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Ukrainian Autobiographical Narratives in Their Historical Development

Introduction to the special cluster of articles dedicated to Life Writing in the Ukrainian literary tradition by the editor, Tetiana Cherkashyna, who reconstructs the history of the development of Ukrainian autobiography throughout the centuries, identifies the key trends and highlights the contribution provided by the articles of the special cluster.

At critical times in Ukrainian history interest in Ukraine memoirs arose. Political and geopolitical upheavals, changes in values, the desire to self-identify in new living conditions led to the emergence of a significant number of autobiographical texts. Autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, letters in all their diversity filled bookstores and the pages of several online publications, thus attracting the attention not only of ordinary readers, but also of specialists in various topics.

It was only during the twentieth century that Ukrainian autobiographical narratives went through several stages of development marked by the preservation of the traditions of the past, the search for new forms of self-expression, tendentiousness and ideological bias and the revival

of traditions.¹ The proposed selection of articles by Oleksandr Halych, Artem Halych, Tetiana Cherkashyna and Svitlana Kryvoruchko gives a broader idea of the dominating features of Ukrainian autobiographical narratives. Each article details a separate stage in the development of Ukrainian autobiography, from traditional socially oriented autobiographies to autofictional novels that stand at the intersection of fictional and non-fictional literature.

The seedlings of the first Ukrainian stories about the self can be

¹ More about Ukrainian autobiography can be found in the academic works of Oleksandr Halych (Halych 1991, Halych 2001, Halych 2008, Halych 2013, Halych 2015), Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska (Kotsiubynska 2008), Maria Fedun (Fedun 2010), Artem Halych (Halych 2017), Valeria Pustovit (Pustovit 2008, Pustovit 2019), Iryna Konstankevych (Konstankevych 2014), Svitlana Kryvoruchko (Kryvoruchko 2021), Tetiana Cherkashyna (Cherkashyna 2014).

traced back to the twelfth century. To this day, some autobiographical texts have survived, such as *Teachings* by Volodymyr Monomakh, *Letter to John Francis Commendon about himself* by Stanislav Orikhovskii (Roksolan), *Osostevicius himself about himself and about his adventures in visiting various countries of the world* by Maciei Strykovski, *My life and sufferings by me*, *Illia Turchynovskii, priest and governor of Berezan, written in memory of my children, grandchildren and all posterity* by Illia Turchynovskii. These works share the interweaving of autobiographical, historical, didactic, spiritual, legal, travel and epistolary literature, and all present syncretic and combined features of several literary genres. Ancient Ukrainian autobiographical narratives were distinctly spiritual and apologetic, but devoid of individualism and self-reflexivity. Particular attention was given to the disclosure of the theme of learning and knowledge of the world around the author. The first Ukrainian autobiographies were written either in ancient Ukrainian or Latin. Some of them have been preserved only in fragments: in 2008 there was the first attempt to combine these texts into one

collection of ancient Ukrainian autobiographies.²

The development of the basic models of Ukrainian autobiography occurred in the nineteenth century. *Autobiography* by Taras Shevchenko, *My Life* by Panteleimon Kulish, *Autobiography* by Mykola Kostomarov, *Autobiography* by Mykhailo Drahomanov, *Autobiography* by Natalia Kobrynska, *Autobiography* by Olha Kobylanska, *Autobiography* and *Something about Myself* by Ivan Franko, *Biography of Ivan Levytskii (Nechui) written by himself* by Ivan Nechui-Levytskii marked a new qualitative stage in the development of Ukrainian autobiography.

The mentioned authors (mostly writers and public figures) changed the ideological and content landscape of Ukrainian autobiographical narrative.³ While for the ancient Ukrainian autobiographer the main idea was serving God, the autobiog-

² See Valerii Shevchuk's textbook of ancient Ukrainian literature (Shevchuk 2008).

³ Autobiographies of this period were already written in Ukrainian and were collected by Iurii Luts'kii in abbreviated form together with autobiographies of Ukrainian public figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the volume *About themselves: Autobiographies of Prominent Ukrainians of the XIXth Century* (Luts'kii 1989).

rapher of the nineteenth century promoted the idea of serving their people, as the vast majority of autobiographies were of nationalists and Ukrainophiles. In the texts of this period, it is still possible to trace apologetical features, but attention towards professional and creative achievements by the autobiographers is increasingly noted. Great importance is devoted to family, school and university education. The historical and cultural context is more widely covered.

