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SHARDS OF TRAUMA:  
MODELLING THE NARRATIVE ABOUT POLES  
IN THE AUTOREFLEXIVE DIMENSION  
(BASED ON OKSANA ZABUZHKO'S NOVEL  
*THE MUSEUM OF ABANDONED SECRETS*)

INTRODUCTION

Modern studies of trauma focus significantly on exploring its embodiment in literary discourse. Models presenting individual and collective traumatic experiences which take into consideration the necessity to narrate these experiences using the “language of trauma” often become a subject of research.<sup>1</sup> The postmodern Ukrainian literature of the 21st century is an experimental space revealing special ways of representing traumatic experiences, depicted in the “language of trauma”. Autoreflexivity, which combines the act of narration and the act of reflection, can be considered one of them. It is noteworthy that it is orientation towards auto-reflexivity, which is “inherent in most literary works of modernism and postmodernism”,<sup>2</sup> that acquires a special functional dimension in the narratives about traumatic

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<sup>1</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 9.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on autoreflexion, see Oleksandra Shtepenko, *Literatura v dzerkali literaturi: strategii khudozhnoi avtorefleksii* (Kherson: Ailant, 2017), 8–20.

events. In this case, autoreflexive strategies serve as a toolkit used to speak about “the unspoken”, which allows narrating trauma.

This study seeks to examine the specificity of representing the traumatic experience of Ukrainian-Polish relationships in the narrative discourse of Oksana Zabuzhko’s novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* in the autoreflexive dimension. The research perspective in the context of the postmodern and postcolonial work primarily requires comprehending the mechanism of the interaction between narrative categories and theoretical trauma studies.

Many scientists believe that analysing the narrative about Poles in Oksana Zabuzhko’s novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* is a complicated task, since the chronotope of the novel incorporates the most difficult historical period of 1939–1947, covering the events of the World War II, whose tragic legacy remains an uncertain issue in the context of Ukrainian-Polish relationships.

Most critical reviews of the novel focus on two different versions of interpreting the national heritage of the Ukrainian-Polish history of the 20th century. Ostap Slyvynskyi argues that

ideologization of the narrative about their own history of the 20th century is characteristic of both Ukraine and Poland, and it is literature that plays (or at least can play) the role of a certain shock absorber between different “official” versions of the national histories, involving in the discussion what is personal, marginal, and individual, what is between the mutually exclusive historical narratives; moreover, it can reveal unexpected points of intersection of these narratives.<sup>3</sup>

The narrative about Ukrainian-Polish relationships in Oksana Zabuzhko’s novel does not play the role of such a “shock absorber” between the national viewpoints on the “official” history, but suggests its own alternative version of “historical micronarrative,”<sup>4</sup> focused on oral history and the disclosure of “secrets” of private life.

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<sup>3</sup> Ostap Slyvynskyi, “Shcho pismennikovyi soganndi robiti z istorieyu: polskiy mayster-klas dlya Ukraïni,” Culture.pl, July 18, 2016, <https://culture.pl/ua/stattia/shcho-pysmennykovi-sohod-ni-robyty-z-istoriye%D1%96u-polskyi-maister-klas-dlia-ukrainy>

<sup>4</sup> Agnieszka Matusiak, *Viyti z movchannya. Dekolonialni zmagannya ukraïnskoï kulturi ta literaturi XXI stolittya z postkolonialnoyu travmoyu*, trans. Andriy Bondar (Lviv: LA “Piramida”, 2020), 86.

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REPRESENTING THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE  
OF UKRAINIAN-POLISH RELATIONSHIPS  
IN THE NARRATIVE SPACE OF THE NOVEL

“Focalization on the concept of trauma”<sup>5</sup> is a characteristic feature of modern culture and literature. Therefore, the issue of narrating trauma possesses great potential for comprehending its functions in terms of literary studies in order to search for new vectors of interpretation of postmodern literary texts. It is noteworthy that methodological approaches to memory studies differ in their treatment of the interrelation between narrative representation and trauma. However, they share a common feature: in trauma studies, narrative is considered to be one of the means by which the injured consciousness constructs its own identity. As a tool for restoring the lost identity, narrative involves telling a story about one’s own traumatic experience and acts as a means of creating and shaping the narrative “language of trauma”, which reproduces a connection to the memory of the traumatic event.

