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GENRE-STYLISTIC SPECIFICS OF MODERN BELARUSIAN HISTORICAL PROSE

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Summary

The aim of the article is the genre-stylistic features and specifics of the modern Belarusian historical prose, which are considered through the prism of reconstruction as a literary method used by the writer as one of the main ways of constructing a collective historical memory. The method of research is historical-literary and motivic analysis. In the process of analysis of selected works by Uladzimir Karatkievič and Uladzimir Arloŭ, worldview prerequisites and the main ways of implementing writing strategies are examined, as well as the issue of the influence of the subject of a literary work on its genre and stylistic specifics. Uladzimir Karatkievič referred to some of the major events, characterizing the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then undertook a massive reconstruction of that period. Karatkievič thoroughly examines Belarusians and "Belarusianness", reconstructing and constructing these notions in a very untypical way for the Soviet literature and ideology. Uladzimir Arloŭ chose a different path in his endeavor to reconstruct the past. In a series of works the writer starts from written sources of information (sometimes really scarce and fractional) in order to reconstruct the context.

Keywords: *Historical reconstruction, contemporary Belarusian historical prose, historical memory, Uladzimir Karatkievič, Uladzimir Arloŭ.*

he American philosopher, essayist and writer George Santayana his book "The Life of Reason: The Phases of Human Progress", speaking of the importance of remembrance as a species of morality, made a conclusion, which then became a celebrated dictum: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". The consequence of this is that remembrance as a species of morality has become one of the more unassailable pieties of the age. Today, imperative to remember is recognizable as a sort of social duty: the remembering of the past and its corollary, the memorialising of collective historical memory, has become one of humanity's highest moral obligations. So, memory is the sum total of what we remember and gives the human being the capability to learn and adapt from previous experiences as well as to build his relationships - not only personal and not only with other members of the society that he belongs. Since it is the ability to remember past experiences, and the recall to mind learned facts, experiences, impressions, skills and habits, learned and retained from the activity or experience, as evidenced by modification of structure or behaviour, or by recall and recognition, the memory is also determinates the perception of other people being a member of other society as well.

Memory is related to but distinct from learning, which is the process of acquiring knowledge of the world and modifing subsequent behaviour. Thus, memory depends on learning because it lets the one to store and retrieve learned information. But learning also depends to some extent on memory, in that the knowledge stored in the

memory provides the framework to which new knowledge is linked by association and inference. This ability of humans to call on past memories in order to imagine the future and to plan future courses of action is a hugely advantageous attribute in our survival and development as a species.

Forming identity and awareness of a human being is determined by society. It is formed under the influence of common spiritual space, including mindset, world outlook, ethics, set of values, traditions, conventional and historical wisdom, etc. The first important element of this space is individual understanding of distinctiveness of the society which they are a part of, its differences from other groups and societies. Another element is own national mythology in the meaning of an evidence of long-lasting and continuous existence in a certain coordinate system. The concept of collective memory plays an essential role in the establishment of the society. Every social group perpetuates itself through the knowledge which transmits down the generations, either through oral tradition or through writing. Writing, audiovisual media and computer records can be considered a kind of external memory for humans.

The invention of writing made it possible for the first time for human beings to preserve precise records of their knowledge outside of their brains. That's why literature – as a way to writing down different historical facts and also the kinds of perception those facts by the certain person or a social / ethnical / religious group – plays a signification role in the process of forming the national identity – from the very beginning of the existence of the society.

In the context of presentation and implementation of the historical theme in literature one should pay attention to the transformation of a traditional approach to history into a modern discourse. The Belarusian sociologist Aliaksiej Lastoŭski¹, commenting on the frequency of using the definition of the notion «historical narrative», says: "In terms of traditional approaches, history was considered to be a science which had to give objective knowledge about the past, «as it really was». The extension of the notion «historical narrative», anyway, shows that now we see a different mission for history. Now we turn to it in order to find answers for the present, which is determined by political and cultural timeliness. In that case history can be considered a narration <...> which, from the point of view of some significant social and political subjects (nation state or counter-elite), has its own sense, its internal logics, and a dramatic plot. Therefore, history becomes historical narrative" [Ластоўскі, 2016].

The reconstruction is very significant for the process of the creation national historical narrative, since it is a complex of methods and procedures hinged on comparison of the remaining direct or indirect data from archeological, graphic, written sources whose aim is to restore/reconstruct lost or unattested conditions, forms, phenomena, based on which the model of knowledge about the past is formed. Historical recon-

¹ All the names of Belarusian literature personalities and fictional characters written in Belarusian, as well as toponyms, are given in transliteration in accordance with "The National standard of Romanization of the Belarusian letters" (2007) which was recommended for use by the Working Group on Romanization Systems of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).



struction as a method of research and understanding the past is implemented on several levels: physical, theoretical, and mental. In the process of construction of objective individual, social, and national historical memory, under the conditions of an epistemological crisis, mental reconstruction, indeed, enables to create the appropriate cognitive space to perceive historical facts, events, phenomena, and processes. The French historian Lucien Febvre, while studying the problem field of mental reconstruction, defined its goals in the following way: "The task is, for a given period, to establish a detailed inventory of the mental equipment of the men of the time, then by dint of great learning, but also of imagination, to reconstitute the whole physical, intellectual and moral universe of each preceding generation" [Febvre, 1973, p. 9].

