

SHORT PROSE OF KOST' GORDIENKO OF THE 1920'S: DYNAMICS OF THEMATIC AND GENRE-STYLE ORIENTATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Socio-political events in early twentieth-century Ukraine, marked by revolutionary pathos and national liberation desires, had a profound impact on the development of the literary process. According to analytically substantiated conclusions of scholars of mainland Ukraine and the diaspora (V. Ageeva, M. Vaskov, T. Gundorova, L. Kavun, Y. Kovalyiv, G. Kostyuk, Y. Lavrinenko, S. Lenskaya, S. Pavlychko, Y. Shevelyov and many others), the first post-revolutionary decade in the history of Ukrainian writing, was a period of raising the emotional and intellectual level of literature and expanding its visual and expressive capabilities. Moreover, it was in those “intervening years that all the forces of the nation were focused on its spiritual life, sublimated into its culture, into the creation of cultural values”¹.

Moments of turbulent changes in the life of the individual and the society as a whole were first written by the poetic genres (mainly the lyrics of the civic-active direction) that came to the reader with a violent flow. If “the verbal majority of the writing has largely broken and grew at large amount of loud defenders”, said S. Efremov, describing the circumstances of the literary life of 1919–1923, “then in the prose even the workers far less”, “even worse within dramatic excitement”². A similar view was expressed in the early 1920’s by Mykola Zerov, calling Ukrainian prose a “wide field of untapped possibilities”³, pointing to the inability of young writers to make full use of the “vital material” of post-revolutionary reality and the lack of a “technical” possibility of comprehending it.

Soon the situation will change: not only the young generation of prose writers will appear in the Ukrainian literature, but they also strongly present themselves with original works of art. “It was a rare period when nearly

¹ Шевельов Ю. Вибрані праці: у 2-х кн. Кн. II. Київ: ВД “Києво-Могилянська академія”, 2008. С. 447.

² Єфремов С. Історія українського письменства. Київ: Феміна, 1995. С. 610–611.

³ Зеров М. Два прозаїки. Зеров М. Твори: у 2 т. Київ: Дніпро, 1990. Т. 2. Історико-літературні та літературознавчі праці. С. 516–526.

twenty to thirty years of age came into the literature at one and the same time, filled with creative energy, a thirst for experimentation, the desire to open new horizons of a literary reality (...) fascinated by attractive perspectives, not always properly appreciated by the previous classics”⁴. In 1925, such a large number of short stories and essays appeared, which enabled O. Biletsky to draw an optimistic conclusion in the article “On prose in general and about our prose in 1925”: in the coming years, along with these small forms, we should look forward to the emergence of a great form in our literature – the novel”⁵.

In the process of forming their own interpretive model, Ukrainian writing showed a wide range of style manners that became apparent at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and took over many features of previous cultural and style systems. This trend was noticed by A. Leites, characterizing in 1926 “paths to the novel”: “Naturalism, romanticism and realism, impressionism – all these categories are intertwined in our day. We live in a time of diffusion of literary genres – the logic of solids (logique des solides) that Bergson once spoke of has finally disappeared ...”⁶.

Modern style strategies have provided the opportunity to express the energy of the revolutionary impulse, to understand the multifaceted life and psychological shifts, to form new models of the literary world. Notably, different (sometimes controversial) stylistic trends were used in the line of one type of creativity. “Even in the works of one author, as a rule, they intersect, enrich each other, enter into a dialogue different, sometimes, seemingly completely incompatible traditions and tendencies”⁷, – correctly remarks Tamara Denisova. For example, the fusion of symbolist and futuristic literary systems was observed in the works of Yakov Savchenko and Mikhail Semenko, the combination of elements of impressionistic and expressionistic poetics were found in the prose of Mykhailo Khvylovy, Andriy Golovko, Arkady Lyubchenko, impressionistic-symbolist style tendencies – Gnat Mikhailchenko, Mikhail Ivchenko, Grigory Kosynka.

The epic development of new life processes required literacy, poetic skills. Instead, creative youth, sometimes “lacking in knowledge, only a real life experience, ... eagerly sought to say their word, a non-everyday word,

⁴ Ковалів Ю. Полісемантика “Розстріляного відродження” з обірваною перспективою. Київ : МП “Леся”, 2009. С. 5.

⁵ Білецький О. Становлення української радянської прози. Зібрання праць у п’яти томах. Київ : Наукова думка, 1966. Т. 3: Українська радянська література. С. 36.

⁶ Лейтес А. Шляхи до роману. *Всесвіт*. 1926. № 8. С. 10.