On a psychoanalytic interpretation, trauma is defined as an event which cannot be fully articulated and described; therefore, the narrative about it can be regarded as an act of “overcoming the unspoken”.<sup>6</sup> In a literary work, exploring the mechanisms of memory involved in creating and representing trauma requires an in-depth reflection on the existence of a certain literary model of the narrative about trauma. Such a model of literary narrative, unlike “natural narratives”,<sup>7</sup> is based on a certain literary model that already exists in literary discourse and can be used and processed in a literary work “at the request” of the author, incorporating structural features such as auto-reflexive strategies. Therefore, articulation of trauma in the narrative discourse inspires an in-depth understanding of its typological features.

Representations of trauma in the literary narrative manifest a specific characteristic which can be defined as incoincidence of events. Sigmund Freud’s definition of trauma as the previously experienced and then forgotten impression implies that the basis for a traumatic event is not the immediate experience of trauma, but rather the memory of it. Thus, the “place of

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<sup>5</sup> Alexandre Gefen, *Réparer le monde. La littérature française face au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Éditions Corti, 2017), 86.

<sup>6</sup> Tamara Hundorova, *Tranzitna kultura. Simptomi postkolonialnoï travmi: staty ta yesei* (Kyiv: Grani, 2013), 118.

<sup>7</sup> Monika Fludernik, “Genres, Texttypes or Discourse Model. Narrative Modalities and Generic Categorization,” *Style* 34, no. 2 (2000): 283.

trauma”<sup>8</sup> is in the gap between the past events and the fact of subconscious fixations of the unspoken memories. Since the “image of the Pole in the Ukrainian historical prose of the past centuries is traditionally associated with the depiction of military conflicts and is created within the framework of the military discourse,”<sup>9</sup> it should be noted that the incoincidence of events in the narrative about the traumatic experience of the confrontation between Ukrainians and Poles in *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* occurs at the intersection between the traditional methods of representation and reproduction of a specific version of “war at war” which is as close to the historical reality as possible.

Taking this specificity into consideration in the process of creating the narrative about trauma Oksana Zabuzhko uses the binary opposition “the Self–the Other vs Foe” to model her own narrative complex, using narrative units of different scales and functions, such as associations, memories, dreams, comments on dreams, reminiscences of others’ experiences, reduplication of events, etc. In this way, the author of *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* creates a “narrative intrigue” (Paul Ricoeur’s term), around which fragments of the literary narrative about traumatic relationships between Ukrainians and Poles are centred.

The above narrative complex is a strategic component of the general “narrative code of the novel”,<sup>10</sup> which, along with other narrative strategies, reflects the author’s idea of “re-reading” the traumatic experience of the Ukrainian society in the post-colonial projection. Furthermore, the writer attempts to decode the memory of generations about the historical past not only to revive the suppressed and silenced national history, but also to find and reconstruct individual “secrets” of people lost in time, but still living at the subconscious level in the present. Vira Aheieva believes that “children’s game in secrets eventually becomes a metaphor of the forgotten, untold and uncomprehended national history.”<sup>11</sup> This metaphor acts as a “carrier of memories” and “extends memory in the way so that the memory of place goes

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<sup>8</sup> Alyayda Assman, *Prostori spogadu. Formi ta transformatsii kulturnoi pam’yati*, trans. Kseniya Dmitrenko, Larisa Doronicheva, and Olesandr Yudin (Kyiv: Nika-Tsentr, 2012), 317.

<sup>9</sup> Oleksandr Kyrylchuk, “Polyak yak Inshiy v istorichniy prozi 1880–1890 rokiv,” *Studia Ukrainica Posnaniensia* 2 (2014): 92.

<sup>10</sup> Igor Papusha, *Modus ponens. Narisi z naratologii* (Ternopil: Krok, 2013), 184.

<sup>11</sup> Vira Aheieva, *Za lashtunkami imperiyi. Yeseyi pro ukrayinsko-rosiyski kulturni vidnosini* (Kyiv: Vikhola, 2021), 323.

far beyond human memory”,<sup>12</sup> requiring a return from oblivion and reconstruction of its integrity.

The necessity to restore the connection between generations at the level of the subconscious is conveyed by the main characters in the novel’s contemporary setting – journalist Daryna Goshchynska and her lover Adrian Vatamanyuk, who realize their own identity through revealing the link with the traumatized past of their ancestors. Tamara Hundorova believes that “the past, when it is coloured by traumatic experiences, affects the future and eradicates the present from life. Attachment to the traumatic past puts the descendants in the position of hostages.”<sup>13</sup> The deep connection of the traumatized past in the subconscious of a modern individual is characterized by Oksana Zabuzhko as a “spiritual body” “which is dragged by us, which is blurred in time”.<sup>14</sup> The author’s awareness of the “body as a medium of memory”<sup>15</sup> encourages readers of her novel to reflect on the discovery of “lost secrets” among which “secrets” of the traumatized past of Ukrainian-Polish relationships occupy a special place.