As a literary method reconstruction is meant to reconstitute the typical features of a given culture in their entirety, including its mythological, ritual, and ceremonial set of values, as well as all the social norms, the magical practices, and other basic elements of a certain worldview, which are common for a given ethnic group, people or nation. Such reconstruction implies the scientific recreation of the conditions of a cultural tradition at a certain historical stage. Important sources for reconstruction are not only written evidence, which may be characterized by various levels of documental and historical authenticity, but also folklore itself, which modifies and actively influences the traditional art or culture of a community or nation.

Reconstruction is one of the key methods not only in the romantic trend of Belarusian historical prose, but also in its intellectual one, created at the cusp of the 20th -21st centuries because of a social paradigm shift. The specifics of this genre (whose representatives include Alieś Asipienka, Alieś Navaryč, Alieś Astraŭtsoŭ, Siarhiej Balachonaŭ, partly Uladzimir Arloŭ and others) involve recognizing a historical fact as less significant, giving much more importance to its interpretation. The author gives readers his own account of the events, which doesn't always correspond to the facts we all know, sometimes even compares them, destroys them. According to Aksana Biazliepkina, the most in-demand genres are intellectual-historical novellas, historicalromantic detective stories, and adventurous prose [Бязлепкіна, 2009, p. 155–157].

One of the first striking examples of historical reconstruction in the discourse of a nation and extension of historical narrative, which subsequently inspired a number of Belarusian writers, was the monograph "The year 1863 in Belarus" by Usievalad Ihnatoŭski – a historian, a publicist, one of the active participants in the process of creating the Belarusian statehood in the 20th century and implementing the policy of the popularization of the Belarusian language and culture, the organization of the national system of education, the support of the production of Belarusian media, the implantation of Belarusian language into whole spheres of public life in the Soviet Belarus, the orientation of the personnel policy for promotion to leading positions of natives from Belarus. This monograph (published in 1930 in Minsk by the National Academy of Science) was the first major scientific work dedicated to an important and controversial event in the national history of Belarus, as well as to the personality of Kastuś Kalinoŭski, the leader of the January Insurrection / Uprising of 1863-

64, which took place on the territory of modern Belarus, Lithuania and Poland, and his role in the process of forming Belarusian national identity in the 19th century (according to the state ideology of Russian Empire, Kalinoŭski, who was executed in 1864 in Vilno, was labeled as an enemy of the Empire, and his name was totally forbidden and didn't exist in the public discourse, since the day of the execution. In the 20th century, Kalinoŭski appeared in the Belarusian historical discourse for the first time thanks to the work of the Belarusian historian Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski, the author of the work "Brief History of Belarus", the first edition of which was published in Vilno in 1910). Certainly, it is necessary to mention about the influence of the epoch noticeable enough in this monograph, since it was written in specific historical conditions. The Belarusian historian Dźmitry Matviejčyk, in particular, points out the journalistic nature of the aforementioned work, since many of the sources used by Ihnatoŭski were articles and essays composed by his contemporaries - writers and culturologists [Матвейчык, 2015, p. 170-178]. This experiment, however, has undoubtedly played a remarkable role in the formation of Belarusian historical discourse not only in the sphere of scientific knowledge, but also in literature.

The establishing role in the process of the formation of historical discourse in the modern Belarusian literature has played Uladzimir Karatkievič, a poet and writer, the author of numerous prose and dramatic works on the historical subject, including novels "Impossible to Forget", "Ears of Rye under Thy Sickle", "Christ Has Appeared in Harodnia"; stories "A Grey Legend", "The Boat of Despair", plays "Bells of Vitebsk", etc., which became the most outstanding examples of 20th century historical prose. The Belarusian writer, being a successor to Walter Scott's romantic tradition, had a keen interest in national historical and cultural heritage and scrupulous worked in the archives. In his literary works Karatkievič referred to some of the major events, characterizing the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) and of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (PLC), then undertook a massive reconstruction of that period. Karatkievič's goal was not limited to reconstructing the national colour and singularity, since he also aimed for understanding the stages of development of the Belarusian nation, ignored by the Soviet historians. Controlled and guided by communist ideologists, the Belarusian historians of the second half of the 20th century constructed a historical discourse in compliance with the Communist Party guidelines. As a result, the official history of Belarus before the Russian Revolution solely came down to the national and economic oppression of Belarusians by the Polish and those landowners who were lacking motherhood and ethnic commonality. Moreover, according to the official records, it was the Russian Revolution of 1917 that really brought to the Belarusians the independence they were striving for, turning farmers and peasants into modern citizens. Karatkievič, thanks to his vast wealth of knowledge, never shared this view on history. The writer used to feel a great responsibility towards his own craft. Evidence of this is the plan worked out by the writer in 1957, according to which he intended to create a whole series of literary works under the name of "The Epoch", dedicated to the most interesting and

