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Biographical fiction: love/patience in Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex*

The novel of the Ukrainian contemporary writer Oksana Zabuzhko (born in 1960) *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex* (1998) can be appropriately attributed to the fiction critique (critical fiction) movement of the turn of the twenty-first century. The article identifies emotional and psychological problems in the relationship between a man / woman in the complex syntax of the novel, which is a sign of O. Zabuzhko's idiosyncrasy. O. Zabuzhko's parents' biographical facts are woven into the fabric of the novel. They mentally influenced the formation of the phenomenon of the genius of the Ukrainian writer of the turn of the twentieth–twenty-first centuries, which arose through pain as an overcoming of the feeling of fear and the complex of slave consciousness thanks to love, which fills with meaning any activity of an individual: art, life, relationships.

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Drawing on a feminist critical approach, it is appropriate to analyze that the main character of the novel is a woman, Oksana. It is through the image of Oksana that the novel reveals the ideas, conflicts and pathos of the space of love and/or patience. The biographical method helps to comprehend the relationship between the author and her work by using the concepts of 'author as subject of con-

sciousness' and 'personality of the writer'.

The novel traces the principles of fiction critique (Kryvoruchko 2016), including the writer's attempt to revive the communicative act, to establish communication between the author and the reader. The writer addresses the reader: 'Ladies and gentlemen'. She tells a 'story', it seems, to the reader, but in fact here the author/author communication opens: O. Zabuzhko writes for herself, establishes a dialogue with herself, 'narrates' to herself in order to better understand her own ego, to know herself and the space of love she has entered. In addition to the reader and the author, there is a narratee – the listener Donna, to

whom the heroine Oksana tells about her love, subconsciously trying to highlight the 'Ukrainian' at the level of male/female relations. The orientation towards 'Ukrainian' is introduced in the very title of the novel through the term 'Ukrainian sex'. Donna, like Oksana, is an intellectual: 'She is writing her dissertation on genderism in post-communist politics' (Zabuzhko 1998: 112). Despite the complex syntax and intellectual vocabulary, O. Zabuzhko strives to be understandable; she clarifies and illuminates the heroine's experiences and her analytical observations. To do this, the writer adheres to the plot, depicts the environment, interiors, and narrates (plot nodes of communication between a woman and a man, the peculiarity of the heroine-writer's existence and the process of writing, the mission or meaning of the writer's / creative personality's / artist's life).

Regarding the genre of this work, researchers K. Abramova, O. Punina argue that the text deploys 'the features of a philosophical novel, a novel-confession, a feminist novel, memoirs, autobiography, diary, psychoanalytic research, essay' (Abramova et al. 2016: 80). Ukrainian researcher T. Cherkashyna in her monograph

Memoir and Autobiographical Prose of the Twentieth Century: Ukrainian Vision in paragraph 3.6, 'Fictionalization of One's Own Life Path: from Literary Non-Fiction to Autofiction' comprehends memoir and autobiographical fiction as memoir writing (Cherkashyna 2014: 290). T. Cherkashyna emphasizes that in Ukrainian literature in the discourse of the novel, novella and short story 'a whole layer of synthesized genres has emerged, which have absorbed the typical features of both documentary and fiction' (Cherkashyna 2014: 290). It should be noted that in O. Zabuzhko's work *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex* these very tendencies can be traced. T. Cherkashyna states that 'The autobiographical story covers a small time period of the author's life... the history of the formation and development of the author's personality, the origins of their worldview and life values, the history of internal psychological changes' (Cherkashyna 2014: 291). These works have 'one main plot line, [...] the author's main attention is drawn to [...] the emotional atmosphere, to the inner psychological experiences of her characters' (Cherkashyna 2014 : 291).