⁷ Денисова Т.Н. Історія американської літератури ХХ століття. Київ : Довіра, 2002. С. 15.

to say something, to say at least a loud feeling for the whole world... feeling together their helplessness, low power. Actually, I could say that about myself”⁸, – Kost Gordienko gave this characteristic of a cohort of writers of the 1920’s (and himself). Not all the works of beginners, some of whom managed to publish several stories or one or two collections in a short life, had great ideological and aesthetic weight, but showed the creative energy of young writers and spiritual and aesthetic potential, a strong desire to join the creation of a new one, “the unprecedented and unforeseen yesterday” (words of Yuriy Mezhenko).

1. Features of short prose by Kost Gordienko in the 1920’s.

Kost’ Gordienko made his debut in 1923 on the pages of the Agricultural Proletarian newspaper with a short story called Spring Time. Over the next few years, more than a dozen stories and short stories, including “Fedko”, “On the Ruins of the Monastery”, “How I Was the Editor of the County Newspaper”, “Crooked tooth and crippled”, “Barjan”, “The inn “Entertainment of Friends”, “The Red Roses”, “Where the Kings lived”, and others that ultimately determined the development of his creative career in the 1920’s. Most of the small prose was published in the Kharkiv magazines “Hart”, “Red Road”, “Universe”, “The Agricultural Proletarian” and in the newspapers “Visti VUCVK”, “Communist”. The rest were published in separate books in the Kharkov publishing houses Ukrainian Worker and Book Union. These works give a more or less complete idea of the early prose, which is developed in line with the realistic tradition, partly gravitating to the stylistic tendencies of modernism.

Criticism met the young author’s debut with restraint, as evidenced by solitary reviews and literary-critical articles in the periodical. Responses to small-format works were not explicitly approving. In particular, pointing to the positive features of stories and short stories (the ability to “give striking pictures of non-sexual reality”, to show “stormy modernity in all its images”, “active life material”, “fruitful use of satirical means of image”, etc.), the reviewers noted a number of shortcomings related primarily to the “imperfection” of poetics.

It was a question of the “indeterminacy of characters” and “not always convincing evolution of characters”, the absence of works of “literary-generalized descriptions and human images”, the “unmotivation of a positive ideal”, the lack of social conflict. The harshest criticism has come from the use of style innovations in the structure of presentation. Critical appraisals

⁸ Гордієнко К. Рясне слово: роздуми і спогади. Київ : Радянський письменник, 1978. С. 92.

and invective passages have acknowledged the basic flaws as “naturalistic domesticity” and “concentration”, “contrived psychologism”, and “the influence of you or other” isms” (implying a fascination with the impressionistic style of writing. – T. Sh.) allowed “the author to rise to the awareness of the true content of phenomena and events”⁹.

In the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, critical attacks did not subside, and elements of vulgar sociology became increasingly visible. Kost Gordienko’s early works are analyzed through the lens of “ideological endurance”. The most notable sign of the excess of politicized reviews is the emphasis on immature worldviews and ideological miscalculations of prose, which appeared in the literary field of a small prose through a “grounded concept of life”, “a false depiction of man, a perversion of Soviet reality”. In the end, literary critics resorted to overtly political accusations, such as Kost Gordienko’s “political accusations”, the “misunderstanding of the strictly limited role of private capital”¹⁰, etc.

Over the next decades, similar tendencies were observed in the early prose of the writer as in the 1930’s. Overall evaluations of stories analyzed or mentioned, essays generally did not go beyond the standardized stencils of what is allowed. An example is the politically colored articulations of the 1970’s, away from the objective analysis of M. Shapoval’s thinking about the maturity of Kost Gordienko’s creative development. Traditionally, the critic sought out the “biases” of the writer, among them – “worldview naïve, philosophical ideas about the person – questionable”, superficial perception of the person “allegedly uncontrollable in their actions”¹¹, etc.

“The path of superficial empiricism without proper generalizations” in the early period of creativity led Kost Gordienko (as well as some others) “Soviet writers to a dead end” and “wandering through depth”¹², – L. Smilianskiy reproached with revelatory and instructive tone. In the conditions of easing of censorship oppressions of the 1980’s, there were single attempts to go beyond the analysis of the ideological content of works, to submit new versions of the literary forms and style of the writer within the framework of the literary and literary process of the twentieth century (O. Zinchenko “Kost’ Gordienko: Literary Critical, 1987). However, they are also far from an objective and impartial analysis of Kost Gordienko’s creative work during the period of the “red renaissance”.

Coming to the literature with the experience of a journalist, Kost’ Gordienko from the very beginning tried to develop an individual style of

⁹ Стукалова Г. Певец доли народной. *Красное знамя*. 1973. 13 марта. С. 3.

¹⁰ Смілянський Л. Кость Гордієнко. Твори : у 4-х т. Київ : Дніпро, 1971. Т. 4. С. 4.

¹¹ Шаповал М. Земніджерела. *Літературна Україна*. 1971. 16 березня. С. 3.