#### THE PECULIARITIES OF CREATING A NARRATIVE ABOUT POLES IN THE AUTOREFLEXIVE DIMENSION

Regarding the structural parameters of auto-reflection as a “complex of strategies, models and typological features in their dynamics,”<sup>16</sup> it should be noted that this combination focuses on the process of reinterpreting and reevaluating the traumatic life experience, incorporating elements of its hierarchization. When telling a story, the narrator always goes beyond the story itself since the narrative functions on the border between referential and communicative types of discourse, combining, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, “the event narrated in a literary work and the event of narrating itself”.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, autoreflexion acts as a cognitive, semiotic construct, that is,

<sup>12</sup> Assman, *Prostori spogadu*, 317.

<sup>13</sup> Hundorova, *Tranzitna kultura*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Oksana Zabuzhko and Iza Chrušlińska, *Ukraïnskiy palimpsest. Muzei pokinutikh sekreti. Oksana Zabuzhko u rozmovi z Izoyu Khruslinskoyu* (Kyiv: Komora, 2014), 320.

<sup>15</sup> Assman, *Prostori spogadu*, 261.

<sup>16</sup> Shtepenko, *Literatura v dzerkali literaturi*, 389.

<sup>17</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, “Problema tekstu u lingvistitsi, filologii ta inshikh gumanitarnikh naukach,” in *Slovo. Znak. Diskurs: antologiya svitovoi literaturno-kritichnoi dumki KHKH*, ed. M. Zubritska (Lviv: Litopis, 2001), 420.

universal for different types of narrative discourses. This semiotic model works in accordance with the principle of switching narrative modes: from the mode of the narrative to the mode of narrating. On the one hand, as a result of this transformation, a literary work is separated from reality, makes itself weird and submerges in its own autoreflexive dimension. On the other hand, such switches encourage comprehending the present self in comparison with the past self and aim to reconstruct one's own identity. In this case, autoreflexion serves to create one's own new identity (in other words, re-identification), and also as an attempt to narrate traumatic events with the help of the narrator.

Adrian Ortynsky, the carrier of the narrative about Poles in *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, appears in the dreams of the contemporary characters and at the same time acts in the historical space as a character who narrates and comments on the events in the first person and "creates his narrative from within history".<sup>18</sup> According to Gérard Genette's classical narratological typification, such a narrator can be classified as a homodiegetic narrator in an extradiegetic situation. Based on Wolf Schmid's typology of narrative, this narrator can be characterized as a carrier of a first-level character's narrative who simultaneously conveys the story and functions as a character in it. However, the narrator type in the novel goes beyond both classifications since it presents a special "metadiegetic level"<sup>19</sup> of narration. This is conveyed in the novel through the postmodern technique "text within text" ("story within story") as the oneiric narrative. Such a metadiegetic narrator possesses maximum textual freedom which offers additional opportunities to enter the inner world of other characters, comment on them, layer and collage them, thereby intriguing the reader, expecting a certain reaction from them and provoking a critical reflection of the proposed version of the author's narrative strategy.

Critics and reviewers partly accuse the author of the novel of distorting the historical truth, excessive pathos in glorification of the UPA soldiers, a nationalistic tone in the presentation of history and deliberate silence about the traumatic chapters in the history of Ukrainian-Polish relationships. One of the aspects of the discussion revolves around the issue whether the narrative about Poles articulated by Adrian Ortynsky is a technique for reflecting "the author's mask", or whether the narrator conveys the rhetoric of a witness of the events of those times. If the narrator is considered to be a person

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<sup>18</sup> Papusha, *Modus ponens*, 116.