I would like to draw attention to the technique of postmodernists of the second half of the twenti-

eth century, which was noted by I.I. Ilyin, when a scientist writes as a writer, and a writer as a scientist: 'poetic thinking is characterized by modern postmodern theorists as a fundamental feature of postmodern sensibility. Its essence lies in the fact that philosophers turn to the very way of artistic, poetic comprehension of thought... Another aspect of the same phenomenon is the fact that critics and theorists act mostly as philosophers, and writers and poets as art theorists' (Ilyin 2000: 211). Not only postmodernists wrote this way. For example, S. de Beauvoir is not part of the postmodernist discourse, although her works harmoniously combine scholarly and fiction writing. Similarly, O. Zabuzhko establishes this 'program' in the title of the work: *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex*. The term 'field studies' was new for the Ukrainian linguistic mentality of the academic community in the 90s and its significance remains unclear in 2022. This is a loan translation from English of 'field studies' – literally field studies, but in fact it is something like sociological research-surveys or pedagogical experiments: testing some principles in the public space. If a non-academic reader saw this title, they might imagine a field with wheat, or flowers, or some-

thing else that has absolutely nothing to do with it. And the title itself already contains the writer's challenge to the reader: he must be an intellectual, he must know what field research is. This book is thus for a very advanced readership. Categorically, this work cannot be defined as postmodern, despite the game with the title, because there is no double coding in it at all.

This work belongs to elite literature, as it is aimed only at highly educated readers (Kryvoruchko 2012). And the heroine-writer herself even notes: she is not understood when she speaks; she is listened to, looked at, but the essence of the message is not grasped, because the author herself occupies a more elite position than the general public. Zabuzhko is well aware of this, and she is absolutely satisfied with it: to be better, smarter than her contemporaries. 'When nobody, no way, understands words' (Zabuzhko 1998: 16). The heroine-writer speaks to an audience that does not understand her. People came to see her and benefit from her strong energy, which is supposed to be transmitted in the sense of words, but is perceived on more emotional deeper levels: with the skin, in the process of communication between the artist and the

crowd. O. Zabuzhko conveys in the work the meeting of the writer and readers: 'in the midst of the festival program, in the thick fumes of sweat and alcohol, where you came down from the stage, having recited your two poems, two damn good poems just in the drunken hum of circular flashing of yellow-spotted fictions merged into one, or rather, on top of it holding on to the sound of your own voice, which does not count on anything, only on words' (Zabuzhko 1998: 16). Unlike the concept of the 'writer', who never intersects with the reader, but communicates with him only through the reader's imagination and the recipient's ability to create in his mind the artistic world that the writer has formed in the work with the help of words, O. Zabuzhko depicts a writer who meets and sees 'her reader'. This reader is drunk, not reading, unable to form something in their own imagination, not understanding, but really present in her writing life. This action – the exchange of energies – is defined in the novel as a 'public orgasm' (Zabuzhko 1998: 16). This is a metaphor for the euphoria that a certain person feels when speaking in front of an audience (the public) because that person is strong and endowed with the virtue of 'power':

the ability to hold an audience because they like you. This function was given to the ancient Greek goddess Aphrodite – she was liked, so everyone wanted to be with her and wanted to make love to her. The audience wants its 'idol', the 'reader' wants the 'writer', but cannot have him because he is unattainable.

In the novel, O. Zabuzhko defines the figure of the writer: intelligent, unattainable, incomprehensible to the majority, causing desire. Communication takes place, but not in the intellectual, rather in the emotional plane. The title *Field Studies* refers to genres like a scientific article or monograph, but the writer defines the work itself as a novel (not essay). That is, the reader is presented with a work of fiction which is a novel that stylistically contains the features of an essay, diary and includes biographical facts of the writer's life, albeit creatively comprehended and processed, so it is built on the material of documents, but is not itself a document.