¹² Смілянський Л. Кость Гордієнко. *Радянська література*. 1941. № 4–5. С. 298.

writing, choosing the leading small prose genres, and later – a satirical story. It is known that the dramatic events of life, its turbulent dynamics, political disturbances “destroyed the psychological conditions and left no time for observing and conceiving large-scale ideas”¹³. Therefore, the basic form of literary response, the aspiring writer chooses such “mobile genres” as: essay, story, skits, “drawing from nature”, which will become productive genre varieties and in subsequent literary and literary practice. Entitled to the title, these titles not only mark the genre of the text, but also serve the purpose of fleshing out and supplementing the content.

Among other things, it is interesting to note that making a genre definition in the title of a work or using so-called genre “label” (M. Kodak’s expression), is actively used in the works of Ukrainian modernists (“It goes! (image)”, “On the stone (watercolor)”, “Apple blossom (etude)”, “Unknown (etude)” by Mykhailo Kotsyubynsky, “Ladybug (image)”, “There will be no service (etude)”, “For the golden fleece (etude)” by Mykhola Chernyavsky, “Dance your predatory ball... (Dedication to the apostles of Bolshevism)” by Spiridon Cherkasenko and others appeared in the writers’ creative laboratory of the 1920’s.

Small epic forms made it possible for Kost’ Gordienko to condense and respond promptly to events, to comprehend difficult life conflicts, to reflect the spirit of the times. To paraphrase N. Leiderman’s thought, one can say that the genre of storytelling has become, as never before, relevant and in demand in “situations of spiritual crisis, on the faults of epochs. At a time when social, ideological and literary stereotypes, mythologists, taboos and clichés are being denied and destroyed, the narrative turns out to be the only prose genre that possesses the ability to draw on the first, barely “cut through”, still unknown, collisions to declare a new concept of personality”¹⁴.

A prominent feature of Kost’ Gordienko’s early work is the combination in the creative field of realistic principles of image with modern searches, the synthesis of different genre-style paradigms, literary and journalistic discourses, which in general significantly expanded the expressive possibilities of small prose. The aspiring writer persistently experimented, looking for individually-copyrighted means of literary and aesthetic reproduction of the realities of being. First of all, it is worth mentioning the use of Gordienko’s sketched form in the process of reality.

¹³ Історія української літератури ХХ ст.: У 2-х кн. Київ: Либідь, 1993. Кн. 1: 1910–1930-ті роки. С. 440.

¹⁴ Лейдерман Н.Л. С веком наравне. Русская литературная классика в советскую эпоху: Монографические очерки. Санкт-Петербург: Златоуст, 2005. С. 192.

The essay made it possible to reproduce the events and living conditions of the characters with documentary scrupulousness and specificity, which gave the literary story a special conviction. In addition, he gave the author the opportunity to build a plot, abandoning the literary fiction, based on real events. The use of non-fiction material (considerations of raising the material well-being and cultural level of the people, economic plans, etc.) added to the argumentation, depth and content of the essay. This form of essays by Kost' Gordienko has a lot in common with the popular "literature of fact" at that time, in particular in terms of the use of expressive means, the rejection of traditional methods of artistic world-modeling (typing, fiction, individualized character, analysis of the inner world, the plot as a way of organizing events and character movements)¹⁵.

In general, the formal features of the essay made it popular in Ukrainian literature of the 1920's. Not only creators of the epic genre (Andriy Golovko "Moment", "Children of the Earth and the Sun", Vladimir Gzhytsky "Nuzhdari", Dokiia Humenna "Letters from the Steppe Ukraine" and many others), but also authors of lyric works, actively addressed this genre: Maxim Rylsky (an essay "From ancient years"), Mykola Voroniy (an essay "The dramatic prima donna") and others.

Impressions of the writers' travels (independent or expeditionary, sometimes quite long-lasting) to the Far North, Siberia and the Far East, Karelia, Altai and Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Caucasus have been reproduced in the texts of Mike Pohorgansen to Dagestan "Kos-Chagil at Ambi"), Basil the Impressive ("Deep Intelligence: Essays on the Caspian"), Ivan Bagmut ("Snow Tundra Riders", "Journey to the Heavenly Mountains: Notes by a Tourist to Central Tien Shan"), Oleksi Desnyak ("Khazakhstan"), Vasily Misyk ("Thousands of kilometers", "Khazakhstans kamagistralya") and others.

Creative missions of travel writers took place not only in foreign territories but also in different corners of Ukraine. The period of "self-righteous arrogance of piratist homeschooling, majestic satisfaction with horse horizons"¹⁶ went into "the process of knowing oneself. Even the brightest representatives of Ukrainian culture are surprised to learn that there are many unknown or little known facts, phenomena, things not only in the history, culture of the native nation, but also in its environment, landscapes, architecture and sculpture of cities and villages. There is a need to fill the

¹⁵ Литература факта. Первый сборник материалов работников ЛЕФа. М., 2000. С. 22.