The first decades of the twentieth century in Ukraine were marked by two revolutions, the civil war, the radical restructuring of life. All this led to a significant revival of autobiographical texts. Famous Ukrainian playwrights, such as Mykhailo Starytskii and Marko Kropyvnytskii, wrote their memoirs. Using a large palette of artistic images, they recreate the atmosphere of the cultural and social life of their time, they recount in minute detail the peculiarities of family upbringing and relationships between people, they analyze how their own worldview change, and focus on how theatre changed their lives and their psychological traits.

A large number of Ukrainian autobiographical texts of 1900–1920s were written by famous

public and political figures of the time, such as Mykhailo Hrushevskii, Serhii Yefremov, Dmytro Bahalii, Yevhen Chykalenko, Sofia Rusova, Oleksandra Kulish (Bilozeroва). These authors came from wealthy, progressive-minded families; had a good upbringing and brilliant education, received in the best Ukrainian and foreign educational institutions; were fluent in several foreign languages; travelled extensively; were acquainted with the most prominent people of their time; had a strong civic position and were actively involved in social activities. They left informatively rich, Ukrainian-centric and socially oriented autobiographical texts, ‘living testimonies’ about how they lived, how people from their social circles lived, what moods and interests prevailed in the educated society of that time, and recorded the most socially significant events they took part in.

As true chroniclers of their time, they provide information for generations to come about the activities of Ukrainian communities of their time, included in their autobiographies detailed ethnographic sketches, told about their revolutionary activities and the consequences of such activities. They created self-images of moral, modest

people who, despite their significant professional, intellectual and socio-political achievements, and carefully avoided the assessments of their own activities. Self-censorship was a typical feature – it existed for both moral issues or safety reasons. This is why these authors spoke quite cautiously and carefully about the Bolshevik government, about their attitude towards it, or about their mostly complicated relationship with it. This type of Ukrainian autobiographies, typical of the early twentieth century, is presented in more detail in the article by Oleksandr Halych, an authoritative Ukrainian researcher of non-fictional literature. On the example of Serhii Yefremov's autobiographical texts, Oleksandr Halych shows the main dominants of the Ukrainian socially oriented autobiographical narratives of that time.

Poorer in terms of historical facts, but more informative from a literary point of view, were several autobiographies by Ukrainian writers of both the older and younger generations, written during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Olena Pchilka, Vasyl Stefanyk, Stepan Vasylchenko, Hnat Khotkevych, Marko Cheremshyna, Valerian Polishchuk, Volodymyr Sosiura, Ostap

Vyshnia, Mike Johansen and many others wrote general accounts of their life and creative paths at the request of researchers of their works and their publishers.

Literary-oriented autobiographies of this period were usually autobiographies of formation, which is why the dominating theme was that of spiritual growth and the origins of one's own spiritual world. Of great importance were spiritual mentors, who were mostly close relatives (such as grandparents or parents), school and gymnasium teachers, foreign and Ukrainian literary classics, whose works were admired by the writers. According to Olena Pchilka, 'the natural environment' too played an important role (Pchilka 2011: 22).

A common feature of the autobiographers of that period was a thirst for reading everything they could get their hands on, and most of the autobiographers were respectful of the literary authorities of the past and present.

In their autobiographies, Olha Kobylianska, Vasyl Stefanyk, Marko Cheremshyna, Hryhorii Kosynka, Olena Pchilka modelled the traditional, in some ways even archetypal, image of a modest, highly moral writer whose works came from life it-

self. The above-mentioned autobiographers, despite the popularity of their works, did not consider themselves exceptional people. Usually, these writers had no special literary or philological education. As Olha Kobylianska, Vasyl Stefanyk, Marko Cheremshyna recall, they lived separately from the rest of the writers, had little contact with anyone, rarely travelled and wrote mostly for their own pleasure.

However, as Solomiia Pavlychko rightly notes, already at the turn of the 1920s 'literature and culture ceased to be a leisure activity of single, scattered authors. Culture was finally beginning to resemble a spiritual industry' (Pavlychko 1999: 170).

Numerous literary unions and organizations began to appear, writers united around the literary editorial offices in which they worked. Preserving partially the traditions of Ukrainian folk autobiographical prose. Writers of the young generation of the period increasingly began to depart from the established canons of writing autobiographical works and to change their ideological and artistic parameters.

