



Sukhenko Inna

PhD, Candidate of Philology
Dnipropetrovsk National University
named after O. Honchar

ON ECOCRITICISM FORMATION IN UKRAINIAN LITERARY STUDIES

At the contemporary stage of literary studies in Ukraine it is quite early to state that the Ukrainian literary studies can have the tendency of well-formed ecocritical researches, especially in comparison with the achievements of the foreign literary criticism where the content of ecocriticism, the ways of its connections with the contemporary world ecological tendencies, the methods of implementing ecocriticism toolkit in text analysis are well-developed and worked out.

Ecological culture of the Ukrainian ethnos, within which the Ukrainians' ecological values were shaped under the influence of ecological determinants and religion, was developed in the direction from the agricultural culture to the high-technical one. The formation of Ukraine's ecological culture stemmed from pagans' nature-centered consciousness, went through the theological basis of Christianity to the anthropo-centered attitude to the nature in the period of the Soviet Ukraine when Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union.

The consciousness of the contemporary Ukrainian society falls into line with the idea of the new ecological ethics formation, based on the renewed life-support systems, intensive development of science as well as those culture components (including economical, social, historical, religious ones), that have got popular for the last decades. Thus, the philosophy of ecocritical perception of the environment is under its active formation in the Ukrainian

society nowadays.

Nevertheless, the ecologically-centered tendency of Ukrainian literary studies as a separate tendency asserted itself in the 1970-1980-ies with its name «ecological aesthetics» – a part of aesthetics studies, devoted to the researches of relations between human and nature, biosphere, the environment.

Also it was a period of a deep ecological crisis at the background of extremely dynamic growth of the industrial zones, the destructive usage of natural resources, which was of extreme threat for humans' life as well as actions of demolishing historical and cultural memories. It was a period when appeared acute problems which were typical and common within the whole territory of the Soviet Union and dealing with the processes of changing rivers' watercourse in the Siberia, polluting lake Baikal and making human-made seas with a view to building new water-power plans. The new ecological aesthetics was aimed at the development of reasonable behavior norms, which could regulate «human-nature» relations in their ecological, cultural, social, aesthetical aspects in order to keep the balance between the environment and cultural national values. This vision of the ecological problems greatly influenced the aesthetical orientation of the environment in its Ukrainian variant. While being of demand today, this ecological aesthetics in its numerous implementations appeared as a complex harmonic conception of the environment. .

Literature and cinematograph were fully involved in the process of providing as well as supporting this society development program. Literary critics regarded fiction works about human-made seas and their destroying consequences and effects – cinema-novella «*The Poem about the Sea*», 1956 by O. Dovzhenko («Поема про море», 1956 О. Довженка), novel «*Birds Leaving Their Nests*», 1965 by I. Chendey («Птахи залишають гнізда», 1965 І. Чендея), novella «*Farewell to Matyora*», 1976 by I. Rasputin («Прощання з Матьорою», 1976 В. Распутіна) – as an entire phenomenon in the aspect of urgent problems of the ecological catastrophe.

In the 1950-ies cinema-novella «*The Poem about the Sea*» by O. Dovzhenko was regarded as one of his great works, as a narration about «the labor and the beauty» as well as «the ethnos's souls and feeling up-bringing», as a proof of the author's «great magnitude of romanticism». Later this fiction work by O. Dovzhenko as well as ones by I. Chendey, I. Rasputin were regarded as a fictional comprehension of humans' drama, who were involved in the cycle of urgent ecological problems of those times.

The most resonant fiction work of that period was novel «*Church*», 1967 by O. Honchar («Собор», 1967 О. Гончара), where the writer emphasized the long-standing problem of negligent attitude to the Samara church – one of the unique and exquisite culture memorials in the Ukrainian culture and history.

The reaction of critics (Ukrainian as well as foreign ones) to these fiction works produced the formation of ecologically-centered features of literary studies as well as its new problems, themes and even terminology. All these actions took place at the crossroads of ecological aesthetics and literary studies. Nevertheless, all these tendencies did not gain the appropriate development while even having all the reasons for this.