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important events of the national history of Belarus. A serious approach, a long and thorough work in archives, as well as in-depth research of written evidences from the past and expeditions to different parts of Belarus - these are the reasons behind the success of Karatkievič's historical prose. The essence of it comes down to dealing with an overriding priority – the need to make up for gaps and spread historical knowledge, in order to provide the reader with an ideological education which would lead to the growth of his national self-awareness. Historical reconstruction allows to collect and comprehend pieces of information gathered and summarized in the process of working with material, graphic, artifactual, documental and written, as well as ethnographic or linguistic sources. Lucien Febvre defines history as a science about man, about the past of the humanity; the primary task of a historian is to understand the people who witnessed one or another event and captured these events in their consciousness, mindset, ideas and texts - the human texts. Consequently, the reconstruction of history must be firmly based on something called humanity [$\Phi e B p$, 1991, p. 19]. According to the Belarusian culturologist Paviel Bancevič, the fact that Karatkievič turned to history, folklore, mythology, and documental reconstruction, allowed him to maintain moral and ethical traditional values, patriotic pathos, and to explore people as a cultural subject. National identity as a culture establishing factor, as well as the necessity of interpreting national tradition both in common Slavic and European contexts, become the main orientation point for the writer [Банцэвіч, 2007]. Being guided by the historical memory and aiming at the romantic, legendaryfolkloristic understanding of the past, the writer offered an absolutely new, reconstructed vision of the Belarusian past, endowing it with a form which may be considered absolutely new for Belarusian national fiction, especially in Soviet time. Moreover, Karatkievič combined in his works (foremost prosaic) the specific genre features of historical, detective, and adventurous novel [Клябанаў, 2016, р. 202-203]. "Impossible to Forget", "A Grey Legend", "Christ Has Landed in Harodnia", "The Dark Castle Alšanski", "Ears of Rye under Thy Sickle", "The Bells of Viciebsk" and other writer's works have become quite an event in Belarusian national literature.

The writer not only got on with a detailed reconstruction of events, he was also interested in the cultural layers of the past eras and all the peculiarities of the national identity of Belarus which were formed during the centuries and were to be understood, among other things, by means of reconstructing the past and returning it to its people. Karatkievič thoroughly examines Belarusians and "Belarusianness", reconstructing and constructing these notions in a very untypical way for the Soviet literature and ideology. From this point of view, Karatkievič's reconstruction of the Belarusian national character, free from ideological restrictions and political interferences, is very valuable. For example, one of the characters of the novel "A Grey Legend", a story about the rebellion in Mahilioŭ region in the 17th century, a Swiss soldier named Conrad Tskhaken, makes the following observations – it is typical of Belarusians to be incredibly bold, obedient, enduring and patient, but at the same time they are extremely brave and phenomenally capable of protecting every inch of

their land. Another important feature is the tendency for poetization, a great creative potential: if a poet appears in Belarus, "they will flood the world with verses and will leave no one unscathed" [KapatĸeBi4, 1988]. Karatkievič reconstructed in the popular consciousness that special all-round connection which had existed for centuries between Belarusian and Western European lands, and had been a precondition for the European character of the Belarusian national culture.

The Karatkievič's novel "The King Stakh's Wild Hunt", published in 1964, is a very specific and interesting example of combining the genres of gothic novel, adventure novel and detective story. The main character of the work, Nadzeja Janoŭskaja, the last direct descendant of an old aristocratic family and the heiress of the palace named The Marshes' Spruces, is terrified of a family curse, set into motion by Raman Janoŭski, a long-gone ancestor from the 16th century. According to the legend discovered in the palace's library, Raman in his pursuit of power and riches decided to betray his close friend Stanislaŭ "Stakh" who was the leader of Belarusian and Lithuanian aristocracy uprising against the king of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and who has proclaimed himself as a legal candidate to be a monarch of The Great Duchy of Lithuania. Raman has invited Stakh to his palace, then poisoned him and his guards and has ordered to kill all Stakh's unit. Stakh has managed to curse Raman and the whole Janoŭski's family before being buried in the middle of depressing and creepy marshes.

Karatkievič creates the Janoŭski's curse basing on the well-known in European folklore motif of Wild Hunts, which is described typically as a ghostly group of hunters passing in wild pursuit. According to Scandinavian, German and also Slavic miths, seeing the Wild Hunt was thought to presage a global catastrophe such as war or plague, or just the death of the one who witnessed those ghostly cavalcade. But in this novel the supernatural group of hunters has nothing common with pagan tradition, when youth men engages in hunting to have ecstatic practices to connect to the spirits of the ancestral dead. It's a symbol of the memory and her power of determinate a fate of generations: all sins must be perceived and mourned – only then it could be a hope for an absolvence and forgiveness.

Nadzieja has no doubts about her duty: being a heir of a betrayal, she must be the one who will pay for family's sins: "I just never be <...> a real human being. I mourn <...> you, myself <...> that happiness which is forbiden for us, the sincerity which we have not. Those who are the best, the decent, are being destroyed. Remember, it was said once: "We have no a prince, a prophet and a leader, and the wind carries us on this sinful earth, as the leaves". There is no hope for the best, the heart and the soul are lonely, and there is no answer for them. And life is burning" [KapatĸeBi4, 2008, p. 197].

The family curse, investigated by the young folklorist Andrej Bielarecki, turns out to involve a lot more than Nadzieja in person and the old palace, full of spirits of the past, which makes it look like a ghost of old glamour and sins. The vengeful spirit of King Stakh actually is a horrible invention of Dubatoŭk, a distant relative of Nadzieja, who also has a function of her guardian, until she reach the age of consent. Being a greedy and vile person, he has decided to lay his hands on the Janoŭski's family estate.



Trying to drive insane the young woman, the Wild Hunt also terrorizes and kills local peasants, keeping the rest in the state of fear and submission or forcing them to run, leaving the land, which might to be added then to the possessions of the local landlords. The social and historic aspect of the novel which is related with the problem of deterioration that befell the peasant's communities after the emancipation of the serfs in the Russian Empire in 1861, when the peasants were no longer property of their landlords, but still were not given any provisions to survive on their own, even more, frequently were drived to bankruptcy and pushed to leave their native land – all of it shifts the novel into the ranks of historic mystery drama.