The article of Artem Halych, a researcher of Ukrainian autobiographical texts, is devoted to the Ukrainian autobiographies

of this period. Halych currently works on unpublished texts that are stored in the literary archives of Ukraine. Through the analysis of literary portraits depicted in unpublished autobiographical texts, Halych provides a wide panorama of the life of Ukrainian writers of that time. The changes of the inner self of such writers are also shown in his article.

In the 1920s, the autobiographical works of Valerian Polishchuk, Mike Johansen, Volodymyr Sosiura, Ostap Vyshnia produce the image of the 'new generation' writer – an active, effective, tireless fighter for the word, ironic and self-ironic – began to form.

At that time, the autobiographies of young writers, despite their utilitarian nature, became one of the means of self-expression for those authors. Irony, wit, ease of writing combined with deep introspection became the hallmarks of the autobiographical works by Ostap Vyshnia and Mike Johansen. Dreaminess, heightened emotionality, authenticity of immediate feelings, and at the same time sadness and disappointment caused by real-life troubles characterized the autobiography of Volodymyr Sosiura.

Autobiographies began to include various types of literary

mystifications and games with the reader. Irony and self-irony became widespread: in most cases, they performed a protective function, because such a frivolous, playful form of writing autobiography allowed the authors to hide the real self, to avoid 'slippery' topics and facts of one's own biography. This was most evident in the autobiographies *Autobiography of Mike Johansen, the Johansen who decorated the 133rd book of the Literary Fair with prologue, epilogue and interludes* by Mike Johansen and *My autobiography* by Ostap Vyshnia – both authors deliberately hid their 'I' under the mask of a jester.

More about this period in the history of the development of Ukrainian autobiographical narratives, which were written primarily in Kharkiv, the capital of Ukraine at that time, can be found in my article. Through the prism of the representation of Kharkiv in Ukrainian autobiographical texts of the twentieth century, the main stages of autobiographical consciousness of Ukrainian authors of that period are revealed – from the fight for free expression of the author's opinion to strict self-censorship. Ukrainian autobiographical prose of the first two decades of the twentieth century testified to the free coexistence of socially

oriented, Ukrainian-centric, sometimes ethnographic autobiographies that continued the best traditions of Ukrainian autobiographers of the nineteenth century; and autobiographical works whose authors boldly experimented with the style, form, artistic specificity of the author's self-representation, developing new typological varieties of autobiographies. All autobiographical texts of this period were written in Ukrainian.

Since the 1930s, Ukrainian autobiography has been divided into two large groups – Ukrainian Soviet autobiographies and Ukrainian emigration autobiographies, each of which followed their own path of development and developed their own autobiographical traditions.

Ukrainian Soviet autobiographies shared a common path of development with the autobiographies written by representatives of other republics of the USSR. In 1934, the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers was organized, which proclaimed the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers. Ukrainian Soviet writers became members of the union and continued to write with a nod to the ideological instructions they were indoctrinated with.

At this time, the development of the Soviet autobiographical can-

on began, according to which the only autobiographical texts that could be published were those ideologically verified and devoid of taboo topics. This was clearly represented in the autobiographies of Ukrainian Soviet writers written in Russian for the large-scale literary publication *Soviet Writers* (Brainina et al. 1959a, Brainina et al. 1959b, Brainina et al. 1966, Brainina et al. 1972, Brainina et al. 1988).

Asceticism, chastity, unpretentiousness in everyday life, modest assessment of one's own life achievements became the defining features of the autobiographical texts of the Soviet period. Writing autobiographical texts became less appealing.

During this period, a review of existing autobiographical texts was carried out, as a result some texts were removed from libraries, while some were eventually rewritten in accordance with the prevailing mindset of the time.

The description of the history of one's own life could be interpreted as a manifestation of individualism, which was severely criticized and eradicated in every possible way. In view of this, the autobiographers, recreating their life path for future generations, constantly emphasized that there was no individualism in their autobiographies, as the description of their lives was

meant to depict the typical life of their social stratum.

The Ukrainian autobiographies of the 1930s present a new motif, that of 'predetermined guilt'. As a result, autobiographers often justify themselves in the pages of their autobiographies to readers who lived in the same period and criticised them. The motive of 'constant guilt' was present to the greatest extent mostly in the 'prison autobiographies' written for the investigators of the State Political Department in order to clarify certain facts of the authors' own biography and to explain in more detail their socio-political and public beliefs, as well as their personal attitude towards the most resonant events of the time or towards some 'unreliable people'. These texts were written in prison cells, under the close supervision of investigators, and often underwent the necessary 'processing', which is why, according to Oleksandr and Leonid Ushkalov, they became not so much the authors' self-autobiographies, but rather 'monuments to the bloody creativity of the State Political Department officers' (Ushkalov et al. 2010: 6-7).

