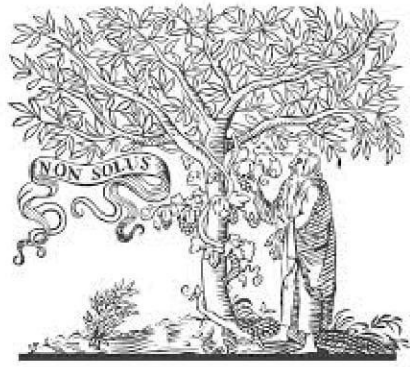


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The concept and modern condition of alternative history.
The role of European myth in spreading
the alternative-historian method in humanities

Abstract: The article is devoted to the genre and stylistic features of the alternative history genre. The article tries to determine the identity and the way of new-modern novel in Ukraine and its comparative position in the stage of foreign novel in this genre. Functioning of the European myth in the arts area of newmodern novel in Ukraine create a new world view in the Ukrainian literary studies.

Keywords: alternative history, European myth, newmodern novel, alternative-historian method, Ukrainian novel.

The alternative history (AH) means history-cultural course of sections in historiography, culture studies, genes studies, phenomenology; their basis of investigation is multidimensionality of historical time. The term has more limited meaning in literature discourse. AH was finally established in worldwide writing during modernism epoch. As fiction genre it originates from works of prominent American writer – M. Twain¹.

The most famous works in this genre are: “*3,000 Years among the microbes*” M. Twain. (1905), “*A Sound Of Thunder*” R. D. Bradbury, (1952), “*Eutopia*” P.W.S. Anderson, (1967), “*Tunnel Through the Deeps*” H. M. Harrison (1972), “*Dr.Heidegger’s Experiment*” N. Hawthorne (1837), “*Lest Darkness Fall*” Lyon Sprague de Camp (1939), “*The Island of Crimea*” V. Aksyonov (1979), “*The Heir*” K. Bulychov (1992), “*Fatherland*” R. Harris (1992), “*The other sky*” A. Lazarchuk (1993), “*72 letters*” T. Chan (2000), “*The variant “Bis”*” S. Anisimov (2004), 11 / 22 / 63 S. King (2011).

The most prominent researchers who discovered the alternative history are: C.Byeryezhnoy (Russia), H. White (USA), J. Clute (USA), R. Cawley (USA), V. Leshchenko (Russia) and A. Royfe (Russia), V. Sobolev (Ukraine), N. Chorna

(Russia). M. Twain's novel "*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*" (1889) is written on real historical notes, chronicles, evidence materials, however, the plot catalyst is fantastic element introduced by the author, which can be generally named as "what would be, if...".

Alteration of the history in the past (even if it comes to the future of society) creates lacuna for plot schemes evolution of fantastic type in literature, namely, prepares the basement for realization of typical story constructions in science fiction and fantasy, for example, in time travelling, intruding of alien civilization or in individual representatives of extraterrestrial forms of life.

Genre markers in AH works can be also balancing on global and partial edges, namely history and story; the probable histories of development, life screenplays of only humane civilization, in relation to official historiography, "and not smart dinosaurs, walking trees or mice²" as Hokser has said [pseudonym of the site founder <http://militera.lib.ru>, organizer of writers-alternatives competition].

The most important stylistic markers of AH are (from the experience of prominent nowadays fiction texts): Immersion in nationally-mental peculiarities of historical development and passing laws and historical events changings; Hermeneutics connection of AH and Christianity (predominant amount of AH works are written on the historical material after Christianity uprising or actually on the material of this process or its objection); Immersion into mythology and esoteric knowledge; Criticism of linear consequence theory in general sense; Reproduction methods involvement from the other kinds of art or science; Wide range of formally-typical formations;

As Hokser introduced, alternative history genre has three principled positions, from which there are its features: Described history fully matches to the fixed world and national history to the point of divergence, in other words, alternative history can't be based on crypto-history, hypothesis, fabrications; only real historical persons must be main in the writing; Alternative history is a history of humanity; that's why animal images or representatives of extraterrestrial civilization can't be protagonists there; If artistic method with parallel world or virtual reality are used in the writing, this world must be identical to the real, civilized space before the divergence point and must differ essentially after it;

Appearance of the AH genre on the fantastic and historical edges is proved with common functioning of both genre markers. As G. Klyut wrote on his

encyclopedic article: "Alternative History is not computer game-strategy, which can *be saved, replayed* and then *resaved*... and it is not secular talks about *what it could be if*..."³ Alternative history "lets to analyze progress of historical events, estimate the role in history of a person and occasional factors, and the most important, understand regularity of historical events, to avoid the repetition of the former mistakes in reality"⁴.