<sup>19</sup> Papusha, 123.

invented by the author, his consciousness is derived from the author's viewpoint and is the "addressee of the fictive narrator".<sup>20</sup> However, the narrative discourse in the novel is constructed according to the rules of the postmodern intellectual game with the text and the reader, which provokes a certain reaction from the recipients (predictable or unpredictable) and leads to exacerbation of the communicative connection. For instance, it can be observed in the review of the Polish historian Grzegorz Motyka, who reproaches Oksana Zabuzhko for the impossibility of "justifying historical mistakes with the author's right to create literary fictions, and also trying to explain that these words do not reflect the author's viewpoints, but rather those of the UPA member Adrian depicted in the novel."<sup>21</sup> Taking into consideration that each narrative strategy creates a communicative discourse and establishes rules of the author's game with the reader through the medium of a literary text, it can be noted that the narrator's viewpoint is a "global projection of the content of the literary text onto the reader's receptive capacity".<sup>22</sup> Therefore, stratification of the voices of the author, narrator and characters in the text "allows thoroughly outlining the contours of the fictional world (in relation to the original idea), giving features to it and making aesthetic communication as psychologically motivated and aesthetically perfect as possible".<sup>23</sup>

When it comes to the literary narrative about trauma, it is always connected to the means of fictionalizing events, which fundamentally differentiates it from the historical narrative. In the 1980s, Linda Hutcheon introduced the term "historiographic metafiction" into literary studies, the principal feature of which is the "incorporation of metafictional elements used to simultaneously elevate and offset objectivity of historical science".<sup>24</sup> This genre distinguishes between the facts defined by historians and meanings inherent in the postmodern literary perception. In addition, the issue of "anti-historical" narrative about the historical past in *The Museum of Abandoned*

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<sup>20</sup> Wolf Schmid, *Narratology: An Introduction*, trans. Alexander Starritt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 78.

<sup>21</sup> Grzegorz Motyka, "Sekreti rozkrivayut chi nadali vishtovkhuyut zi svidomosti? Navkolo knizhki Oksani Zabuzhko 'Muzei pokinutikh sekretiv'." *Historians*, October 28, 2013, <https://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/zabuti-zertvy-viyny/906-gzhegozh-motyka-sekrety-rozkryvaiut-chy-nadali-vyshtovkhuyut-zi-svidomosti-navkolo-knyzhky-oksany-zabuzhko-muzei-pokynutykh-sekretiv>.

<sup>22</sup> Lidiya Matserko-Bekerska, *Ukrainska mala proza kintsya 19-pochatku 20 stolittya u dzerkali naratologii* (Lviv: Splayn, 2008), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Matserko-Bekerska, *Ukrainska mala proza*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), 122–23.

*Secrets* is explained by the author of the novel: “Ukrainian, as well as European, literature is yet to develop a more or less satisfactory, adequate, and coherent narrative from that period.”<sup>25</sup>

#### AUTOREFLEXIVE STRATEGIES OF MODELLING THE MENTAL PORTRAIT OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLISH NATION

The modelling of the mental portrait of the representatives of the Polish nation occurs in the distinctive anti-colonial narrative and acquires a negative connotation through the figure of the narrator, who is a direct witness to the events of the Ukrainian-Polish confrontation in World War II. The life of the UPA soldier Adrian Ortynsky has been marked by a negative attitude towards Poles since his childhood, as he carries the traumatic memories of the past: “since that day in his childhood, when Uhlans came and dragged his father out of the church narthex, throwing his cassock over his head, one sat on top of him, and the other two were beating him with a billy stick and shouting: ‘Long live Marshal Piłsudski’.”<sup>26</sup> In this narrative episode, the narrator’s negative attitude towards the representatives of the Polish Army is reinforced by the narration reduplication technique, which adds infernal meanings to these characters. In Adrian’s perception, the image of the Pole is identified with the image of the Foe who should be punished for oppressing Ukrainians: “This was Poland’s legacy, he thought: for twenty years Poland handled us as tools, with a condescending, speak-to-you-through-the-teeth certainty that the Rúsyns were not people but pigs, and honed and tempered us to respond, like a good ax, symmetrically, in kind.”<sup>27</sup>

Adrian’s childhood trauma, which, like a flash of the subconscious, appears before his eyes in an extreme situation, acquires deep meaning in the episode of the conversation between the “Beast” and the catholic priest Yaroslav in the partisan hideout, when it is revealed that Adrian’s father was a Catholic and a priest of the Greek Catholic Church. This focus of narration deviates from the traditional Ukrainian prose “model of the religious otherness of Poles which was mainly based on the opposition of Orthodoxy and

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<sup>25</sup> Oksana Zabuzhko, afterword to *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, trans. Nina Shevchuk-Murray (Las Vegas: Amazon Crossing, 2012), 86.

<sup>26</sup> Zabuzhko, 68.

<sup>27</sup> Zabuzhko, 224.



Catholicism.”<sup>28</sup> The narrative model created by the author of the novel reinforces infernality of the Pole character as an enemy, demonstrating the idea of religious oppression of the Ukrainian by the nationality, without distinction based on religious preferences.