This type of Ukrainian Soviet autobiography has been actively developing since the 1930s, since mass arrests and political re-

pressions began. The bulk of these autobiographies are still stored among other materials and investigative documents in various state archives of Ukraine, although recently there has been a tendency to make them public (see the scientific and documentary volume *Archive of the Executed Renaissance* compiled by Oleksandr and Leonid Ushkalov, Ushkalov et al. 2010).

Obligatory motives of the 'prison autobiography' were 'sincere' confessions of the authors' own political unconsciousness in the turbulent revolution and post-revolution years, self-accusatory passages and confirmation of their loyalty to the current Soviet government. However, even this did not save the 'prison autobiographers' from their tragic fate.

The new Ukrainian Soviet literature needed a new type of hero, and the autobiographical trilogy of Yurii Smolych (*Childhood, Our Secrets, Eighteen Years*), which became a vivid example of socialist realist Ukrainian autobiography of the 1930s, was aimed at the realization of this task. Only the first part of this trilogy (the autobiographical story *Childhood*) belongs to the field of autobiographical literature, as the next two parts (the autobiographical novels *Our Se-*

crets and *Eighteen Years*) were fictional works. *Childhood* was written in compliance with all the requirements of the socialist realist canon, such as the presence only of typical socialist realist images, the deep morality of the main characters, codified aesthetics and patriotism.

Another reason for the unpopularity of autobiographical writing during the 1930s–1980s was that, with the total control by the authorities over what one could talk and write about, writing out one's true life story could endanger not only the autobiographers themselves, but also their family members, friends and acquaintances, whose names could appear on the pages of the autobiographical work. Therefore, Ukrainian Soviet autobiography of the 1930s–1970s was strictly self-censored.

One of the ways to overcome the dilemma between the desire to recount about oneself and of one's life and the danger of touching upon undesirable topics and names is to depict only the formation of one's own personality during childhood. This is the path followed by Oleksandr Dovzhenko, the author of the autobiographical film story *Enchanted Desna*, which is significant not only for the Soviet autobiography of the 1940s and 1950s, but also for the

Ukrainian autobiographical tradition as a whole. Having rejected the principles of didacticism, which were to be used by the autobiographers of that time, Oleksandr Dovzhenko focused primarily on the ethical and aesthetic possibilities of the autobiographical narrative, giving the work a deep philosophical connotation. As a result each generation of researcher discovers thoughts relevant to their time throughout.

A significant achievement of Ukrainian autobiography of this period was the literary autobiography of Volodymyr Sosiura *The Third Company*, which the author wrote in segments during the years 1926–59. Volodymyr Sosiura, as well as Oleksandr Dovzhenko, was one of the most prominent Ukrainian autobiographers, whose work was considered ahead of his time. Innovative for the Ukrainian Soviet autobiography of the 1950s was his bold public appeal to speak about taboo topics and forbidden names, which became one of the main reasons for which this work was silenced for years. The author was not afraid of the public exposure of his own self – he chronicled with a greater or lesser degree of frankness the history of his own mental and emotional life in different periods of his life.

The description of their difficult era against the background of their own lives was provided not only by officially recognized Soviet writers, but also by writers who were well aware of the impossibility of publishing their autobiographical works during their lifetime due to their difficult life and tense relations with the Soviet authorities. With the memoirs of Nadiia Surovtsova, Borys Antonenko-Davydovych and Zinaida Tulub, the Ukrainian autobiography includes not only the topic of the Gulag, but also philosophical and existential reflections on the meaning of human existence, on the peculiarities of human stoicism, the transformation of the human psyche in a closed space, mental and psychological breakdowns from violent trials, etc.

Another path in the development of Ukrainian autobiographical narratives was taken by Ukrainian emigrant autobiographical prose, the purpose of which during the 1930s and 1940s was not only to raise the morale of political emigrants, but also to support them morally, as the main message of such works was that the struggle was still not over and emigrants were to hope for the best. The first Ukrainian emigrant autobiographers (Ivan Ohienko, Vasyl

Koroliv-Staryi and others) acted primarily as carriers of historical memory, recreating their own vision of the Ukrainian events of 1917–1919 and the first years of life abroad as an emigrant.