This is not an autobiography, nor a diary. This is a work of fiction, in which the heroine Oksana should not be identified with the writer Oksana Zabuzhko, as she is a literary image, a product of the writer's imagination. However, in this

novel there are biographemes from O. Zabuzhko's real life, which give the biographical fiction a documentary flavor. This heroine is an intellectual who seeks to understand herself, the time, the environment: the end of the twentieth century. The invariability of the heroine is that she, like all women at all times, seeks love; she wants a relationship with a man. The problems of communication between a woman and a man (Kryvoruchko et al. 2021b) are the angle from which O. Zabuzhko creates a picture of the world of the novel. The continuation of the title, *in Ukrainian sex*, is an allusion to S. de Beauvoir's essay 'The Second Sex' of 1949, in which the French writer comprehended a woman as a phenomenon in the history of mankind. O. Zabuzhko also seeks to 'know' a woman, but not in diachrony – she is a person of the end of the twentieth century. This woman already has freedom of choice, the right to work at the university, free relationships with men outside marriage.

The work traces the features of fiction criticism. O. Zabuzhko revives the plot (the life of the heroine-writer abroad, etc.), depicts the modern environment (the heroine's communication), refers to the procedural nature

of the narrative (through a highly complex, elitist way of using the syntax). The work undergoes a genre transformation thanks to its representational aims: to depict the survival of a post-colonial personality in a post-totalitarian / post-imperial / post-Soviet atmosphere; to reveal the complex of inferiority and ethnic minority. To do this, the writer implants features of essays, scientific articles, autobiography into the discourse of the novel.

O. Zabuzhko depicts the environment: the circumscription of leading Ukrainian intellectuals who integrate into the Western space and are successful and patriotic. Having the opportunity to stay and work in the United States (as most would have done in the 1990s), they return to Ukraine – to a 'native' pain, a 'Ukrainian' one as suggested by the subconscious of the heroine: 'our only choice [...] is between victim and executioner: between non-existence and existence that kills' (Zabuzhko 1998: 113).

The question that arises in the 'ladies and gentlemen': why does the heroine allow her husband to behave in such a way towards her? Why does not she quit / change / answer? O. Zabuzhko gives the answer at the end of the novel: it is a matter of national mentality, genetic

memory – the ability to endure. ‘the same can be done with nations’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 113). In this spectrum, the writer reveals that ‘Literature’ is ‘a form of national therapy’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 113). And the novel itself, which O. Zabuzhko writes, among other things (or even primarily) for herself, is this therapy: a psychologically damaged woman tries to heal herself in the process of self-telling about her painful but chosen love, which filled her life with thrills and fullness of being, but with the taste of the object of love not meeting the woman’s expectations. He is just ‘not her man’.

The features of fiction critique in *Field Studies* reveal autofictionalism or biographical fiction, which is the basis for placing the work in the discourse of ego-literature. The critical orientation of the novel is the basis for defining the work as a dialogic one (Kryvoruchko 2014), since it traces references to the scientific and literary heritage of the past, which becomes a synthesis of O. Zabuzhko’s imagination and reflection, because the text is formed on the border of science and art. The mixing of narrative instances of the author O. Zabuzhko and the heroine Oksana occurs in a combination of biographism and essayism in fiction. Therefore, there is a dif-

ficulty in defining the genre, which the writer outlined as a novel. The ‘ladies and gentlemen’ are tempted to read *Field Studies* as a psychological striptease by O. Zabuzhko, although I am sure that this is a trap of the writer, who created a ‘myth’ for the reader as a model of herself, which she would like to present: fatal S&M-intellectual-unattainable-incomprehensible. With her non-standard narratives, O. Zabuzhko has created a different type of writing that differs from the previous Ukrainian and European tradition, which is ahead of its contemporaries and can become a model for the future.

The problems of mutual understanding of man and woman reduces aesthetics to miniaturization. The writer focuses on the heroine, her private life and the psychology of her internal reactions to the world around her. The love of the chosen woman is much more important than cataclysms. The novel resembles a letter. Structurally, it is unified, without division into sections... According to the principles of fiction criticism, narrative minimalism can be traced in the work *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex*, as the intrigue (the heroine’s love, the development of relations between a man and a woman) and characters are re-

duced to an intimate level. The artistic space (the life of a successful intellectual abroad into dreamland) is presented by the writer from a different angle: as a debunking of the 'myth' of life in the United States, and this helps the reader to see the realities in an unusual critical interpretation. The artistic world of the novel is an 'invention' of O. Zabuzhko, which is due to her individual style: the existence of a disappointed woman in love through the prism of the creative process is a 'creation' of paintings, poems, essays, articles, her own life.

