into new bodies. However, there exists another memory from a Ukrainian astronaut, who learned that the soul of the hero, unlike the souls of many other rulers, was freed from the burden of sin through repentance and received Enlightenment.

In this book, typical of the literature of the “sixtiers,” everything is built on mystical insights and a baseless conclusion is made that the problems of humanity are connected with the decline of traditional Christian morality, which was bequeathed to us by distant ancestors. The novels are too anachronistic; their style is reminiscent of Tom Clancy's spy thrillers, and in some places they impress with naivety and bad taste, where magical realism is mixed with the grotesque, but this is not as important as the sense of impending disaster, which Yuri Shcherbak manages to convey very accurately.

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## Literary Associations

In the 1980s–2000s, the vast majority of SF festivals and the activities of literary associations took place in the usual mode of face-to-face meetings, but in the late 2000s they mainly moved online, which contributed to a significant revival of their productivity.

The SF literary association, Star Fortress, was founded in 2008 by Serhii Torenko and Mykhailo Zipunov, with the participation of Oleg Silin. The original idea was to create a platform for a contest of fantastic stories in the Ukrainian language, where the participants themselves would evaluate each other. It was decided to hold competitions twice a year. A mini-story contest, held every summer, was later added to the “big” contest. Among the currently well-known authors who participated in or won competitions were Igor Silivra, Nataliya Matolinets, Svitlana Taratorina, Dara Korniy, Natalka Lishchinska, and Vladyslav Ivchenko.

Over the past few years, twenty-seven major contests have been held, and more than two thousand short stories were submitted. The twenty-eighth was supposed to start on March 3, 2022, but due to the full-scale invasion of Russia, the competitions were put on hold.

Cooperation with the Kyiv Club of Fantasy Fans “Portal” helped the association to start master classes at conventions (“Portal,” “Days of Fiction in Kyiv”). The winner of the competition and four to six participants selected by the administration had the opportunity to hear an analysis of their own story from an invited writer (literary critic). The first master was Maria Galina; among the other masters were Volodymyr Aryenev, Volodymyr Yeshkilev, Anton Sanchenko, Oleksandr Mykhed, and Serhiy Oksenyk. Master classes, as well as competitions, were held twice a year.

Since 2012, the association has begun to cooperate more actively with the country’s general literary festivals – the Book Arsenal and the Lviv Forum of Publishers. At the Book Arsenal, Star Fortress later became the curator of a special program on SF. Further, SF events from Star Fortress were also held at the Zaporizhia and Severodonetsk book festivals, the Cherkasy Book Festival, and at four mass culture festivals: Yukon, Eastern Bastion, KyivSteamCon, and KyivComicCon.

After 2014, when the conventions of the old formation ceased to exist, the association began to hold master classes at general literary festivals, created a separate event around the master class, and also joined the creation of the LiTerraCon fiction festival, which was held from 2014 to 2017.

Star Fortress compiled two almanacs of fantastic stories based on the results of contests, and compiled the collections *Pocket Mandruary* (Travel Guide), *Travels by Fantastic Transport* (KM-Buks), *Independence Agency* (NK Bohdan), and *Legendary of Strange Cities* (Ranok).

Since 2020, the association’s website has begun to cover many more events surrounding SF in Ukraine and the world, including presentations of books by Ukrainian authors, reviews of foreign awards, community initiatives related to SF, and so on. In addition, three special projects were launched on the website: the blog “Copyright in Your Own Words,” a series of interviews with Ukrainian authors, “42 Fictions about the Incredible, Literature and Everything Else” (2020–2021), and

“Reading the Future Victory” (spring 2022). Since 2016, Oleg and Alyona Silin have represented the Star Fortress team.

## Scientific Research

During these times, the first thorough study of “Ukrainian Science Fiction: Historical and Thematic Perspectives,” an SF monograph by the Canadian researcher of Ukrainian origin Walter (Volodymyr) Smyrniw, appeared. The author worked on the book for several decades; the study was published in English in Switzerland in 2013. Separate sections were published by the author in the form of articles in Canadian and Polish scientific periodicals.

The analysis of works of Ukrainian fiction is grouped into blocks of topics: utopia, space travel, encounters with aliens, artificial creatures, humor in Ukrainian fiction, and a number of others. Some chapters are devoted to fantastic concepts or individual works of specific fantastic writers. At the end of the book there is an appendix, a selected bibliography of Ukrainian fiction compiled by Vitaly Karatsupa.

The author, Walter Smyrniw, traces the chronological development of Ukrainian fiction from its inception to the 1990s. A separate section is devoted to the harbingers of SF in Ukrainian literature. In contrast to similar Soviet studies, the book contains significant factual material that illuminates the history of the genre in the territory of Western Ukraine, which was part of Poland in 1919–1939, as well as the development of fantastic literature among the Ukrainian diaspora. Smyrniw discovered or brought back from oblivion numerous names of Ukrainian SF writers. On the basis of new materials, he made many innovative conclusions about how Ukrainian writers depict typical fantastic plots. For example, one of Smyrniw’s very interesting remarks concerns the definition of original artistic thinking and the value of an artistic work:

Not all of them [new SF writers] were talented or creative authors. In fact, a number of graphomaniacs appeared who only created imitation stories based on certain clichés and published them mainly in newspapers and magazines. At the same time, some extremely creative writers-innovators entered the literature and introduced many new themes and concepts into Ukrainian science fiction. (Smyrniw 2013, 379)

Smyrniw also made apt remarks about the two main trends in the development of Ukrainian fiction in the twentieth century:

- Positivism is most vividly represented by the works of Ihor Rosokhovatskyi, who sees the future of humanity in technological progress.
- In relation to the mysticism of Oles Berdnyk, who does not believe in technical progress, seeing the future can only be in knowledge and interaction with mystical entities that are not amenable to positive evidentiary research.