The message of the novel is much deeper than the convention of a genre of the historical-detective story provides. The "King Stakh's Wild Hunt" offers the reader "the humanistic pathos – a philosophical meditation on the destiny of man, the fate of the Belarusians, their national character and spiritual universe" [HabyMoBi4, 2002, p. 308].

Kastuś Kalinoŭski, the leader of the Uprising of 1863-64, became one of the most important historical figures for Karatkievič. The novel "Impossible to Forget" became in the author's works a peculiar prologue to the topic of the January Insurrection of 1863 and to the image of Kastuś Kalinoŭski, colorfully shown in, probably, the most popular novel of the writer – "Ears of Rye under Thy Sickle". The first publication of the shortened version of the novel was held by the literary magazine "Polymia" in 1965, and the first book publication appeared in 1968.

The preparation of the novel took years: according to Karatkievič's idea "Ears of Rye under Thy Sickle" should have been a trilogy representing the events preceding the uprising led by Kalinoŭski, the uprising itself and its defeat by the Russian troops (the writer was not able to implement the plan completely; he managed to write only two chapters of the second book of the novel, which were first published in 1989, only after the Karatkievič's death in 1984). In 1967 Karatkievič said: "I thought a lot, then I've collected the material for 12 years, I've been writing it for 8 years and it's not finished yet" [Шапран, 2013]. "Ears of Rye under Thy Sickle", in fact, became the first panoramic historical novel which reflected "the process of gathering nationally self-aware forces, the celebration of the Belarusian national idea, the growth of people's discontent" [Баршчэўскі, Васючэнка, Тычына, 2006, р. 456]. In "Ears of Rye..." the author successfully accomplished historical and cultural reconstructions, shows the past and the surrounding world in the way they were and in the way they could have been. His characters act in exceptional situations as if they were beyond real life. At the same time, the historical background where they act is shown concisely and accurately". The Belarusian National Poet Janka Bryl, recommending "Ears of Rye under Thy Sickle" to be published, stated that the novel would teach us to love our people and to learn more about our own history. Moreover, this book would help Belarusians to get free from their inferiority complex, which had been implanted in them for centuries [Верабей, 2007, р. 191].

Thanks to Karatkievič's persistence, commitment and support towards a number of prominent writers and literary critics, such as Janka Bryl, Ivan Mieliež, Aleś Adamovič,

Janka Skryhan, Ivan Navumienka, Viačaslaŭ Adamčyk, Ryhor Kisialioŭ, Adam Maldzis, and others, the novel was published without any conceptual changes. Furthermore, Kalinoŭski started being recognized as a Belarusian national hero - mainly because of the fact that Karatkievič created the "cult" of Kalinoŭski, then he became himself a faithful apologist of the character (the writer turned to the image of the rebellion leader in the play "Kastuś Kalinoŭski" and in the novel "The Arms"). The literary recreation of the socalled *dziadźkavanne* ceremony (is one of the examples of the Belarusian traditional ritual that existed during the period of the existence of the Great Dichy of Lithuania), which was undertaken by Jury Zahorski, the main charakter's father, may serve as an example of the reconstructive method used in the novel. Prince Zahorski sends his first son to the Kahuts, a peasant family, in order to foster in him the true love towards his native land, his people and culture, to develop true values in his heir. In the introductory part of the plot Karatkievič deliberately referred to this custom, which was anachronistic in the 19th century. This stylistic choice allowed the writer not only to declare the commonness of people's and nobility's cultural heritage as a component of the national culture, but also to create a vision of the Belarusians without dividing them into different ranks. Following the historical logics of events, Uladzimir Karatkievič actively worked on forming a new model of historical knowledge among readers. For instance, he put the leaders of the nobility on the foreground, since they were driven by patriotism and were energetically resistant to the national oppression of the Belarusian people. The driving force of the rebellion was nobility themselves, which greatly influenced the formation of the national identity of the Belarusians. Confronting the one-sided and stereotypical image of the Belarusian olden times, the writer tried to display the nobility in an unbiased way. On the one hand, the negative images were not ignored: serf owners Chadanski, Krojer, Tarkajla ("Ears of Rye under Thy Sickle"), greedy, morally corrupt Dubatoŭk, Varona ("The Wild Hunt of King Stakh"); on the other hand, the writer shows lightfully and colourfully the images of Rakutovič ("A Grey Legend"), Janoŭski ("The Gypsy King"), Nadzieja Janoŭskaja and Andrej Śviecilovič ("The Wild Hunt of King Stakh"), Jury, Aleś and Veža Zahorski, Maja Raŭbič, "Black" Vojna and Kalinoŭski ("Ears of Rye Under Thy Sickle"), Usiaslaŭ Hrynkevič ("The Leonids Will Not Return to Earth"), etc. Soviet ideologists faced severe opposition to Uladzimir Karatkievič attitude: some of his works could not be printed for quite a long time, others were published only after his death. The Belarusian culture researcher Hleb Labadzienka, talking about the methods of editing the writer's texts, mentions the influence of censorship as a respective mean of making the nation forget its roots [Лабадзенка] - for example in the story "The Boat of Despair" censorship tried to avoid the word "Belarusian" in every possible way, thus protesting against Karatkievič's aspiration to reconstruct and clear from ideological clichés the national image of Belarusians, their distinctiveness, courage, nobleness, and love for their native land.