In creating the mental portrait of the representatives of the Polish nation in the novel, an important role is played by a social factor which is associated with the colonial assimilation of the Ukrainian people under the influence of the pacification policy implemented Józef Piłsudski’s order against the Ukrainian population of Galicia in the 1930s. Adrian Ortynsky’s characteristic of his liaison Nusia fits into the optics of the anti-Polish rhetoric. The narrative acquires a distinctive anti-pacification meaning: “when she’s nervous this awkward Polish syntax spills out of her: she bragged she’d graduated, in the old days, from the Madame Strzalkowska’s Polish Gymnasium, and it’s a marvel indeed that they hadn’t quite managed to craft a first-rate Polish chauvinist out of her.”<sup>29</sup>

The anti-pacification rhetoric is also inherent in Adrian Ortynsky’s memories of his “Grandpa”, who “was the first in his family to go to Gymnasium; he passed his exit exams, the matura as it was called”.<sup>30</sup> He was taught by a Polish professor, whose figure acquires a negative, chauvinistic connotation: “He was a good student, but did not receive a distinction because of this one Polish professor, he said, who couldn’t stand the sight of Ukrainian students, and humiliated them every chance he got.”<sup>31</sup> However, later in this narrative fragment, there is a switch of meanings which shifts the contextual emphasis:

And when in '39 the Soviets came, that very first autumn in Grandpa’s town they put to the wall everyone who graduated with distinction, line by line according to the Gymnasium’s rosters – Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, not sorting who was “genteel” and who was “peasant,” everyone whose atestats had that summa cum laude.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike the episode about Adrian Ortynsky’s childhood trauma, this narrative episode does not deepen the negation of the character of Poles. There is rather a carnival reversal of meanings through post-modern irony, which results in the sacralization of the demonic figure of the “Ukrainophobe professor” and his transformation into the saviour. The professor who could not

<sup>28</sup> Kyrylchuk, “Polyak yak Inshiy,” 98.

<sup>29</sup> Zabuzhko, *Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, 91.

<sup>30</sup> Zabuzhko, 249.

<sup>31</sup> Zabuzhko, 249.

<sup>32</sup> Zabuzhko, 250.

bear Ukrainians and prevented Adrian's grandfather from receiving an honorary diploma, thereby saved him from being shot. The presence of a sarcastic tone in the narrative almost offsets the negative connotation of the perception of the Polish character: "thanks to his Ukrainophobe professor".<sup>33</sup> Thus, the traumatic episode about shooting the gymnasium students, in which Poles, Ukrainians and Jews are regarded as equal, is interpreted in the autoreflexive dimension in the novel as a strategy for creating the image of the collective Victim. This reflects a change in the author's optics from the anti-Polish narrative to the narrative of the common totalitarian trauma.

The narrative about the impact of the pacification policy on Ukrainians actualizes the long-standing issue of the Polish expansion which is associated with the image of a Ukrainian who "followed Poles" and assimilated into their faith and culture. The creation of the autoreflexive strategy of othering the Self as the Other can be observed in the novel. It manifests itself in the reference to the historical events surrounding the foundation of the Ostroh Slavic-Greek-Latin School (now the Ostroh Academy) by Prince Kostiantyn Ostrozkyi in 1576, established in opposition to the Polish expansion, which declined in 1624 with the foundation of a Jesuit college there. The discourse of the history of misunderstanding between Ukrainians and Poles is reflected in the novel as a cultural trauma of generations. Attention is focused on the grand-daughter of a famous Ukrainian scientist who married a Polish nobleman and converted to Catholicism, thereby betraying her grandfather's life's work: "founded the Ostrog Academy to counter the Polish expansion only to see his granddaughter convert to Catholicism and deliver the Academy – lock, stock, and barrel – to the very Jesuits her granddaddy had spent his entire life fighting".<sup>34</sup> This narrative is conveyed by the main character of the novel, Daryna Goshchynska, who reflects the author's perspective. This, perhaps, is the only instance in the novel where the redirection of the narrative about Poles to another narrator reflects the exceptional importance of this historical memory for Oksana Zabuzhko. The reference to the long-standing history demonstrates the use of the narrative in an uncharacteristic prognostic function and models the strategy for creating the future perspective when referring to the past. According to this strategy, the narrative of trauma acts as a tool for constructing the future, in which the writer requires the descendants' adequate comprehension of the mistakes of their national

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<sup>33</sup> Zabuzhko, 250.