Ambivalence of this genre is connected with the fact that it is **distinguished from science fiction sphere and is formed on the genre of historical novel.**

Genre scheme of historical novel successfully works for alternative history writings. Alternative emerged in the historicism field, that shifted history. Appearance of historical novel is connected with historical prose revival during Middle Ages epoch, modification of novel narrative structure, and transformation of historical literature in New time epoch from mythology-parable into epic gender, lately into canonized genre of novel. "Historical prose is original genre, where facts, scientism and style are combined, that is based on poetics principles"⁵. This expression was said by A. Abramovuch and it is connected with historical prose genesis. But in XX century "[...] in connection with totalitarian regime establishment in Europe and practice of history rewriting [...] numerous presentations of historical events [...] mythology more and more dominates [...] and numerous stylizations are observed"⁶.

Movement to generalization gave the history the role of mediator between philosophy and religion: it transformed into secular religion. So its relations with church became ambiguous. History blocked up *Divine Providence* by the skill to explain the course of things, but at the same time, history continued to *be connected with God (unmittelbar zu Gott)*, there was always something lofty for rational historical reconstruction. V. Humbolt compared history with art that "is also not only imitation of an image, but application into the idea that is based in that image". («[...] auch nicht sowohl Nachahmung der Gestalt, als Versinnlichung der in der Gestalt ruhenden Idee ist»⁷.

In XX century, AH elements appeared in essays, dramas, small prose, and lately in novel. Historical intervals and moments that interested foreign writers the most mainly belong to history of wars and century breaks and also connect with history of Christianity [see table 1]. In return, Ukrainian attempts mainly apply to domestic history (mostly to political one) and belongs to Kievan Rus and Christianization of Ukrainian territory (I. Bilyk "*Mech Areya*" [The Sword of Arey],

“*Pohoron bohiv*” [The Gods’ funeral], “*Ne dratuyte hryfoniv*” [Don’t annoy griffins], V. Vladko “*Nashchadky skifiv*” [Scythians’ descendants]), or till XIX – the beginning of the XX centuries (O. Irvanets “*Rivne-Rovno*”, Ya. Yanovskuy “*Dolyna Belvederu*” [The valley of Belveder], Yu. Shcherbak “*Chas smertochrystiv*”, M. & S. Dyachenko “*Vita Nostra*”, and *defilyadna* range of three novels by V. Kozhelyanko.

A. Alekseev, founder of the biggest Internet-resources connected with alternative history questions wrote in *Time o'clock: news-дневник фут-уролога*: “On the basis of my old idea lies the notion that feuilleton epoch rooted in Russian fantasy long time ago. There are not original writers with holistic creative method for about 20 years. All who exist are regarded as hybrid-mutants, pasted with small parts from the past.”⁸ He didn’t atop on the fact, that his old idea was principally taken from F. Blyaya, from his book “*Bestiariy suchasnoyi literatury*”⁹ [Bestiariy of modern literature], we can see that A. Andreeyev considers brothers A. & B. Struhatskuy and K. Bulychov to be original and holistic writers.

There is the other important theoretical aspect – fantastical one. Its role in AH as genre-stylistic component of aim genre and AH formation in Ukrainian literature as genre-stylized variety *alternative history of Ukraine*.

In XX-XXI centuries, fantastic becomes aim genre in fiction literature, which uses property of the former genres of alternative history. “Genre, which is taken from the other literature, undergoes some modifications in new cultural environment. One of the most complicated problems of genes science is interaction in genre between stable and variable, generally theoretical and national unique” – N. Kopystyanska¹⁰ wrote in one of the most authoritative domestic work in genre studies.