¹⁶ Новицький М. Передмова. Недоля Л. Жовті брати: Кризь Хіну. Харків : Український робітник, 1929. С. 3.

gaps”¹⁷, – sums up M. Vaskiv, characterizing the genre of the essay as a way of knowing” “I” and others.

The focus of the writer’s attention on the feature of Kost’ Gordienko’s “Barjan” (1926) is the work of the loaders in the port of Odessa, the conditions of their life, public life. The title of the work contains the name of the working club, which was founded by the port workers. The characters of the work are workers, whose image is limited by a laconic collective portrait. Putting to the fore not the personal fate of the hero, but the problem, he bypasses the process of unfolding the event and the formation of characters, neglecting such a technique as prehistory.

The work is characterized by rigorous truthfulness in showing the circumstances of life, conveyed with all the details, detailed reproduction of the working conditions of port loaders in pre-revolutionary Russia, which the author compares with modern conditions of work, rest and leisure (elimination of illiteracy, publication of wallpapers, playing chess, reading, books, the participation of wives and daughters of loaders in the tailoring group, etc.). From all the working class, Kost Gordienko singled out the worker Gavrish, again limiting himself to the contour image of the hero. The author is first of all interested in the collective portrait, which he depicts with literary means.

In an effort to expand the genre boundaries, the author resorts to “cyclization – the union of self-contained completed fragments on a thematic, figurative, stylistic basis”¹⁸. Each part or section of the essay “Barjan” has its own title (“Lumpen”, “Barjan”, “Literary career of Gavrish”, “Unexpected guest”, “Stingazeta, school”, etc.), which plays an important semantic function.

Cyclization, as well as the controversial process –”sputtering”, according to the reasoned conclusions of the Ukrainian small prose researcher of the 1920’s and 1960’s, Svetlana Lenskaya¹⁹, was one of the leading tendencies of the literary era of the first post-revolutionary decade, as they contributed to the expansion of genre boundaries and expression. These phenomena are reflected in the structure of the texts: fragmentation in “Fragments of Life” by Klim Polishchuk, “A Fearful Night (three stories)” by Grigory Epic, “Kara-Krucha (three stories)” by Alexander Kopylenko; cyclicity – in Ivan Senchenko’s “Chervonograd Cycle”, Semyon Sklyarenko’s “Stories of

¹⁷Васьків М. Мандрівний нарис як спосіб пізнання іншого й самого себе [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: http://elibrary.kubg.edu.ua/5693/7/M_Vaskiv_UHPISP_1_GI.pdf.

¹⁸ Ленська С. Українська мала проза 1920–1960-х років: на перетині жанру і стилю : монографія. Полтава : ПолНТУ, 2014. С. 68.

¹⁹ Ibid., с. 656.

Feelings”, Vasily Vrazhlyv’s “Six Stories”, “Thousands in Units: A Collection of Stories” by Sergey Pylypenko and others.

The very principle of cyclization is also used by Kost’ Gordienko in the essay *On the Ruins of the Monastery* (1925), organically combining several stories with laconic, refined names (“The Last Bell,” “The Holy Chant”, “The Thorny Way”, “Labor Day”, etc.) that outline the subject of further narration into a single literary integrity.

Realistic tendencies, combined with ironic-comic grotesque means, are clearly outlined in Kost’ Gordienko’s narrative “The inn “Entertainment of Friends”. Humorous “drawings from nature” “Evening Street” (1926), “Bazaar” (1926), published in the magazine “Universe” under the kryptonite KG, is almost a photographic statement of the author’s everyday observations during the NEP period. It is noticeable that the focus of attention on the prose in these works is one situation or one moment depicted with shades of satirical ridicule.

“The events of the years of the revolutionary explosion experienced by the country and the life that is being established and experienced through these years are two thematic spheres in which... the prose of 1925 revolved”²⁰, – concluded O. Biletsky, determining the direction of creative pursuits. The young generation of Ukrainian writers. Around these “thematic spheres” was the creativity of Kost Gordienko. Dominant in his early prose are two themes: the theme of the city and the theme of the village of the post-revolutionary decade. And both are inextricably linked with the understanding of the fate of the “little man” – the lost, deprived, whose interests are connected with the satisfaction of the simplest physiological problems.

A person is often spiritually poor, leading an asocial lifestyle. The unity of problems and ideological-thematic content – the life of the city “bottom” with fixation on mostly dark and negative phenomena – marked stories “The inn “Entertainment of Friends” (1925), “Red Roses” (1926), “Night” (1926). These works do not have a clear creative skill in depicting psychological situations, but at the same time they represent a literary model of analysis of the soul of the “hurtful” person.

Behavioral algorithms of a “defective” human being thrown to the sidelines of life were actively developed in Ukrainian prose in the 1920’s. Close to the topic of social and moral “bottom”, the degradation of personality, for example, the story “The Old Man” (1920) Valerian Podmagilny, “Blind Vanka Kosy” (1926) Peter Vanchenko, “Via dolorosa”

²⁰ Білецький О. Становлення української радянської прози. Зібрання праць у п’яти томах. Київ : Наукова думка, 1966. Т. 3: Українська радянська література. С. 34.