The desire to communicate with the reader can be traced in the writer's prediction of their opinion about the characters of the novel, which O. Zabuzhko introduces in the work: 'national masochists' and 'autistic maniac' (Zabuzhko 1998: 46). But O. Zabuzhko seeks this communication with an intellectually 'advanced' reader, who has to be oriented in nuances. For example, when depicting the financial insolvency of Mark, Rosie's husband, it is emphasized 'even being a full professor, he is, of course, unable to pay' (Zabuzhko 1998: 46). Full professor is a literal translation from the English of 'full professor', which is equal to the Ukrainian title of professor,

awarded by the Ministry of Education for normative achievements, resulting in a certain percentage being added to the salary (33% in Ukraine). So, if Mark was a full Professor, his salary would be higher, and maybe he could pay for his wife's psychoanalyst. But when O. Zabuzhko writes 'full professor', these allusions encourage the reader to make complex thinking and interpretations (Belimova 2022).

O. Zabuzhko debunks the 'myth' of the American dream and high material security of US citizens when he introduces a gallery of characters of scholars into the context of the novel: Mark and Rosie. 'Rosie [...] has been seeing a psychoanalyst for the seventh year in a row' – in her marriage she is deprived of sexual relations with her own husband: '[...] in the sixth year [...] they stopped fucking' (Zabuzhko 1998: 46). The relationship between man and woman is conflictual in all nationalities. The writer encodes this conflict as 'psychological problems' (Zabuzhko 1998: 46), in which she introduces the relationship between the heroine Oksana and the artist and the correlation in the married couple of the full professor. And no one can solve these problems: 'problems are problems, and society tells

us to solve them according to four actions: given A, given B, they can be added, multiplied, divided, rearranged... the answer... someday we will be shown it. Someday each of us will read our own answer – though it will be too late to change anything’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 47). Because of the inability of man and woman to find the way to each other, the gap appears: ‘and a burning horror grips you when your leg hangs over the emptiness, from where invisible vapors slowly smoke that devastating, bone-sucking longing’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 47).

With irony, O. Zabuzhko reflects on the smile, which is a mask of American mental culture, hiding the real pain, which the personality has to cope with independently, without bothering others. This is symbolically reflected in linguistic communication: ‘How are you doing?... Fine’. ‘Fine’ in the work becomes a sign of despair, which is the tragic reality of the life of the heroes of the novel: Chris, Ellen, Kati, Alex. In the emotional routine behind the daily response ‘Fine’, 41-year-old Chris ‘has breast cancer, has been going to radiation for five years now’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 50). Zabuzhko illuminates the emotional loneliness of the 50-year-old sexy lady Ellen with a touch of bitter

humor that descends into irony. Ellen has doomed herself to eternal youth: ‘she drowns herself with work’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 50). The paradox is depicted in the medical examination by a gynecologist, which is usually a rather unpleasant procedure for most women, however Ellen ‘just adores visits to the gynecologist – every time she has an orgasm on the chair’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 50). Ellen desires male attention with all her might, and therefore has to lie about her life, stating that is full of sexual adventures. The 60-year-old Kati is afraid to retire. All three heroines have feelings particular to their age, which are built in a sequential growth: 40 – 50 – 60. But they are all unhappy and lonely. The only man whose age is not indicated by a number stands out as ‘oldish’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 51). The writer also portrays the Yugoslav Alex with irony: narcissistic, nostalgic for the past (he feels like a Yugoslav even after the collapse of his country, Yugoslavia), always emphasizing his own achievements: ‘Alex does not hear himself from the outside, he also does not see or hear anything from the outside, he is completely absorbed in an enthusiastic eulogy to himself – to his books’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 51).