The second factor has become the problem of genre transformation on the basis of traditions of a particular national literature, as pointed the researcher of genre theories; this factor increases AH borders. That’s why we talk about the discovery made by V. Kozhrlyanko of not only the novel in AH genre for Ukrainian literature, but of creating a specific genre variety – *Alternative history of Ukraine*.

So, flash ideas were not developed during centuries; they were forgotten or used again, but differently. In the article “*Narodzhennya ta smert natsionalnyh mifiv*” [Birth and death of national myths] written by Zh. Niva this process was called the *greenhouse effect of Europe*. Europe is complicated botanical garden where all kinds must be cultivated and where unification can’t be simplified with hybridization. Each variation must have its own place there, while there is deficiency it will disappear,

together with Europe idea; it means wealth and national diversity of Europe. It is much easier to plant pines everywhere than to do Aboretum. European garden can't grow with outdated agriculture. Europe can't be Middle West".

Alternative of each historical work and novel, in particular, was proving this philosophical idea every year, which discloses inner features of Europe.

Creation of obliged ground for simultaneous survival of many similar, multi-aspect ideas means multiculturalism, multi-semantic as symbolic features in European culture and literature development that lead American genre to European writing. AH obtains the biggest distribution and readers' interest in Germanic, Austrian, Polish, Swedish, Finnish and Dutch literatures. In this investigation attention is paid on the impact of Germanic, Polish, Finnish and Swedish literatures among the others ones on AH formation in Ukrainian literature and importance of V. Kozhelyanko works in the development and formation of this genre in Ukrainian literature process.

Non-admission of alternatives is a historical peculiarity in Asia (in wider cultural sense) that has rooted in Slavic area. The reason of mental colonialism of former USSR provoked almost complete absence of alternative history works in fiction literature of Ukraine, Belorussia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, by the time of obtaining political independence by these countries. Large amount of texts availability Russian AH literature doesn't mean overcome of colonial complex, as not only quantity is important, but also quality of writings that has been already mentioned by A.Andreev: Russian writers aren't able to create different worlds, they only parody and imitate the action. Russian writer and Moscow performer M. Elisarov (who originates from Ivano-Frankivsk) wrote about this in his book "Myltuku"¹³ [Cartoons].

Prominent country man M. Zerov wrote about ideological conception far from mobility and about rate of artist's mastery in East Slavic literature such a words: "Oh, you, my nipples – Asian area!"¹⁴ So, Zh. Niva's *botanic garden* symbolizes European culture artificiality dependence of its development on closed and repetitive processes, its own microclimate unlike Asian culture (even because of the fact that its borders are wider).

We can find in works connected with literary gens science of a novel which processes in European literature have happened in genre redistribution and its role in Ukraine¹⁵. Peculiar feature of Ukrainian modern novel is mythology of history in global and local meaning of this term, which is also similar to a novel in Western

Europe. A myth symbolizes kind of rescue from conservation on European literature. The repeated mythology process happens in Ukrainian literature practice of modern novel, that is modern myth creation on the basis of mythology historiography; T. Bovsunivska¹⁶ notes about it in her monographic work. Repeated mythology process is observed in V. Kozhelyanko's novel "*Konotop*" on the example of historical consequences differentiation of Konotop battle and alternative variants mythology of history in each of them.

So, let's consider M. Novikova theses from her article "*Yudeysko-hrystyyanske korinnya Evropy*¹⁷" [Jews-Christian roots of Europe]. Here are external comments:

1. "Europe and old Mediterranean gave monotheism to humanity [...]"¹⁸. But she denies herself – none atheist culture existed before Europe of New period. Furthermore, none other country produced such as divine-demonic pluralism. And still all these things would not exist simultaneously and symbiotically in any other culture. We see from there theses that there is arisen two *traffic lights* of external myth: Europe=European culture, and *alternative* appears on religious and philosophical planes, even on such an initial level of European essence determination.