Neither Ukrainian Russian-language fiction nor the domestic SF literature of the 2000s and 2010s is considered in Walter Smyrniw’s monograph.

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Solomiya Khorob's dissertation (Khorob 2017) is dedicated to Ukrainian science fiction and presents the vectors of the genre's formations, providing grounds for arguing the following conclusions:

1. The concepts of "fiction" and "fantastic" are central to works with artistic conventions. The latter acts as a special type of thinking-feeling and artistic vision, introduced into literary circulation by French scientist, Tzvetan Todorov. It is justified that literary fiction in artistic practice is realized in two guises: fiction as a technique (in the form of a component, element, detail) in nonfiction texts and fiction as a concept (as the main thematic and genre-creating factor of the work).
2. There are three main genres: fantasy proper, SF, and fantasy. But, taking into account the tendency toward interpenetration of genres, their hybridization, we attribute utopia and dystopia to those phenomena that are already developing today in the direction of fiction.
3. Fiction as a literary concept is a dynamic metagenre with a clear dominance of the fantastic (unusual, unreal, mysterious, miraculous, conditional), which reflects, through the interaction of content and form, human and social problems, regardless of the time and space reflected by the writers. It further reflects the hero-characters (real-virtual, mythological, historical, fairy-tale, imaginary), which is mutually determined by means and methods of modeling an unusual world and its components.
4. The peculiarity of the genre of fantasy proper, the so-called pure fiction, is its function to violate the norms of reality, causing hesitation in both the reader and the characters of the work. Examples of this subspecies in contemporary red literature are the novel *Cave* by Maryna and Serhiy Dyachenko and the collection of short prose by Yaroslav Melnyk, *Why I Will Not Tire of Living*. In the works of these writers, the most noticeable thing is the artistic conventions they follow, that is, they have fantasy as their main feature. Despite this, hesitating between real and unreal, and between possible and unbelievable, in the end the reader/character accepts the writers' "rules of the game."
5. The framework of science does not allow realizing all aspirations and possibilities of technical/natural science intelligence; therefore, scientists resort to artistic creativity. Modern SF is represented by Viktor Savchenko's works *From the Afterlife – Incognito* (Savchenko 2003) and *Under the Sign of a Cricket* (Savchenko 2004), as well as Volodymyr Yeshkilev's *Shadow of the Predecessor* (Yeshkilev 2011). Both the author-scientist and the writer-humanitarian are based on the rational-fantasy concept, the harmonization of scientific and artistic discourses. Attention is paid to the ability of the authors to create plot-plot collisions with the ability to psychologize the thoughts and reflections of the main characters. The focus is on intellectual analysis and the illusion of the reliability of the simulated reality and the corresponding attributes.
6. Contemplating the fantasy novels of Marina and Serhiy Dyachenko and Volodymyr Aryenev, Khorob notes their connection with mythology, folklore, and history with a primate ritual over myth. There are irrational motives of sorcery and magic, which are also connected with the realistic method of



narration. Personal motivations are possible, and there is a binary ethical opposition of good and evil, as well as plot components, such as escape and consolation.

7. Based on the artistic experience of modern fantastic literature and the main provisions of receptive aesthetics, Khorob proves that utopia/dystopia develops within the framework of the fantastic metagenre. It was noted that the main criterion in utopia is a suitable idea based on the achievements of science and technology, spiritual and moral maxims, and fantastic fiction. All features are reflected primarily in the chronotopic section. When analyzing dystopia, we consider the example of fiction as a concept and fiction as a method (the novels of Yuri Shcherbak) (Khorob 2017).

## Summary

Studying the history of Ukrainian SF, one cannot fail to notice how carefully it repeats all the twists and turns of Ukrainian history. It is worth remembering that any fiction is only an image of the surrounding reality, modified with the help of the postulates of positivism and mysticism. Such a strategy is not unique because any literary work is a modified image of reality, even one that is considered realistic. A realistic image is impossible due to natural reduction. The author simply cannot take into account all the elements of reality, but chooses only those that he remembers and considers more pleasant for himself than others. This is how Ukrainian SF writers work. In the 1920s and 1930s, they frantically promoted communism; in the 1940s and 1950s they began to depict the technological utopia of the times of communism, which had already arrived. In the 1960s they were fascinated by mysticism; in the 1970s and 1980s the Golden Age of Ukrainian SF came, a time that was without political propaganda, and that was soon replaced by existentialism and postmodernism. In the 1990s and 2000s, Ukrainian SF writers massively began to write novels in favor of Russian imperialism and the wildest forms of chauvinism. After 2010, a new generation appeared, educated in the latest examples of European and American metamodernism, which reached us through popular cinema and mobile internet usage. In the 2020s, a new Golden Age should come, which will repeat the success of the dead and almost forgotten authors of the 1980s. Although we do not remember them, the digital trace of their lives remains in online libraries, like a kind of dead city that lives without noticing its own death.

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