The writer outlines the problems of Oksana and the artist as the intuitive jealousy of a woman to the process of her husband's creativity, and here the conflict moves from the plane of woman / man to the dimension: woman / artist. The most important thing for Oksana's chosen one is creativity, love for art, desire to join the process of painting:

'I have always wanted one thing to be realized... Smell, smell how it smells...' he leaned, lustfully flaring his nostrils, over the case of freshly purchased paints, ecstatically closed his eyelids (what a luxury these American stores are, what is there, oh bitches, look, look! I was furtively fondling a silky sheet of Chinese rice paper, how much does it cost? oh, what a sponge, touch it, it's alive! and the canvases are already stretched, well, damn it, and what is this, whitewash? How much? They'll choke, fall down, that's it, let's get out of here, and suddenly he would abruptly brake on the spot, gasping for air with the agony of untiring thirst: do you smell it?), she liked this predatory in-

tentionality, in vain that it was not directed at her, in vain that she only got the remains from it: she also loved the word in a thoughtful way first of all for its sound (Zabuzhko 1998: 47).

This scene depicts the woman's jealousy of the creative process, despite the fact that she herself is an artist: 'in vain that it was not directed at her, in vain no matter that she only got the remains from it'.

O. Zabuzhko reveals the phenomenon of language in two hypostases: 1) language as space in the specific feeling of the writer, 2) Ukrainian language as a sign of genetic patriotism of the heroine Oksana. 1) Language as space is defined by musicality, magic, dimension: 'the *language* [...] in front of the audience shrank around you into a transparent, changeable, fluttering [...] ball, in the middle of which [...] some kind of divination was taking place: something was living, pulsating' (Zabuzhko 1998: 16); 'your own text protected you from abuse and humiliation, you read as you wrote by voice, led by the self-moving music of the poem' (Zabuzhko 1998: 17). Here a complex narrative intersection is built: the pronoun 'you' indicates a dialogue in the work of

the heroine-writer with herself: she seems to be talking to herself about herself – the text defended you; you read. 2) The Ukrainian language is defined as a refuge for a representative of a nation and ethnic group, especially when this individual is territorially separated from their native geographical space, a painful aggravation in situations of indistinguishability of Ukrainian from Russian: ‘is it not Russian? [...] listening only to your own text, hiding in it, as in a lighted house at night, entering and locking the door behind you [...] your home is the language’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 16).

Abroad, the native language is dying. This is felt by the heroine Oksana, who is a ‘stranger’, and it is confirmed by the narcissist Alex: ‘the reserves are depleting, and for the first time there’s a gloomy expression on his face: there is such a thing’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 52). O. Zabuzhko reveals the depths of the Ukrainian mentality, highlights the problems in the unsuccessfully formulated national idea, critically explains the choice by the ruling circles of the text of the national anthem, the meaning of which does not allow to get out of the past troubles: ‘all that Ukrainians are able to tell about themselves is how, and how much, and in what way they were beat-

en [...] little by little you begin to be proud of this’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 84). It is in the hymn that the writer notices this landmark that becomes a national virtue, the essence of which causes criticism of Celtic descendants: ‘friends from Cambridge were laughing when you translated the beginning of the national anthem for them’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 84–85).

As a contemporary of the writer, I agree with her criticism. Why was this poem by P. Chubynskii chosen? We have many achievements: the deeds of Prince Igor, which are recorded in the *Slovo*, the *Book of Veles*, the deeds of Iaroslav’ the Wise, the wisdom of Hryhoriy Skovoroda, scientific discoveries of the twentieth century... Why do we keep returning to our un-free past, even after gaining independence?!

And this affects all the representatives of Ukraine, whose life is a continuous burden that cannot be got rid of. O. Zabuzhko exposes the influence of the energy of words on people’s lives at a personal, psychological level: ‘rejoice and be glad that you did not die, poor sexual victim of the national idea [...] and for what it seems, life without love [...] it would be better to die, [...] or even better not to be born’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 85).