<sup>34</sup> Zabuzhko, 23.

history which are repeated in the history of generations and transmit the negative experience to the future.

In accordance with this strategy, Oksana Zabuzhko plays a providential role of the “creator of history, in possible sacred and demonic, apocalyptic meanings”,<sup>35</sup> bravely pulling skeletons out of the national cupboard of the Ukrainian community: “Ukrainian families changed faiths, languages, and national flags in practically every generation – sometimes faster than fashion, like addicts going through needles: a shot in the arm and toss this one out the window, grab a new one, and so on.”<sup>36</sup> The writer frankly speaks about the heavy bonds of the Ukrainian mentality which have merged in minds, distorted by the long-term colonial past: “This would appear to be our only national tradition that survives to this day – this compulsion to offer ourselves up to whoever rules the day.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, in *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, the narrative representation of the Polish characters reverses the binary opposition “the Self–the Other” into the version “the Self as the Other”, where the Self is othered according to one’s own national re-identification. Oksana Zabuzhko has embedded an important intention in the novel for the sake of further decoding of the awareness of the national dignity by future generations.

#### NARRATIVIZATION OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS IN THE ONEIRIC DISCOURSE

The strategy of narrative discourse in the novel is unique because the narrator (the senior Adrian) and the focalizer (the junior Adrian) are separated not only by the real historical time, but also by the imaginary space of dreams. According to Tamara Hundorova’s observation, “this virtual model is based on the principle of mutual reflection of the time mirrors – the 1920s look at 2003, the latter looks, as if in a mirror, at 1943 and 1947, and all three generations are interconnected with the chains of virtual associations and links – like, for example, Adrian’s dreams.”<sup>38</sup>

In oneiric discourse, we usually encounter an atypical representation of the narrative as a method for revealing different worlds: mystical and real.

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<sup>35</sup> Shtepenko, *Literatura v dzerkali literaturi*, 137.

<sup>36</sup> Zabuzhko, *Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Zabuzhko, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Hundorova, *Tranzitna kultura*, 120.

The modelling of the narrative is complicated by a special status of eventfulness in a dream, when the narrator is a participant of this dream, but his or her actions in the oneiric space cannot be associated either with real events and the narrator's conscious agency or with fiction. Therefore, the "double eventfulness"<sup>39</sup> is a basis of the oneiric narrative: external (the event in the dream is one of the central plot points) and internal (the events of the dream are regarded by the narrator as unusual). Such a reduplication appears in the dreams retold by the narrator (the senior Adrian) and the focalizer (the junior Adrian) and is complicated by the extra-narrative comment embedded in the fictional text: Daryna Goshchynska and Andrian try to interpret their dreams about the past for each other. The presence of the extra-narrative comment testifies to a shift in the narrative perspective from the oneiric events to reflections about what was seen. Moreover, the interpretation and evaluation of dreams in the rhetoric of the junior Adrian are accompanied by the context of anxious feelings of the senior Adrian who experienced them in real life in the past. Negative associations of the historical double are conveyed at the subconscious level and transmitted to the modern real world by Adrian Vatamaniuk: "I'm dreaming someone else's consciousness" that "doesn't look like a dream – more like a memory, a very vivid, visceral memory, with touch and smell – only I am absolutely certain that whatever is happening has never happened to *me*. I know it's not *my* memory."<sup>40</sup> The protagonist, embarrassed by what he dreamt, tries to reassure himself: "I am not mad I tell myself as I try to suppress the shakes; I am not mad. Calm down. I'm not mad."<sup>41</sup>

Thus, complex connections of the reality, oneiric narrative and extra-narrative comments in Oksana Zabuzhko's novel create a special narrative technique for the author's coding the past and transmitting it to the present. Agnieszka Matusiak characterizes this form of presentation as a "symbolic ghostly museum exposition"<sup>42</sup> and defines Adrian Vatamanyuk as a "ghostly character", who becomes a "medium for transmitting the past to the present: the history, *witnessed by his ghostly alter-ego – the military Adrian*" (italics mine).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Valentina Nikolaienko, "Zhanrova spetsifika onirichnogo narativu," *Naukoviy visnik Mizhnarodnogo humanitarnogo universitetu. Ser. Filologiya*, no. 55 (2022): 74.

<sup>40</sup> Zabuzhko, *Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, 99.

<sup>41</sup> Zabuzhko, 111.

<sup>42</sup> Matusiak, *Viyti z movchannya*, 95.

<sup>43</sup> Matusiak, 102.