One of the writers whose works fit both in the context of romantic and intellectual styles in the Belarusian historical prose is Uladzimir Arloŭ – a well-known Belarusian writer and poet, the author of numerous works on historical themes, the winner of a number of prizes and awards. Karatkievič's literary works have become



for Arloŭ the main source of inspiration and the basis on which, according to him, he has been maturing as a patriot and a writer. As well as Karatkievič, Arloŭ, especially in his early literary career, saw his writing activity as an educational and influential tool for readers, an instrument to introduce them to, in a way, an alternative reality, an alternative history. As noted by the Belarusian historian Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski, history is the foundation on which people's life is built [Jactoўcki, 1992, p. 5], therefore one of the primary tasks is to reinforce this ground by understanding our own history in the context of a national and global cultural political discourse, which includes the reconstruction method.

The epistemological and axiological potential of historical reconstruction is directed to historical memory, the collective beliefs about historical events, which may be characterized as emotional, stable, sometimes schematic and simple. These beliefs reflect not only specific knowledge, but also an evaluative aspect – the attitude of an individual and (or) a society towards events, facts, historical figures. According to Nikolai Berdyaev², historical memory is the ultimate manifestation of the spirit of eternity in our temporal reality, it is an eternal ontological principle, foundational for history as the whole [Bierdiajew, 2002, p. 53]. The Russian historian Tatiana Volkova determines historical memory as "people's ability to keep and understand their own experience and the experience of the previous generations" [Волкова, 2017, p. 47].

It's needable to notice, that collective historical memory is no respecter of the past. This is not simply a matter of inaccuracy, wilful or otherwise, of the type one encounters in the many contemporary texts of culture, like literary works, movies and television series that attempt to re-create a past. The Polish philosopher and researcher Marek Cichocki points out a selective, reconstructional aspect of historical memory. According to him, historical memory corresponds to a farsighted product of the man, an object of his artistic ambitions, which constantly undergoes a constructive and reconstructive influence [Cichocki].

It must be stressed that "historical memory" and "memory about the past" indicate two different concepts. Unlike "memory about the past" (i.e. "recollection", based on the chronological reconstruction of the events), "historical memory" defines a constructive process filled with axiological elements characterized by different degrees of complexity, for example: the influence of an existing cultural tradition in the society, the dominating social ideology, individual and social world outlook, sociocultural stereotypes, etc. The role of "historical interest" is particularly important in this context. It is the level of interest in the process of perception and comprehension of facts, of the events of our own history, in getting acquainted with historical figures, etc.

The perception of history – forming in individual / collective consciousness the image of a historical figure, event, as well as their evaluation and understanding – is supposed to be preceded by a process of selection, organization and interpretation of emotional information. Perception, in turn, is characterized by two interdependent

² All Russian names are given in transliteration according to BGN/PCGN romanization system for Russian.

processes: attraction and empathy. In case of historical fiction empathy relates to the ability to reconstruct a pattern of thoughts, emotional experience, emotional sphere of people of a certain age from the typical perspective of the set of values of a given age. In this case, historical reconstruction becomes a useful tool: many Arloŭ's works in the 1980s were created in such a manner. As well as Karatkievič, Uladzimir Arloŭ worked with documents, referred to some dramatic events of the Belarusian national history, underlining the scenes with the greatest educational potential and presenting the spiritual values, loyalty, military power of the Belarusian people. Everything, in general, that could serve as an example to follow for the Belarusians of the 20th century.

It should be noticed, however, that Arloŭ chose a different path, unlike Karatkievič, in his endeavor to reconstruct the past. In a series of works, such as "The Day When the Arrow Fell", "Nuncio's mission", "The Time of Plague", "Prince Heranim's Mercy", the writer starts from written sources of information (sometimes really scarce and fractional) in order to reconstruct the context. It can be seen in the image of the prince of Polack Valodša and in his fight against the expansion of German knights at the beginning of the 13th century. The unfolded narrative, depicted in the story "The Day When the Arrow Fell", is, in fact, a reconstruction based on indirect historic evidence and the contextual knowledge of the author. Such thorough work, in terms of reconstructing events, was also completed by Arlou in the story "The Time of Plague", dedicated to the Mikola Husoŭski, Latinist poet of the 16th century, and, in particular, to his sojourn in Rome. Since the documental evidence of Husoŭski's life is quite scarce, Arloŭ reconstructed a considerable part of it. The writer not only relied on the literary heritage of the Latinist poet, but also obtained some biographical details and facts about Husoŭski from the verses and poems written by him during his stay in Rome as a member of diplomatic mission of Polish Kingdom and Great Duchy of Lithuania, being bishop Erazm Ciolek's secretary (those verses and poems were published subsequently in 1522 in Krakow). Arloŭ reconstructed many Roman scenes relying on photo albums, maps and articles on Italian architecture, since, as the author himself admits, he couldn't visit Italy while working on the story [Чудак]. The reconstructed topography is nevertheless accurate and creates an effect of "interaction". Moreover, in this story Arloŭ reconstructed many details referring to the Renaissance: the Inquisition, epidemic plagues, pagan sacrifices in Rome, political intrigues in order to create a coalition against The Sublime Porte, the presence of Belarusian citizens in western universities and the desire to get a worthy education. Obviously, Husoŭski's image is worth mentioning as a separate point – a reconstruction, filled with usual and understandable feelings, desires, passions and fears, which lets us overcome a stereotypical perception of a Renaissance poet dictated by popular culture – a rather mythical or legendary figure [Kliabanau, 2016, p. 227–242].