Here, ironically, one can read O. Zabuzhko's pain for the Ukrainian people. The writer defines the national idea as the basis of the relationship between a man and a woman. The inability of Oksana and Mykola to be together is exacerbated in the United States, when from a distance one can better see the gap that has always been there. In Ukraine, it was intuitively psychologically felt, physically responded as pain, but it was in a foreign country that the 'strangeness' of the Ukrainian, whom Oksana mistakenly wanted to see as 'her own', became more acute.

The catharsis is depicted by the introduction of plot twists. The tragedy is revealed in the humorous accumulation of obstacles on the way to the long-awaited meeting with the beloved. But the meeting is not an approach to each other, but the heroine's epiphany: being together will not work. The writer uses a repetition: 'you are open to evil' (Zabuzhko 1998: 86; 91; 92). The repetition is introduced three times and italicized in the text. 'Evil' is conventionally symbolically encoded by everyday troubles, technical inconsistencies, weather conditions, which are graded in the process of physical approach to the beloved: 'a torn sandal' (Zabuzhko 1998: 87); 'all United flights de-

layed' (Zabuzhko 1998: 87); a change in the time of a possible flight; an unplanned overnight stay in Washington with distant acquaintances; a Pakistani taxi driver who does not know the way; menstruation (Zabuzhko 1998: 90–91). The writer portrays the dear one as a ridiculed tragedy. It is a path to enlightenment: this man is not her man. Already on the road she feels irritated: 'I left Cambridge for him' (Zabuzhko 1998: 87); 'to meet a brilliant Ukrainian artist who doesn't know a word of English (idiot)' (Zabuzhko 1998: 87–88). Here, opposites are pre-tentiously juxtaposed, forming a stinging implication of irony: 'brilliant' / '(idiot)'. The man turned out to be a 'stranger': 'How could you be so blind, poor fool? Blinded like that – at a time when everything was speaking, shouting, calling out to you in a direct language?... you were in love, ay, you were sure that you could ("I can do everything!") do what one person cannot do for another alone, fish' (Zabuzhko 1998: 93).

A man cannot offer equal relations, there is arrogance, she claims, but this is the maximum he is capable of. The pride of the artist is the reason for the impossibility of kinship. Pride is manifested in the confidence of one's own unsurpassedness: 'he

was already churning [...] with a screw [...] only a frightened pride, a burning fear, lest, God forbid, “people should say” (oh, mother province, how Khvylovyi would sigh!) that it was she who left him, pulled him out of his native soil, carried him across the ocean and abandoned him, that, they would say, *kobieta*’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 96). Intertextually, the name of Khvylovyi establishes an intersection with the comprehension of the tragic fate of the artist (Arey 2022) and his heroes (Kryvoruchko 2022a). The syntax of the novel consists of lengthy compound sentences. Some of them are as long as 6 pages, e.g. pp. 18-23 (Zabuzhko 1998: 18-23), which are a chapter of the novel. The sections of the novel are defined by spaces in the text. The text itself is written in block letters, in which the author’s emotional and ideological accents are italicized. The prose text includes poems by the writer. But the poems are written as in scientific articles: the lines are separated by a slash /. ‘Something has shifted in the world: someone shouted / Through the night my name, as if tortured / And someone on the porch layered leaves, / turned over and could not sleep / I learned the science of parting: / the science of distinguishing between pain that is sick / And pain that is

life-giving (someone wrote) / Letters to me and threw them into the stove, / without writing a line). Someone was waiting / For something from me, but I was silent: / I was learning the science of parting’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 18).

The poems are highlighted in bold italics. This way of writing poems fits into the genres of the scientific style of an article or monograph, the purpose of which is research, which subtextually echoes the title of the novel *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex*. The emotional poems express the writer’s idea: the eternal separation of man and woman throughout all time. People passionately love each other, but cannot be together.

The idea of separation is also realized by the leading messages, which the writer also emphasizes in bold italics, for example ‘This man will hurt you’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 17).