(1926) Arcadia Lyubchenko, "Forest Strands" (1927) by Mikhail Ivchenko, "Pate" (1929) by Vasyl Vrazhlyvny.

Kost' Gordienko is not so much interested in the social conditions of the restless, full of social contradictions of the present, but in their reflection in the lives of the heroes. At the same time, he artificially comprehends the depth of man's fall "to the bottom", determines the degree of moral and spiritual anger to which he is able to reach. There is a whole gallery of images of lumpen-proletarians in the literary world of the writer: innkeeper Alyosha, his wife Oksana, homeless Spirko, Methodius, Gnid (story "The inn "Entertainment of Friends"), drunkard Serg, Paul and Jean (story "Night"), the prostitute Tamara (the story "Children") – all of them carry the burden of dirty habits. All have lost faith in their powers, really perceiving the ruthless essence of their lives and the situation in which they find themselves.

The writer presents the life scenes and way of life of the city's bottom in a naturalistic way. Naturalistic stylistics is particularly noticeable in the story "Red Dew": "Life woke up ... Among the dirt, rags in the vomit ... sweaty, slippery ... Batting eyelashes, yawning, stretching – and sniffing ... Predatory sparkled eyes – the head rushed into the swirl // In a suffocating atmosphere – a din. (...) – At times, the din is covered with loud, barbaric voices ... Fingers twisted ... bloodshot eyes... violin mourned "The Seagull" ... Throwing her head back, the prostitute laughed²¹. The author resorts to naturalistic details, depicting scenes of Levko's brutal torture and the violent massacre of guards. Naturalistic episodes also include episodes of unbearable suffering in prison, pictures of pain, and psychological despair. The naturalistic elements are traced in an excessive attention to the physiological aspects of the life of public house visitors.

In the center of the story "The Red Dew", which still shows the traits of novitiate, reveals a dramatic event – the arrest of the revolutionary underground member Levko in the public house, his imprisonment and escape. The chronotope of the work is extremely localized: the depicted events take place one day on the eve of the revolution. The character's biography is outlined laconically, with several strokes (lived in the port city, talked with sailors, distributed postcards), without retrospect and consistent biography. The author minimizes exposure and concentrates on the climax of the action.

"The rights and powers of the author's voice are deliberately delegated to the narrator, establishing communication with the reader ... and interpreting the programmed creative concept (of course, the author's) as a product of

²¹ Гордієнко К. Червоніроси. Харків : Український робітник, 1926. С. 1.

one's own intentions and individual thinking"²². The means of characterization are the expressions of the characters (Levko, investigator, supervisor), which prevail over the story-event principle and reveal the motivation of their actions, logic of behavior.

Complex constructions appear only in the outcome, which has little to do with the events told by the author of the story (distribution of postcards by Levko, arrest, time in prison, interrogation of police officers, bullying, massacre, escape). The depicted pictures of the spring landscape become colorful and are perceived as a meaningful symbol ("red dew", "song lark", "steppe").

In this context, Lotman's remarks are correct, according to which the outcome of the work indicates not only "the completion of a plot, but also the construction of the world as a whole". "In a work of art, the course of events stops at the moment when the story breaks. Further, nothing happens, I understand that the hero who lived up to this point will not die at all, the one who has achieved love will not lose it anymore, the winner will not be further defeated, as every subsequent action is excluded // This reveals the dual nature of the literary model: depicting individual events, it simultaneously reflects the whole picture of the world, telling about the tragic fate of the heroine – telling about the tragedy of the world as a whole the researcher reasonably summarizes"²³.

The confrontation between a revolutionary young man who is imprisoned for dissemination of the proclamations and guards forcing a confession of his clandestine activity which is conveyed in the story *Red Roses* through laconic dialogues, without the narrator's or author's judgment. Realistic image (actions, behavior) of the protagonist is inferior to the analysis of his inner self. The writer uses laconic, but richly-psychological dialogues, uses internal monologues, non-proper direct speech, which reinforce the intonational structure of the work.

Characteristic features of poetics: extreme psychological tension and dramatic sharpness of action, seeming conciseness and expressiveness, fragmentation of writing, use of internal speech of characters – bring the "Red roses" closer to the novelty genre. After all, the work is also characterized by such "classic" features as: condensed action, conciseness, storyline monotony, expressive compositional center, minimized the number of characters, etc²⁴.

²² Філатова О. Український роман 20–30-х років ХХ століття: типологія авторської свідомості. Миколаїв : Ліон, 2010. С. 127.

²³ Лотман Ю. Об искусстве: Структура художественного текста. Семиотика кино и проблемы киноэстетики: Статьи. Заметки. Выступления (1962–1993). Санкт-Петербург: Искусство-СПб, 1998. С. 210.