The accident at Chornobyl nuclear power plant (April, 25, 1986) produced the peculiar exposure of ecologically-directed publications as well as enabled the appearance of «ecological non-fiction» (so-called «writings on ecological affairs») as well as «memoirs ecological literature», representing the «writer's approach of ecological kind». Ukrainian

writers' responses to this accident were extremely dynamic, among them are non-fiction works (1986) by L. Kostenko (Л. Костенко), «*Reasons and Consequences*», 1986 and «*Chornobyl*», 1989 by Y. Shcherbak («Причини і наслідки», 1986 та «Чорнобиль», 1989 Ю. Щербака), «*Maria with Mugwort at the End of the Century*», 1988 by V. Yavorivskiy («Марія з полином у кінці століття», 1988 В. Яворівського), «*Chornobyl Madonna*», 1988 by I. Drach («Чорнобильська мадонна», 1988 І. Драча), «*Seven*», 1988 by B. Oliynyk («Сім», 1988 Б. Олійника), «*At That Fire Night*», 1989 by L. Viryna («Тієї вогняної ночі», 1989 Л. Віриної), «*Fire Destructors*», 1996 by V. Mykulskiy («Ліквідатори», 1996 В. Миккульського) and others. But the critics' response to these and other works was a restrained and low-key one. Even sometimes a newly-published work went unnoticed. And the reasons for this are well-known: in the first years after the Chornobyl tragedy under prohibition on reporting any information dealing with the accident, it was the only official – governmental – point of view on this catastrophe, that journalists as well as writers could cover. There was a complete blackout on the factual events. But some time later, in spite of all obstacles and prohibitions the society came got aware of the Chornobyl as a technical accident that caused the global ecological catastrophe, the sequences of which will be experienced by some next generations. This awareness of real events in the Chornobyl came to mass media in the capacity of huge and various publications mainly representing memoirs of the Chornobyl catastrophe witnesses.

Memoirs ecological literature, devoted to the accident in Chornobyl, can be regarded as of research kind, which enabled to reveal as well as cover not only reasons for the Chornobyl accident to the common people but also comprehend the consequences on that catastrophe. These non-fiction works as well as memoir notes touched upon the reasons for the Chornobyl accident, provided readers with facts and reports, represented witnesses' recollections but under writers' and authors' interpretation of the facts. Unveiling the «dead zone» matters, memoirs and non-fiction writers confessed that they did not know and even do not know the whole truth about the Chornobyl accident. And even now there exist some works, prohibited to publish. Among them there are «*Soothsayer from Future*» and «*Farewell to Chornobyl*» by M. Malakhuta («Віщун з майбутнього», «Прощання з Чорнобилем» М. Малахути).

Some great works of talented writers are still underappreciated, and among them is L. Syrota Л. Сироти with her collection of poems «*Burden*», 1990 («Ноша») and novella «*Prupyat Syndrome*», 2009 («Припятский синдром»), who headed the writers' society in Prupyat city (the city, located near the Chornobyl nuclear power plant), saw the accident exposure, went through the awful process of fast evacuation and subsequent medical treatment.

Post-Chornobyl decade's writers tried to keep the commonly-accepted opinions on the accident consequences, although ecological problems, depicted by them, allowed writers to be deep in analysis of human characters under danger. Despite the aspects of covering the Chornobyl accident as well as its aftermath, every writer of that post-Chornobyl period came to the comprehension that every land patch is dead and inappropriate to live on. These post-Chornobyl non-fiction works by Ukrainian writers represented the statement of facts, memories, reconsidered by the authors and passed through writers' and eye-witnesses' imagination. However, Ukrainian fiction did not manage to cover all the tragedy of the Chornobyl catastrophe to the full extent.

Ukrainian literature – both of the post-Chornobyl period and the contemporary one – is characterized by its ecological-spiritual direction, where ecological and spiritual problems are regarded as the integral whole, which caused the differentiated approach of the Ukrainian literary studies in covering ecological problems in Ukrainian literature. All these problems are regarded by Ukrainian literary critics as a typical phenomenon of the industrial society, while the emphasis on representing the moral and spiritual aspects of ecological-spiritual problems of the Ukrainian society are based on the «memory culture» theory (by A. Assman). All these factors put the background for the dominant tendency of covering «human-nature» relations in the contemporary Ukrainian literature. In this aspect the most attractive ones are non-fiction works by L. Kostenko and research works by T. Gundorova.

The Ukrainian literary studies have reached the point of feeling the urgent need in ecocritical researches, as the Ukrainians' ecological consciousness formation as well as its further development can function as both the background and the main source of ethnical self-comprehension in the contemporary world, the basis of national self-identification, which can integrate as well as keep the integrity of the Ukrainian nation, and provide mutual connections and heredity of generations within the Ukrainian society.