The junior Adrian, as a witness, defines the form of his testimonies in the novel as shots from someone's film, from the film of the murdered person who did not have a camera with him. He begins to realize that the film shot in one's mind does not disappear anywhere, it exists in their minds, and that there are countless films of this kind in the history: somewhere in the virtual world, there is a hidden, enormous, immeasurable – endless, in fact! – archive of films, which want to be watched – in what way is a detail which is insignificant currently.<sup>44</sup>

In the post-traumatic reality, Adrian Vatamanyuk revives, transmits and verbalizes the trauma of his grand-father's past, thereby becoming "a moral witness who proclaims testimonies and breaks silence".<sup>45</sup> Performing an important mission of a witness in the court of history, he speaks on behalf of someone who was deprived of this voice, but whose story should be articulated. "In real life, trial and history are interrelated not as reality with fiction, but as two narratives of trauma, two riddles of emotional and physical destruction, two human responses to the shock of unrelenting reality of death and pain."<sup>46</sup> Shoshana Felman defines the "model of testimony" as the "main discursive model" which is "inherent in the post-traumatic 20th century".<sup>47</sup> Tamara Hundorova notes that the "traumatic past remains in a transgressive way in the present; being vengeful, it haunts, takes over the present and dominates it instead of getting rid of it".<sup>48</sup>

The past in the present, comprehending, revealing and re-interpreting it, actualizes the problem of manifesting auto-reflection at a certain meta-level, which incorporates the processes of "connecting" to others' experiences, reflecting on them, going through them as through one's own experience and representing it further in a literary work in the palette of personal feelings. It is noteworthy that going through someone's traumatic experience as through one's own experience is the core of Oksana Zabuzhko's personal perception of the tragedies of the national history, therefore autoreflexive strategies gain great importance in the novel since they serve as a powerful resource in creating and representing the narrative about trauma.

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<sup>44</sup> Zabuzhko, *Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, 89.

<sup>45</sup> Matusiak, *Viyti z movchannya*, 104.

<sup>46</sup> Shoshana Felman, "Forms of Judicial Blindness, or the Evidence of What Cannot Be Seen: Traumatic Narratives and Legal Repetitions in the O. J. Simpson Case and in Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*," *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 4 (1997): 740.

<sup>47</sup> Felman, 741.

<sup>48</sup> Hundorova, *Tranzitna kultura*, 16.

In the afterword to *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, Zabuzhko describes the traumatic context of the Ukrainian history of the 20th century as “Himalayas of mental rubbish, packed over the last sixty years almost into concrete – the layers upon layers of lies, half-lies, innuendo, falsifications, and so on.”<sup>49</sup> Agnieszka Matusiak suggests that *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* postulates a new type of memory for Ukrainian literature – “trans-active memory”, which focuses on “imagining trauma experienced by the Other”.<sup>50</sup> Her observation correlates with the socio-cultural idea of “traumatized communities” by Kai Erickson<sup>51</sup> in the direction of the “process of jointly processing trauma and filling the emptiness which is not always possible to verbalize”.<sup>52</sup>

In the novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, the post-modern model of testimony is used as the main discursive model of narrative representation of the traumatic experience which encourages “revealing” the unspoken trauma in the oneiric narrative and can be considered a way of finding balance, which is intuitively felt and implemented in Oksana Zabuzhko’s landmark postmodernist novel.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the strategies of narrative modelling of traumatic experience in postmodern perception requires the study of the mechanisms of interaction between trauma and narrative in a work of fiction. Literary narrative about trauma differs from historical narrative in fictionalization and “anti-historical” nature of events. In *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, Oksana Zabuzhko constructs her own narratological complex, the peculiarity of which lies in the unfolding of the narration in the oneiric discourse, within which the narrative “shard-fragments” of the traumatic history of Ukrainians and Poles are united into a complex of shared experiences.

In the narrative structure of the dream discourse there is a reduplication of narratological eventuality and narratological perspective, which actualizes the manifestation of autoreflexivity at a certain meta-level and emphasizes

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<sup>49</sup> Zabuzhko, afterword to *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, 424.

<sup>50</sup> Matusiak, *Viyti z movchannya*, 123.

<sup>51</sup> Kai T. Erickson, *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters* (New York: Norton, 1994), 231.