The biographemes are introduced by O. Zabuzhko throughout the novel and intensify at the end, after Oksana and Mykola’s separation, when the author talks about the origins of her formation: her family, father and mother. And here, through the emotional fabric of complex sentences, the biography of a real person emerges (Zabuzhko 1998: 104-11). O. Zabuzhko was

born in the family of an ‘unreliable Ukrainian’, a patriot who did not accept the totalitarian pro-Russian Soviet regime, for which he was arrested and sent to a labor camp. Therefore, throughout her childhood and adolescence, the writer behaved very cautiously, as she was always surrounded by spies, boys/young men who worked for the special services of the USSR government. Oksana’s fear was a genetic component of her worldview: ‘Fear started early. Fear was inherited – you had to be afraid of all strangers (anyone who showed interest in you was actually sent by the KGB to find out what you were talking about at home, and then those uncles would come again and put daddy in jail’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 103). The novel introduces the images of the boys who tried to provoke her – an excellent student ‘with a Leninist sparkle in his eyes’, who asked about Oksana’s knowledge of forbidden Ukrainian patriotic activities (Shteinbuk 2022). O. Zabuzhko introduces this text in Russian: ‘the Ukrainian writer Vynnychenko, haven’t you read? [...] and about the Ukrainian People’s Republic, and about emigration [she listened without doubting who was in front of her, sweetly dying from the near danger], she froze him [...] in a drumming pi-

oneer voice [‘Atryad! Ravniy! Smir na!’], confessing that she was not interested in all that emigrant scum, at a time when the international situation was so complicated and tense, and that she was always outraged by young people listening to various radio voices’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 104). With these memories, the writer conveys the oppression of the ‘Ukrainian’ in the USSR, in which she was forced to live. Although at home she saw the true reality, the extermination of Ukrainian culture, because of which her father suffered; he ‘listened in the evenings, with his ear to the ground [...] memoirs of the dying Snegirev, listed the operated entrails, beaten kidneys and bladders, insulin shocks, noisily inserted probes, pools of blood [...]: Marchenko, Stus, Popadiuk...’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 104–05). O. Zabuzhko’s father was a Ukrainian patriot, and the writer was ‘daddy’s daughter’.

One biographema is the poverty in the writer’s childhood, in which the majority lived at that time: ‘one dress is a school uniform, petal-white frayed at the elbows, went to school parties [...] in a borrowed blouse and a short, pioneer still, white-top-black-bottom, skirt’ (Zabuzhko 1998: 105). The novel introduces the biographeme of the theft of

the brassmatic 'from the lightly opened briefcase of the queen of the high school' (Zabuzhko 1998: 106). The family was supported by the mother, as the father did not work because he was not hired after the camps. In the context of 'Ukrainian sex', the writer depicts the life of a mother, a child of the famine of 33 years old, whom she sympathizes with, and whom she defines as frigid with a taste of pain: 'my mother was innocent, like a lamb, or rather the Virgin Mary' (Zabuzhko 1998: 107), stating with great sadness that this generation was hungry throughout their lives: 'they wanted to eat in their twenties, to eat and nothing else! to choke on student ration bread, to stuff handfuls into their mouths and arms, picking up crumbs, they never learned what a clitoris is' (Zabuzhko 1998: 107). Hunger was a physical block to the discovery of corporeality and sexuality.

Other biographemes are the images of his mother and father, about whom O. Zabuzhko writes with compassion and understanding, as Ukrainian intellectuals who were not allowed to realise their full potential: 'mother, singing birds, officious lamb, was writing her dissertation on poetics in a communal "Khrushchevka" [...] but she finished the dissertation, just in her

seventy-third year, and made with it' (Zabuzhko 1998: 107). Alongside intellectuals, O. Zabuzhko introduces the image of a 'boor', a neighbour who lived next door and spoiled life with her hopeless primitiveness and rudeness: 'a cook from the worker's canteen, the one who was supposed to "manage the state" (a single mother with five children from five men, who threw rags and broken teeth into the pot of borscht)' (Zabuzhko 1998: 107–08).