²⁴ Літературознавчий словник-довідник. Київ: Академія, 1997. С. 510.

2. Thematic and genre-style orientations of Kost Gordienko's work

In the ideological-thematic paradigm of Kost Gordienko's early prose important are works that reveal the theme of children's destinies in two diametrically opposed social dimensions: in an unjust bourgeois society and in Soviet times. Writing about children in an objective-realistic tone, the writer is concerned with the exceptional situations in his tragedy, which are most fully reflected in the crisis moments of social confrontation – revolution, war, famine. Notably, the literary and artistic collection “Homeless”, published in 1927 with the promotion of the Central Commission for Assistance to Children, mainly for school use, along with works about homeless children Gordy Brasyuk, Stepan Vasylichenko, Yakov Shchogolev and others. there is also a story by Kost Gordienko, “The Crooked tooth and the Cripple”.

In the stories “Fedko” (1925), “The Crooked tooth and the Cripple” (1925), “Children” (1926) there are insightful stories of children of all ages and social status, their moral suffering and distress, reproduced emotionally, acutely. In the foreground, as a rule, the characters and destinies of children from the poor, orphans, street children, their feelings and impressions. The author depicts in detail the burden of hard work, the abuse of wealthy owners, depicts the existential loneliness and despair of a deprived child in an adult (often hostile) world. The heroes of Kost Gordienko's early stories combine “childish” problems that are overcome alongside – often at the level – with adults: hunger, needful existence, brutality, and ill-treatment. For example, Fedko from the eponymous story, wants “to earn money for boots”, and even more to “make his way in life”, and for a boy called the Crooked Tooth (the story “The Crooked tooth and the Cripple”) a piece of bread and his own penny in the pocket are important.

By the way, almost none of the Ukrainian prose writers of the 1920's did not depict the “child” theme. The stories “Girl on the Road”, “Comrades”, “Pylypko”, “Red Handkerchief”, “Engineers”, the story “Widowed Children” by Andrei Golovko have become classic. “The author's attention in these works “focuses not so much on the development of external conflict, but on the ambiguous position of small characters, who, alongside adults, are steadfastly overcoming difficult trials. The writer captures the most subtle details that relate to every young hero – instant moods, scrappy, sometimes chaotic impressions, while using a variety of shades of visual and auditory associations²⁵. “Since events are given from the perspective of the hero-child (and his or her perception is almost not corrected by the author), so do the

²⁵ Філатова О. Автор і текст у системісоцреалізму. Миколаїв : Іліон. 2017. С. 202.

moral judgments, sentences expressed by the child, often acquire absolute conviction, the value of ethical imperatives”²⁶, – points (and quite rightly) to literary imperatives of Andrey Golovko as Vera Ageeva.

Creative understanding of children’s characters, meticulous analysis of child psychology and behavior unfolds in the stories of Vasily Atamanyuk (Vasylko, 1921; Comrades, 1922), Stepan Vasylchenko (Pribluda, 1922), Vasyl Vrazhlyvny (Wolf Bayrak, 1925; The White House Life, 1927, Barbarian Cherednichenko (What Happened to Tetya Zoryanskaya, 1926), Ivan Bagryany (Pacan, 1928). The lives of childless children are reflected in the stories of Stepan Vasylchenko’s The Olive Ring (1927), Ivan Senchenko’s Homeless (1927), Ivan Mykytenko’s Urgana (1927), and his thematically related novel, Morning (1933), in the unfinished novel “1920” (1925) by Barbarian Cherednichenko and many others. By the way, Stepan Vasylchenko, who wrote about orphans and before revolution, was one of the first to introduce the image of the homeless in Ukrainian literature, reflecting “his inner world from the standpoint of ethical analysis of social reality”²⁷.

In the texts of the specified thematic complex, the inner world of the child is multilaterally comprehended, the subtler disorders of child psychology are recorded. The writers have succeeded in creating a series of true images of orphans, one-parent children, homeless people, vagabonds, realistically depicting their lives at work, at markets and train stations, at wanderers. Little heroes are permeated not by children’s entertainment or toys, but by the serious problems of survival in the face of poverty, starvation, revolutions and wars.

The author’s attention is focused not on the naive child’s worldview, but on the ambiguous position of characters deprived of parental care, which are constantly experiencing grief, are not lost in difficult situations of life’s trials, do not lose optimism and belief in the person, her inner self. Here is, say, the heroes of the sketch “Hope” by Oleksa Slysarenko: “The children were carrying small slivers of chips, and their figures swayed like mothers. They seemed to be carrying heavy firewood, and enjoyed the good children’s joy – they worked! ... And a secret light at the bottom of the eyes that had fallen out was revealed. At the back of the eyes was a transparent source of All-human Hope for the Future”²⁸.