While autobiographies of socio-political and public figures who found themselves in exile played, according to Maria Fedun, the role of ‘a full-fledged “word-weapon”’ (Fedun 2010: 18), literary autobiographies focused primarily on educational and cognitive tasks. In the best traditions of the Ukrainian folk-ethnographic autobiography of formation, dating back to the nineteenth century, Bohdan Lepkyi and Stepan Smal-Stotskyi turned to a detailed revision of the origins of their self, and showed how the natural environment, folk customs, traditions, beliefs, folklore, deep religiosity and high morality of parents, relatives and fellow villagers shaped the consciousness of the autobiographers at a young age.

Another, more lyrical and nostalgic stream, marked by a pronounced longing for the ‘lost paradise’ of early youth, was represented by the autobiographies *Without Roots* by Natalia Koroleva, *Chrysanthemums* by Uliana Kravchenko, *Distant World* by Halyna Zhurba, *Distant Close Up* by Maria Strutyn-

ska, *The Path Home* by Lesia Lysak-Tyvoniuk and others. The works of Maria Strutynska and Lesia Lysak-Tyvoniuk testify to the emergence of another trend in Ukrainian emigration autobiographical prose of the mid-twentieth century. In their memoirs, in addition to the motif of nostalgia, there is a pronounced longing for their native lands, with which the authors, who found themselves in exile, did not break the inner spiritual and emotional connection. A significant place is given to the image of home. The autobiographers were well aware that their homes were not what they once were. ‘The owners have gone, there are collective farmers, whom I felt sorry for. They cut down old cherry trees in the garden for fuel. They do not call on Saturday evening to announce the coming of the God’s Day – Sunday. It is completely different there now’ (Lysak-Tyvoniuk 1978: 306), sadly stated Lesia Lysak-Tyvoniuk. However, the authors did not lose faith for the future, because, according to the author, ‘these are only temporary changes. Earth and sky remain the same’ (Lysak-Tyvoniuk 1978: 306), and ‘people are still healthy in spirit’ (Lysak-Tyvoniuk 1978: 307).

Autobiographies devoted to the youth years, *From Yellowed*

Leaves from Australia by Stepan Rodion, *My Youth* by Fedir Dudko, *Wanderings of Life* by Mykola-Sydir Chartoryskii, *War Experiences of a Grey Man* and other autobiographical texts by Volodymyr Barahura were characterised by a more remissive tone. These authors departed from the idyllic perspective of interpreting the events of their ancient past and, taking inspiration from their own life, showed how socio-political changes, wars, and emigration destroy the established ways of life of people who are forced to leave their homes and go in search of a better life. The immediacy of their impressions, the lack of documented evidence, and the reliance on one's own memory became the defining features of these Ukrainian emigration autobiographical narratives.

Ukrainian emigration autobiography increasingly included comparative elements, as can be seen in the autobiographies *On a White Horse* and *On a Raven Horse* by Ulas Samchuk, *I am 85* by Volodymyr Kubiiiovych, *Conversations on the Way to Myself* by Ivan Koshelivets, *Under the Sun of Australia* by Dmytro Nytchenko, *From Far to Close* by Vasyl Sokol, *Meetings and Farewells* by Hryhorii Kostyuk, *Eudothea's Gift* by Dokiia Humenna, *I – my – me... (and around)*

by Yurii Shevelev. In these texts words such as 'Western' – 'Ukrainian', 'arranged' – 'unsettled', 'idealized' – 'real', 'present' – 'past', etc. are correlated. Many pages are devoted to reflections on the reasons for the unsettled life of the emigrants, especially for those autobiographers who spent part of their lives in Soviet Ukraine, such as Dokiia Humenna, Ivan Koshelivets or Vasyl Sokil.

As in the Ukrainian emigration autobiographical works of previous decades, in the autobiographies of the 1970s and 1980s a significant place is given to the motif of the road. In most autobiographers, the road was associated with dramatic changes in life. Initially, the authors often moved from place to place for education, job search or business trips. Then came the time to emigrate, which was associated with hopes for a better life, but also with worries about the unknown – in most cases, it was a 'road to nowhere'. Later, after settling in a new place, the motif of the road is mostly used to describe the roads-travels to new, previously unknown places. The majority of Ukrainian emigration autobiographers proved to be bright analysts, portraitists and landscape painters, as one of their main tasks was to leave

the most accurate memories of their past life.