2. "Europe and old Mediterranean gave God humanity [...] to mankind [...] idea itself about a person as creation similar to God"¹⁹. But simultaneously, it gave us a theory and practice of monotheism, which was noticed by F. Dostoyevskyi and happily accepted by F. Nitsche. Both cults are connecting in idolatry. Alternatives are not comforting and their duality is based on the fact, that in one is sinful from the side of Christianity and the other is utopian in its form and content, leaving the question: WHY?

3. "Europe gave the concept (and practice of realization) of [...] personality"²⁰. And almost simultaneously (in correlation with human life and epochs) proposed absolute *impersonality*. Government insists on electronic indexing of all people from the beginning of XXI century. So, a person becomes virtual even in the quality of individual existence is a number.

4. "Europe gave the history as advancement to humanity"²¹. Purposeful walking to the progress, not cyclic circulation along circle or spiral. And Europe gave the feeling of *history* as of *deadlock*. "Posture European cultures (with all their historical dramas and tragedies) didn't even imagine"²². It is necessary to point out that the author and M. Novukova meant not Europe covered with total pessimism of

the end of XX century or “Prysmerek Evropy” [Twilight of Europe] by O. Shpengler. Historical fatalism has become more abrupt in its outline and more adventurous in the second decade of XIX century. Old *alienation* was added to deadlock of history. People didn't feel themselves *nobody's* nowhere except new European experience. They belong to God, the other people, family and origin and to their lands. We can find brutal and global alienation in extremely emotional and vivid novel of British (!) writer P. Dibisi “Zhaslo svitlo v krayini dyv”²³ [Lights Out in Wonderland].

Alternative history has become emergency help in restoration of such a necessary myth in Europe. As it was mentioned, firstly in historiography practice historical renovation branch and later in fiction literature. Firstly, in English and later in all the others national literatures of Europe and the USA.

Alternative *history and stories* attempt to overcome this sacralization and making each European component as alternative one. Also writers of alternative history not always deliberately do it. some authors use alternative because of technical needs (way of combination detached storylines, difficulties in transition between composite elements) that's why they don't strive to draw their thoughts by genre and stylistic means of AH. That's why the state of genre development as well as its investigation is similar to iceberg: marked texts are the part of available works bank.

Alternatives of Europe strongly connected with spirit of ruin even in Europe. And even though European culture is regarded as garden by Zh. Niva, these two varied qualities are successfully connected. Yu. Andruhovych's essay “*Tsentralno-shidna revizia*” [Tsentralno-shidna reviziya] is a vivid confirmation: “[...] ruins, this special trace, special garden of former being [...], landscape of my part of the world saturated enough with these objects [...] time fracture is sensible not so demonic as in provinces than, for example, in Vienna, however bigger part of that world was in ruins in the moment of my birth [...]”²⁴. The view of Ukrainian Yu. Andruhovych on so called *old Europe* is a view of Slavic heathen on Christian ruin of Europe of permanent inner *fin de siècle* who lives in blooming *Baroque country*.

The rate of literature processing of achievements in alternative history genre is also different in various countries. The USA as genetic colony of the Grate Britain began to create alternative history the first. This is not strange fact as urgent necessity of *own history* existence realized in such a simple way. G. Klyut is perennial literature investigator in science fiction and fantasy genres, professor and

writer; he prepared and reissued encyclopedia of science fiction in 2000s. the edition contains several encyclopedic articles where alternative history genre mentions in its various sides.

There were two investigations in Ukrainian science in 2012 which were dedicated to functioning of alternative history genre. Investigation of S. Sobolev converted into scientifically-publicist edition "*Alternativnaya istoriya: posobiye dlya hronohichhaykerov*"²⁶ [in Russian] and dissertation work in onomastics "*Onimnyi prostir postmodernistskoho tekstu*" by M. Maksymiuk²⁷ that is created on the basis on three novel of V. Kozhelyanko, two of which are alternative examples – "*Defilyada v Moskv*" [Parade in Moscow], "*Kotyhoroshko*".

Meta genre formation itself has separated into individual genres and varieties during the century and accepted different fable schemes of the other genres, in particular canonical ones, such as historical novel, literary, detective novel, chronicle and fantasy.

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