O. Zabuzhko herself is the pride of her parents. Defending her PhD thesis in philosophy was an important event in the life of the writer's mother: '...the day of the defense (what the hell was it for!) was her holiday, she rejoiced like a child, "if only daddy were alive!"' (Zabuzhko 1998: 108). Biographemes are also features of portrait/character traits: mother was a guitarist, father died of cancer (Zabuzhko 1998: 111).

Emotionally, O. Zabuzhko concludes her novel with conclusions, which are the leading idea: as a problem to be overcome, the writer defines the fear and slave mentality of the Ukrainian people, which can be saved and revived only with the help of love, the consequences of which will be the discovery of individual sexuality in everyone

who wants it: 'Slavery is infection with fear. And fear kills love. And without love are children, poems, and paintings – everything is pregnant with death' (Zabuzhko 1998: 112).

In the complex syntax of O. Zabuzhko's novel *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex*, which is a sign of the writer's idiostyle and demonstrates her orientation towards the intellectual reader, the desire to revive communication is realized. Allusions to previous literature (Khvylovyyi) are an attempt to revive the tradition: the forbidden, the best in Ukrainian literature, intellectual and sensual, innovative. The plot evolves through the complex syntax of the heroine's analysis of her own inner feelings through her past loves; the retrospection of relationships, which revives the 'story of the narration', establishes a linear sequence of collisions that turn into a conflict: man / woman. O. Zabuzhko revives the plot and intrigue, faith and universal values, tries to find connections, turns to science, religion, psychology to clarify to the reader the essence of the problems of communication in an attempt to find the truth, to come to oneself (author O. Zabuzhko / heroine Oksana).

The novel presents one narrative, the narrative instance of

the author-heroine; there is a transformation of the genre through the synthesis of artistic and scientific styles. This provides a convenient plane for the probability of creating autofictionalism.

O. Zabuzhko's novel is created in keeping with postmodernism aesthetics, which the author uses as a tradition: she both opposes and imitates it. O. Zabuzhko deepens the poetic thinking on writing. Among the oppositions of postmodernism it is appropriate to determine the rejection of the image of the artistic world as chaos, the rejection of fragmentation, the denial of the variability of truth. The peculiarities of art criticism include the revival of faith, the existence of universal values, the search for 'connections', the linearity of the plot, the trust in the meta-narrative, where science and religion are explanatory systems of knowledge. O. Zabuzhko revives 'history', which is presented as an evolutionary process. The heroine Oksana is actively involved in modern realities, the time of the events depicted in the novel is the present of the late 90s of the twentieth century, which in the work is linear, consistent, evolutionary, historical, in the earthly space.

The biographemes in the novel can be documentary material that is necessary for the analysis of other works of the writer, as it highlights the subtexts and allows to better understand the views and aesthetic techniques of O. Zabuzhko.

Autofictionalism is manifested in the combination of the empirical author O. Zabuzhko and the explicit author in the image of the main character Oksana, who is not identified with the real author. The biographical fiction of *Field Studies in Ukrainian Sex* is only an imitation of the biography of the real author O. Zabuzhko, who is the heroine Oksana. There is a certain indecision in the narrative, which demonstrates the angle of view in Oksana's story from her inner perspective, which is the focus of her worldview. O. Zabuzhko invents Ukrainian authenticity and difference to interpret 'own' and 'foreign'. The novel shows an orientation to the 'connection' of the work with reality, which makes its impact on the community possible. Oksana tries to know and understand the man she loves too much, herself, and the modern world around her. And although the writer addresses 'ladies and gentlemen'/the reader, the complex syntax of the work demonstrates her desire to prove how cool she

is, which subconsciously shows that O. Zabuzhko is oriented towards herself, writes for herself, tells herself. She is her leading reader, not 'ladies and gentlemen'. And this is good, and let 'ladies and gentlemen' catch up if they want to understand such a wonderful narratologist. Euripides said that he came to teach the people, not to learn from the people. So, let's learn from our best contemporaries, and be grateful for having them.

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