²⁶ Агеєва В. П. Українська імпресіоністична проза. Київ : Інститут літератури імені Т. Г. Шевченка НАН України, 1994. С. 86.

²⁷ Філатова О. Автор і текст у системі соцреалізму. Миколаїв : Ліон. 2017. С. 204.

²⁸ Слісаренко О. Вибрані твори. Київ : Смолоскип, 2011. С. 58.

A special place in the segment of small prose, dedicated to the theme of childhood, is the story of Valerian Podmagilny "Vanya", which simulates a crisis existential situation in which a seven-year-old boy is. However, in the author's interpretation the child appears as a "little adult". So, let's just say that Valerian Podmagilny never calls Vanya a child, the character appears in the work as a "little man" or "seven-year-old man"²⁹. Psychological study of the inner world of the boy in the story "Vanya" is carried out through the prism of moral and ethical conflict. Skillful reproduction of unconscious destructive instincts, existential experiences (aggression, premonition of the punishment, fear, condemnation of fear), actualized by the boy's cruel actions (murder of a dog) destroys the traditional "angelic interpretation"(statement by Svetlana Lenskaya) of the child (expression).

Kost Gordienko's attraction to the literary absorption of the lives of children in the adult world of social, class conflicts was reflected in Fedko's story. The reception of the children's world has similar characteristics to the Ukrainian humanist traditions, presented in the works of Panas Myrny ("Morozenko", "Adventure with "Kobzar"), Ivan Franko ("Little Myron", "In Forge", "My Crime"), Mykhailo Kotsyubynsky ("Kharytya", "Yalinka", "Little Sinner"), Vasily Stefanyk ("Maple Leaves", "Mother's Son", "Katrusya"), Mark Cheremshyna ("Karbi") and several other national writers. The title of the story clearly indicates the intertextual coincidences with the story of Volodymyr Vynnychenko "Fedko-Khalamydnyk". The common features are traced at the ideological-thematic and figurative levels (perhaps most of all – defined by V. Panchenko "spirit of opposition" of the character of the hero³⁰), although, of course, the work of a beginner by artistic and aesthetic level seems artistically weaker than the work of an authoritative predecessor.

Several pages of Kost Gordienko's story "Fedko" unfold the story of a 10-year-old boy from a poor rural family who, through his own actions and behavior, reasoning and conclusions, shows signs of exceptional "adulthood". The literary material is composed by the author to show the character of Fedko, a rebellious, full of self-esteem, and to express his inner world.

The problems and conflicts of the story of Kost Gordienko have a clear social implication. The work reflects the author's reflections on the needy existence and the bleak future of peasant children, who have come face to

²⁹ Підмогильний В. Історія пані Ївги : Оповідання, повість. Київ : Веселка, 1991. С. 21.

³⁰ Панченко В. Будинок з химерами. Творчість Володимира Винниченка 1900–1920 рр. у європейському літературному контексті. Кіровоград, 1998. 272 с.

face with the brutality of the adult world. The subject of reflection is also the destruction of family ties, the moral degradation of the peasants driven into despair (drunkenness, rudeness, uncontrolled outbreaks of rage, unmotivated cruelty), and their cultural backwardness.

The writer's pioneering quest was found in elements of scripted stylistics characteristic of the silent cinema genre, "focused on the condensation and conciseness of the phrase, the fragmentation of the narrative, the dynamics of reproduction of" fact, "devoid of detail and descriptiveness"³¹. In the text prevails clearly defined expressive event, more precisely, concentrated action-action of the hero without individual existence, in exchange of psychologism – gestures, movements, facial expressions that convey the tension of experience. The tendency for scriptural stylistics is also noticeable in the semantically syntactic structure of the phrase (rhetorical questions, exclamations, impersonal, incomplete sentences), and in the graphic organization of the work, in particular in the "graphic segmentation" (O. Filatova's expression) of parts of the narrative.

The author scrupulously analyzes the frankly unattractive aspects of peasant life: malice and aggression, physical violence as the main "method" of raising a son, uncontrollable outbursts of fury and brutal treatment of his wives ("...father grabbed Fedko by the hand, and so much that the bone was broken // "How long, how long is he?" – the fire was in the darkened head. // And my father was spinning: // – Here you are, here you are! // It seemed to Fedko that a whole tough, fierce, gluttonous eternity lasted while his father was beating him"³²). There are no pictures of the safe childhood of a 10-year-old boy in the story of Fedko – bright and joyful, with games and fun, with a characteristic behavior pattern.

The work features a new approach to the position of the author, which was actively used in Ukrainian prose in the 1920's. In the story "Fedko" (just like most works in the genre), Kost Gordienko demonstrates a first-person narrative, blending the "voice" of the hero and the "voice of the author". Built into the plot of the work, "voices" are perceived as one. This approach to the "presence" of the author in the literary structure of the text, in the words of Zinaida Golubieva, "allows achieving the style of spontaneity, a kind of emotional coloring of the story of the direct participant of events"³³.