The novellas "I'm Writing to You in Moscovia", "Prince Heranim's Mercy", "Laŭryn Barščeŭski's Chronicle" are particularly interesting from the point of view of the reconstructive method. Taking these works into account, it could be confidently stated that Arloŭ applies the technique of stylization (an imitation of written evidence of a different kind which dates back to certain historical periods) and also a technique



which we may provisionally call "pseudoreconstruction": in this case the author reconstructs a real, historical event, not only referring to real documents and texts, but also by means of creating fake evidence – chronicles, correspondence, diaries, charters.

Uladzimir Arloŭ undertakes a task to create his own framework of narrative texts in order to build anew the conscience of the Belarusian society. In fact, the main character of the novella "Laŭryn Barščeŭski's Chronicle" is the son of the potter, characterized by clear mind and sensibility, which suggests the reader a great value of knowledge and education, since he does everything possible to ensure his son access to a higher education. It is commonly known that the number of students of Belarusian origin, not only coming from noble families, but also from merchant and petty-bourgeois layers, significantly increased in the 15–16th centuries in European universities - most of all in Krakow Academy, but also in Germany and Italy. Creating the image of Laŭryn, Arloŭ draws inspiration from a real figure - the Belarusian printing pioneer Francysk Skaryna, son of a merchant. So, the construction of a character becomes simultaneously a reconstruction of the historical circumstances which influenced the formation of Skaryna's personality and determined his life path. Other hidden references to Skaryna could be guessed from Laŭryn's declaration of love towards his hometown, Viciebsk (Skaryna repeatedly focuses on the fact that he comes from Polack; besides, Polack and Viciebsk are the historical parts of the same cultural space in the north-eastern Belarus). The similarity between the fiction character and the real person could be noticed on the biographical level: as well as Skaryna, Laŭryn ties his life with Czech, in particular with Prague, where - once again, just like Skaryna - he studies diligently (Skaryna studied Czech translations of the Bible, Laŭryn tried to learn the art of alchemy); on the basis of Skaryna's publicistic texts, Arloŭ reconstructs the ideological grounds and the world outlook of the Belarusian printer (a Renaissance man) and applies these features to his character, which bears some resemblance to Renaissance personalities and may be seen as Skaryna's precursor [Kliabanau, 2016, p. 335]. Laŭryn strives for self-perfection by means of acquiring new knowledge for the love to his country's sake and the ambition "to serve the enlightenment of our people" [Арлоў, 1993, p. 167] - the allusion to Skaryna's motto could be easily seen in this fragment, which was printed on the front page of a Prague edition of the Belarusian Bible: «for God to glorify and for the common people to enlighten» [Саверченко, 2013, p. 113]. Besides, at the end of the story Laŭryn announces that he wants to become the apprentice of the printing pioneer Johannes Gutenberg – a very significant fact with a great deal of suggestive weight, with the help of which Arloŭ solves the problem of reconstruction, offering to his readers a reconstruction of Belarusian social life between the 15th and the 16th centuries. Another significant moment is found in the way Laŭryn understands language, that is one of the highest spiritual values, an evidence of national and cultural identity. It is no coincidence that the main character of the novel talks about the Czech Bible as a source of real knowledge and a book about common people's life - Skaryna, working on the translation of the Old Testament, used Czech sources in particular [Калеснік, 1998, р. 103].

In the novella "I'm Writing to You in Moscovia" Uladzimir Arloŭ combines the techniques of reconstruction and allusive construction. In this context it's necessary to pay attention to the subtitle of that literary work, that is a charter from a town councilor's archive: "Written in the town of Polack in the summer of 7073, the year 1565 AD in July" [Арлоў, 1994, р. 145].

The writer, constructing the narration, imitates not only the memorial genre, but also the annalistic one: «In the year of 7070 the Lithuanians marched towards Apočka, Nieviel and Vieliž, and our warlords destroyed the Mścislaŭ land and set on fire the surroundings of Vorša and Dubroŭna. At that time prince Andrei Kurbski marched towards the town of Viciebsk, he conquered the fortress and burned it down together with the villages and the surrounding areas, and killed a great number of people. Besides the Latin ones, he burned down twenty-four orthodox churches and took no prisoners, but after the campaign Tsar Ivan Vasilievich looked at him with a jaundiced eye, accusing him of being unable to crash a four thousand Lithuanian army near Nevel, as he had a fifteen thousand army» [Apnoÿ, 1994, p. 123].

The character of the narrator of the charter – the tsar's strelets Aleksei – demands a special attention. He comes from Moscovia, ends up in Polack by a twist of fate. Aleksei witnesses the bloody events within the walls of an ancient Belarusian town and is imbued with its citizens' suffering, so he depicts to his relatives not only the events he is a part of, but also the image of Moscow tsar Ivan IV, who plays in this context a different role, unexpected even for the author himself. The tsar's strelets realizes the danger of writing down everything he has seen, but nevertheless, he consciously decides to leave some written evidence, explaining his deed by moral reasons: «<...> I want to say a few words about our tsar and sovereign Ivan Vasilevich, risking my life though. It is horrific to judge the one appointed by God, but I feel restless remembering my unforgettable teacher and mentor Aleksei Fedorovich Adashev <...>. <...>Aleksei Fedorovich Adashev was a trusted person under the tsar and he reinforced his reign by his cleverness. <...> He had a rigorous and commanding character, yet he was righteous. <...> This diligent and reasonable man did not want the war with the Livonian Order and tried to dissuade the tsar from marching to Polack. <...> But our tsar was not the same as he used to be, he did not listen to any wise advice, yet he listened to mean and insidious men. Aleksei Fedorovich Adashev died with the sovereign's grace» [Арлоў, 1994, р. 123–124].