<sup>52</sup> Matusiak, *Viyti z movchannya*, 123.

the angle of the writer's perception of her own traumatic experience. This reflects the importance of using autoreflexive strategies as an important tool in producing, modelling and representing the narrative about Ukrainian-Polish relations. The autoreflexive strategies employed in Zabuzhko's postmodern novel, that is, othering of the Self as the Other, constructing the image of the Collective Victim and building the Future Horizon by Referring to the Past, acquire a specific meaning and perform special functions: they invert the central binary opposition, change the narrative's optics and translate prognostic meanings.

The complexity of the narrative representation of traumatic Polish-Ukrainian relations in *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* lies in the uncertainty of important traumatic issues in the history of the twentieth century, which are interpreted and mirrored differently in the minds of the neighbouring communities. Oksana Zabuzhko interprets the traumatic experience of the Polish-Ukrainian misunderstanding as "a page of history common in its subservience that needs to be re-read" because it "has, in the subconsciousness of both sides, the memory of the 'common' Polish-Ukrainian tradition",<sup>53</sup> which is based on a shared totalitarian trauma. According to Alan Feldman, such similarities of traumatic events can form a "community of loss", that is, "the author and addressee of trauma".<sup>54</sup> The re-narrativization of these events will serve as a starting point for finding a common ground for processing and understanding the traumatic past of Ukrainians and Poles.

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<sup>53</sup> Zabuzhko, Oksana, "Polska kultura i my, abo malyy Apokalipsys Moskoviyady," presentation at the Ukrainian-Polish Symposium "Intelektualy, kultura, polityka: dosvid Polshchi ta Ukrayiny," Kyiv, 5–7 June 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Alan Feldman, "Political Terror and the Technologies of Memory: Excuse, Sacrifice, Commodification, and Actuarial Moralities," *Radical History Review* 85 (2003): 60.

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SHARDS OF TRAUMA:  
MODELLING THE NARRATIVE ABOUT POLES  
IN THE AUTOREFLEXIVE DIMENSION  
(BASED ON OKSANA ZABUZHKO'S NOVEL *THE MUSEUM OF ABANDONED SECRETS*)

Summary

This article focuses on determining the specificity of modelling the traumatic narrative about Ukrainian-Polish relationships presented in Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*. In order to reveal the structure of the author's "narrative code" (Igor Papusha's term), an attempt is made to comprehend the mechanisms of the interaction between narrative categories and theoretical studies of trauma and examine how the structural parameters of auto-reflection are involved in creating a literary narrative about trauma. The analysis shows that the narrative discourse about Ukrainian-Polish relationships employs autoreflexive strategies of othering the Self as the Other. This creates the image of a collective victim and constructs the future perspective, which play specific roles in postmodern writing – they invert the central binary opposition, change the narrative optics, and convey a prognostic meaning. The interpretation

angle presented in the article is expected to deepen and balance the perception of the literary version of the traumatic past of Ukrainians and Poles presented in Oksana Zabuzhko's novel.

**Keywords:** autoreflection; literary narrative; Oksana Zabuzhko's narrative intrigue; oneiric discourse; trauma

ODŁAMKI TRAUMY:  
MODELOWANIE NARRACJI O POLAKACH W WYMIARZE AUTOREFLEKSYJNYM  
(NA PODSTAWIE POWIEŚCI OKSANY ZABUŻKO  
*MUZEUM PORZUCONYCH SEKRETÓW*)

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie specyfiki modelowania traumatycznej narracji o stosunkach ukraińsko-polskich w powieści Oksany Zabuzhko *Muzeum porzuconych sekretów*. Aby ujawnić strukturę „kodu narracyjnego” autorki (termin Igora Papushy), badaczka stara się zrozumieć relacje między kategoriami narracyjnymi i teoretycznymi badaniami nad traumą i zastanowić się, w jaki sposób autorefleksja uczestniczy w tworzeniu literackiej narracji o traumie. Analiza pokazuje, że dyskurs narracyjny na temat relacji ukraińsko-polskich wykorzystuje strategie autorefleksyjne: strategia postrzegania Swojego jako Innego, strategia konstruowania obrazu zbiorowej ofiary oraz strategia budowania horyzontu przyszłości. Aspekty te pełnią określone funkcje w utworach postmodernistycznych: odwracają główną opozycję, zmieniają perspektywę narracji i prognozują przyszłe znaczenia. Przedstawiona w artykule perspektywa interpretacyjna ma na celu pogłębienie i zrównoważenie percepcji traumatycznej przeszłości Ukraińców i Polaków przedstawionej w powieści Oksany Zabuzhko.

**Słowa kluczowe:** autorefleksja; narracja literacka; intryga narracyjna Oksany Zabuzhko; dyskurs oniryczny; trauma