³¹ Філатова О. Український роман 20–30-х років XX століття: типологія авторської свідомості. Миколаїв : Ліон, 2010. С. 245.

³² Гордієнко К. Федько. Харків : Книгоспілка, 1925. С. 5.

³³ Голубева З. Український радянський роман 20-х років. Харків : Вид-во Харк. ун-ту, 1967. С. 208.

Meanwhile, in the poetics of the story “Fedko” there is a manner of story, in which the author’s description of the psychological-emotional and mood of the characters seamlessly transforms into reflections, in a kind of internal monologue organized at the level of improper direct speech (“Fedko wanted to earn money for the boots very much, and even more “make his way in life” and therefore he hoped for the words of his parents. Although... as much as Moshko promised, everything is in vain”³⁴).

In his essay, *On the Ruins of a Monastery* (1925), the author focuses exceptionally on the history of establishing a children’s shelter on the territory of the famous Okhtyr Monastery. The composition is carefully sustained to the requirements of the genre: the work consists of small individual fragments – “The Last Bell”, “Sacred Chantan”, “Thorny Way”, “Sang Lark” and others. The storyline is based on the education of a new Soviet generation, united by a common idea, inspired by labor affairs. The story begins with the history of the monastery, the reasons for the creation of a children’s colony in it, then goes into the pictures of the real life of the former homeless (teaching, community service), the success of the first graduates.

The text of Kost Gordienko clearly outlines the spatial location of events, defines a limited amount of time, a large number of characters. There are no individual images here at all, as there are no attempts of the writer to make certain generalizations, to comprehend the inner being, complex spiritual reflections of the heroes, etc. “In the foreground, almost all the characteristics of the image of the new hero, in acute conflict situations, dramatic episodes – collectivism as the norm of behavior and the dominant of consciousness”³⁵. There is a complete self-identification of the individual “Ego” of the child with part of some powerful whole one.

Also noticeable is the method of strict but fair fellow-mentors, which mainly consisted in turning the most active bullies, appointing leaders over the rest of the colonists, into organizers of the children’s community. Curious to relate, the practice of re-education soon gave results: “the child arranges itself everywhere, manages food, knows organization of the work, works in the field, gardens”³⁶. While one group is studying, another is working. So the work did not stop its rhythm, nor did the training.

³⁴ Гордієнко К. Федько. Харків : Книгоспілка, 1925. С. 10–11.

³⁵ Філатова О. Автор і текст у системісоцреалізму. Миколаїв: Іліон. 2017. С. 207.

³⁶ Гордієнко К. На руїнах монастиря. *Всесвіт*. 1925. № 19. С. 14.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the case of educating a new person in the essay is presented as fully completed, and the mechanism of its creation – as well-established, tested and perfect. The final episode of the story is quite telling in view of the idea of Soviet upbringing of children, artistically presented in the work of Kost Gordienko: fully transformed, healthy morally, politically literate, conscious community workers, they got everything they could take here – today they will wander, go further trails, someone to work, someone to the sugar factory, to the experimental station – to independent life, to work³⁷. “The colony “on the ruins of the monastery” in the artistic interpretation of prose (as well as in real life) becomes a kind of “utopia of rational education” (O. Filatova’s expression) of “street children”. On the other hand, it fully represents the author’s worldviews based on the ideas of building a new “happy” society.

It is quite obvious that in the early prose of Kost Gordienko there is no romantic idea of reality. Instead, we see a tragic image of the world, burdened with hunger, danger and fear of loneliness, suffering and hopelessness, loss of humanity in man. At the other end of the artistic model are contrasting pictures of Soviet myth-making, pathetic, far from the truth, ideologically oriented. Intentions of the writer in both cases, in our opinion, determine the spiritual and moral-ethical poles of the artistic-ideological system of the aspiring writer and reflect the controversial nature of his worldview.

SUMMARY

Attention is drawn to the fact that the main literary ground on which Kost Gordienko’s creative preferences were formed – the traditions of Ukrainian realistic literature. From the very beginning, Kost Gordienko tried to develop an individual style of writing, choosing the leading small prose genres, and later – a satirical story. Small epic forms made it possible for Kost Gordienko to condense and respond promptly to events, to comprehend difficult life conflicts, to reflect the spirit of the times. A prominent feature of Kost Gordienko’s early work is the combination in the creative field of realistic principles of image with modern searches, the synthesis of different genre-style paradigms, literary and journalistic discourses, which in general significantly expanded the expressive possibilities of small prose. The work is characterized by rigorous truthfulness in showing the circumstances of life, conveyed with all the details, a detailed reproduction of working conditions, which the author compares with modern conditions of work, rest and leisure.

³⁷ Гордієнко К. На руїнах монастиря. *Всесвіт*. 1925. № 19. С. 14.

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