The introduction of real historical figures into narration (above all, tsar Ivan himself together with his attendants: Andrei Kurbsky, Aleksei Adashev and the priest Silvester), not only solves the issue of legitimization of the narrative, but also enhances its actuality and archive-worthiness, which has already appeared in the subtitle of the story. In the charter created by Aleksei, that is a fake document (like in other Arloŭ's works, where the author combines fiction and historical topics), a recreation of Ivan the Terrible's reign (such as the Livonian War, the devastating march to Polack in 1562 and the life-guards of Ivan the Terrible) is reproduced by real written evidence, like chronicles, Andrei Kurbski's letters, or German informational papers describing



the brutality of the Moscow army in the taken by storm Polack, etc.. In edition to that, Arloŭ summarizes all the stored knowledge about different historical periods with the help of some "literary tools" and endows the narration with powerful allusive references. The image of a cruel ruler who drowns his own country in blood, and the moral degeneration of the society under the degrading influence of tyranny – even considering a clear reference to Ivan IV – gets an atemporal and universal sounding, which do bear resemblance to other periods and rulers, separated by centuries but united by the longing to establish a totalitarian regiment, one of the basic attributes of which are punitive measures:

"The worst thing is that they sing <...> the officials sing without any cold fear because of the death of the best people, but with joy, wild and dark. The squares are covered with blood from executioners' blocks, and the sovereign asks the people, who came to look at that butchery, «Now say if my judgment is fair?». And the people worship the king's justice with the noise of thousands of voices.

They cut heads in our homeland with amazing simplicity, just like jesters playing war and knocking down thistle cones with truncheons. <...> They make children report their parents, and then kill them in their mothers' eyes. <...> The servants of the tsar knock on the door at night and then people disappear without a trace, a lot of people go to bed dressed, awaiting their faith» [Арлоў, 1994, p. 143].

The contextual knowledge used in the process of reconstructing that period adds to the novella "I'm Writing to You in Moscovia" prophetic features and, considering the perceptive capacity of the common reader, a social forecast as well.

In the novel "Prince Heranim's Mercy" (1987) Uladzimir Arloŭ also uses as a basis of the narrative a real historical event – Kryčau Uprising of 1743–1744, a large anti-feudal act of the peasants under Vasil Vaščyla's leadership in Kryčaŭ *starostvo* (eldership) of the Great Duchy of Lithuania. It was crushed by the troops of Hieranim Flaryjan Radziwill, who was in fact the absolute ruler of the region, which was formally royal property. Among the 16 most active participants of the uprising Ivan Karpač, among the 16 most active participants in the uprising, was executed by order of Radziwill. Vasil Vaščyla died in prison.

Arloŭ reveals the specifics of written historical evidence by clashing two narrations – an oral narration by mayor Ivan Karpač, which reflects the course of events of the Kryčaŭ rebellion (Karpač really participated in those events), and an obvious fake historical document about Hieranim Radzivill, who crushed the rebellion and strived to be a "constructor" of historical memory for the future generations.

The action of this work covers Karpač's last days as well as the destiny of his rebel companions, who awaited their execution in the prince's prison. Radzivill, the absolute owner of the Kryčaŭ land, offers Karpač a deal: freedom, material benefits, women, even releasing some of the rebels in exchange for his agreement to rewrite the story of the rebellion, which was composed by one of its participants. In a convulsion of anger the prince referred to the written account as "the Gospel of Kuźma", and to its author as "a new Herodotus" [Apnoy, 1993, p. 189]:

"<...> you will write a new story. You'll write how you liked living under my reign. And then, let's say, the rebels came from abroad, <...> and you helped my soldiers to catch and shoot those foreign rebels. And in the year of 1744 AD <...> there was a great festival in Kryčaŭ, as prince Radzivill together with his allies punished the bandits, but those who had stood for the truth were rewarded. Never ever had you been that happy, as well as the world had never seen a more righteous and wiser ruler than Heranim Radzivill" [Арлоў, 1993, p. 189–190].

The issue of authenticity of written evidence is very significant for writers and historians. Arloŭ approaches the topic of the Kryčaŭ rebellion both as a writer and a history popularizer. In "Prince Heranim's Mercy" the author deliberately correlates a diary (that is biased evidence about personal and social life, lacking any internal censorship and not designated for the public) and history (that is an accurate and unbiased written evidence): "Had it not been Vaščyla, then another one would have appeared. <...> but I bet he'll be remembered for much longer than you. That's why Kuźma wrote his diary, it isn't just a diary – it is history as it was written for our children and grandchildren" [Apŋoỹ, 1993, p. 189].

History and literature exist in a certain interconnection and interdependence. Uladzimir Arloŭ, as a writer who shapes history into belletristic compositions, not only realizes this mutual dependence, but also underlines the significant, broadly determining role of writing in recording historical events, in reflecting certain political, ideological attitudes. Then the author emphasizes the influence of political elites on the historic process itself and the way it is reflected and fixated in people's historical memory through the creation of written evidence. Arloŭ's professional approach as a historian, together with his ability to draw historical parallels, finds its reflection in Radzivill's viewpoint (the man who requested to write the story of the rebellion anew), in fact, by means of constructing, modelling history:

"Until we are in power in these lands, history will be written by our command. We'll announce a dark night to be a bright day or name your enemies your friends if we want. And you, slaves, in a hundred years' time will remember the things we want you to remember. You'll erect the monuments for your torturers" [Арлоў, 1993, p. 199].