Since the mid-1980s, after half a century of information vacuum, bans, silences, taboos of 'undesirable' topics, names, phenomena and permission to publish only autobiographies which were neutral, devoid of criticism towards the ruling power, and ideologically verified, the first printed memoirs appeared in Ukraine (*The Story of One Fate* by Dmytro Zatonskii, *To Live and Tell* by Anatolii Dimarov). Both authors wrote with a greater or lesser degree of frankness about themselves and their real life during the Soviet era, i.e. about the real life of their country and their contemporaries.

However, the real 'breakthrough of information borders' began in the early 1990s, when the autobiographies *Museum of a Living Writer, or My Long Road to the Market* by Volodymyr Drozd, *Solo for a Girl's Voice* by Halyna Hordasevych, *The Greatest Miracle is Life* by Mykola Rudenko, *Free and Unfree Roads* and other works by Roman Ivanychuk appeared.

Public self-repentance for their own sins, sincerity, extreme frankness about themselves and their actions, self-criticism, constant thirst to get to the root of their failures and troubles became the distinctive features of

autobiographical writing of that time.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, the image of a system characterized by total control, intrusion into the most intimate spheres of human life, the presence of a repressive and punitive mechanism, etc. has been a constant motif of Ukrainian autobiographies. Authors used a large palette of artistic images to depict the image of the system and its relationship with the individual. The contrast of the colour system, metaphorization, metonymy, allegory, allusiveness became the distinctive features of such theme.

Autobiographers unanimously agreed that the colour that was most associated with the image of the system was grey. Grey clothes, grey routine, grey life became the defining characteristics of the system and life inside it. Individuals lived in the system, they were closely interconnected. The system influenced a person, changed their inner essence, transformed them.

The main image that was used in regards to the repressive and punitive machine of the system was that of knocking. Knocking on the door was a harbinger of arrest, knocking on the cell wall was an invitation to communicate. However, as Volodymyr Drozd concluded, 'despite all the

losses, we were destined to survive and resurrect, albeit with crippled souls' (Drozd 1994: 197). Yurii Andrukhovych (*Moscoviada* and others), Oksana Zabuzhko (*Field Studies on Ukrainian Sex*), Oleksandr Irvanets (*Rivne/Rovno*) turn to new forms of autobiographical self-expression. These authors offered readers a new 'system of aesthetic values and priorities' (Ahieieva 2011: 33), a new vision of the world and of how they live it. Their autofictional works, as well as traditional autobiographies of this period, were not devoid of social analysis, but the angle of interpretation was different.

A more detailed analysis of one of these autofictional works is included in the article by Svitlana Kryvoruchko, a well-known Ukrainian researcher of psychoautobiographical writing. In Ukrainian autofictional novels of the 1990s there was an alternative representation of Ukrainian history, presented not in its objective truthfulness, but primarily in the author's personal perception. The socio-historical background was decisively reinterpreted, much attention was paid to anti-colonial discourse. At the same time, a new type of autobiographical hero emerged from the pages of Ukrainian autofictional novels,

which are distinctly self-reflective, attentive to the author's inner, deeply hidden mental states.

Ukrainian autobiographies of the first decades of the twenty-first century continued the main trends laid down in the Ukrainian autobiography of the late twentieth century. Among the new autobiographies, there is a tendency for the coexistence of autobiographies of the traditional type, which were characterized by their analytical nature, deep psychological and attentive attitude towards the word, moral responsibility of the autobiographer for every word spoken in public (this is revealed in the autobiographies *Book of Memories* by Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska, *Homo feriens* by Iryna Zhylenko, *Memories and Reflections at the Finish Line, Not a Separate Life* by Ivan Dziuba, *On the Shore of Time* by Valerii Shevchuk); and experimental autobiographies that were aimed at finding new forms of autobiographical self-expression through the decentralization of autobiographical material, and autofiction (as in the texts *The Secret, Lexicon of Intimate Cities* by Yurii Andrukhovych, *From This You Can Make a Few Stories* by Taras Prokhasko, *From the Map of*

Books and People by Oksana Zabuzhko).

In conclusion, Ukrainian autobiography has passed through various evolutionary stages of its development over the centuries, and the proposed selection of articles by Oleksandr Halych, Artem Halych, Tetiana Cherkashyna, Svitlana Kryvoruchko gives a broader picture of the main dominants of the Ukrainian autobiographical narratives.

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