Yury Lotman talks about the origin of an opposition between "reality" and "fiction" in the literary text, an opposition which, in its turn, leads to the emergence of a new myth, which constructs or reconstructs a historical background supposedly familiar to a reader [Лотман, 2001, p. 62–64]. The belief that history is the verbal incarnation of a certain fiction stems from the comprehension of impossibility of some constant truth existence. A new myth, interpreting constant mythologems, allows us to reread a well-known history. Many contemporary Belarusian authors of historical literature, such as Mikola Jermalovič, Lieanid Dajnieka, Volha Ipatava, Kastuś Tarasaŭ, Larysa Rublieŭskaja, Alieś Navaryč, Vitaŭt Čaropka, Uladzimir Arloŭ, often refer to myth and different mythologems. These are the tools which allow us either to reconstruct historical events (which frequently refer to the category of national mythology as an embodiment of historical memory) and to construct new myths, which give us the possibility



to look back at the past from a different perspective, to rethink it, fill the known myths with some new sense and to create new mythologems. This process is determined by the necessity to clear our historical heritage from the footprint of powerful, assimilative influences and, to a certain extent, of colonialism.

The construction of a plot line reflecting the structure of a myth is quite common for contemporary Belarusian history prose, which actively deals with filling the gaps in the national heroic hypertext. For example, in "Prince Heranim's Mercy" a real historic event is reconstructed by Uladzimir Arloŭ as a legendary deed, and the actual participants of those events acquire the features of mythological characters. Doubtlessly, the appearance of the word "gospel" is not accidental – it is marking an allusion to a Biblical myth as an archetype, when the structure of the story – the retrospective, the oneiric motive, prophetism and hagiographic elements (for instance, stories about miracles and martyrdom) - reduplicates the structure of said myth. Since the structure of the myth isn't really flexible and mythological characters are dependent from the processes of the surrounding reality, their freedom is relative, is limited by the bounds of a structure. Moreover, mythological heroes can act only under certain specific conditions that they cannot modify, they are usually pushed to a situation of so-called "semblant choice". In a common sense, this situation comes down to a choice between achieving a goal for the common good or to our own well-being. The paths offered to the hero symbolize wealth, life pleasures, but only one way leads to the goal. Therefore, a real hero chooses the "right" way, which allows him to complete the main mission of the myth. Sham heroes, choosing the other paths, doom themselves to death - literally or metaphorically. This actually happens in one of Arlou's stories: Karpač and the majority of his companions choose to be ganched, ignoring the temptations and the promises of eventual joys and pleasures. That choice is not only salvific for their souls, but also for historical memory: through witnessing the death of his father Karpač, his son Tamaš finally finds his voice. He will be the author of a new apocryphal work - the Gospel of Tamaš. The choice of the character's name - Tamaš is a Belarusian version of the name Thomas, quite common among Catholics and consonant with the West-Slavic form of this name – Tomaš / Tomasz – is not accidental: it can be seen as an allusion to the apocryphal Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and also to the story of the apostle Thomas's assurance, presented by John the Theologian.

A similar choice, which is the only righteous one, is done by other Arlou's characters: Lauryn Barščeuski, Kazimir Lyščynski, Ihnat Hryniaviecki, etc.

Reconstruction as a method in Belarusian romantic and intellectual historical prose still plays a distinctive role (such as educational). Historical prose in Belarus also promoted the formation of self-consciousness and a sense of national identity. Nowadays, in spite of the still existing ideological approach to Belarusian national history and culture, historical prose helps filling the gaps in the worldview and in the historical-philosophical self-concept of the nation, and plays a popularizing role, spreading historical knowledge and laying the basis to strengthen the sense of national consciousness and identinity of the Belarusians.

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ЖАНРОВО-СТИЛИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ БЕЛОРУССКОЙ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ ПРОЗЫ

Д. Клябанау (Краков, Польша)

Аннотация

Целью статьи являются жанрово-стилистические характерстики и особенности современной белорусской исторической прозы, которые сквозь призму реконструкции рассматриваются как литературный метод, используемый писателем как один из основных способов построения коллективной исторической памяти.

Метод исследования – историко-литературный и мотивный анализ. В процессе анализа избранных произведений Владимира Короткевича и Владимира Орлова рассматриваются мировоззренческие предпосылки и основные способы реализации писательских стратегий, а также вопрос влияния субъекта литературного произведения на его жанровую и стилистическую специфику. Владимир Короткевич рассказал о некоторых крупных событиях, характеризующих историю Великого княжества Литовского и Речи Посполитой, а затем предпринял масштабную реконструкцию этого периода. Короткевич тщательно исследует белорусов и «белорусственность», реконструируя и конструируя эти понятия очень нетипично для советской литературы и идеологии. Владимир Орлов избрал иной путь в своем стремлении восстановить прошлое. В серии работ писатель начинает с письменных источников информации (иногда очень скудных и фрагментарных), чтобы восстановить контекст.

Ключевые слова: историческая реконструкция, современная белорусская историческая проза, историческая память, Владимир Короткевич, Владимир Орлов.

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