

Ecocritical Comprehension of the Chornobyl Accident in Non-Fiction Works by Y. Shcherbak and R. P. Gale

Halyna Bitkivska & Liudmyla Anisimova

Department of World Literature, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University

18/2 Bulvarno-Kudriavska St., Kyiv, 04053, Ukraine.

Email: h.bitkivska@kubg.edu.ua; l.anisimova@kubg.edu.ua

Abstract The article deals with a representation of the Chornobyl accident in non-fiction prose by the Ukrainian and American authors from the perspectives of ecocriticism. The literary devices of ecocritical discourse such as the frame of idyll, paratextual forms, the key metaphors are defined and analyzed in a documentary narrative “Chornobyl” (1987) by Yuriy Shcherbak and a not-fiction story “Chernobyl: The Final Warning” (1988, second ed. 2020) by Robert Peter Gale and Thomas Hauser. A depiction of environmental problems, relations between a man and nature, the elements of ecological consciousness etc. are studied in the documentary works about the Chornobyl tragedy, which were written by the Ukrainian and American authors shortly after the accident. Their texts represent the axiology of two different social systems—socialism and capitalism. It was also proved that a development the ecological consciousness and a liberation from colonial dependence are interrelated processes. A methodological basis of the research were the works from the field of ecocriticism (H. Fromm, D. Haraway, P.D. Murphy and other scholars). We came to the conclusion that in texts by Shcherbak and Gale, a key metaphor of ecological problems is an image of the final warning. The authors reveal its essence with the help of an idyllic worldview in a context of pastoral landscapes. In both texts an importance of understanding the interdependency between man and nature for the sake of avoiding further catastrophes was proved.

Keywords ecocriticism; Chornobyl (Chernobyl) accident; non-fiction prose; Yuriy Shcherbak; Robert Peter Gale

Authors **Halyna Bitkivska**, DSc in Philology, is Head of the Department of World literature at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine). The areas of interest include Intermedial studies, Medieval and contemporary European literature,

literary theory. Liudmyla Anisimova, PhD in Philology, is Associate Professor at the Department of World literature and the Academic secretary at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine). Her main research interests include but not limited to British and American literatures.

Chornobyl is a mystery which we still ought to unravel.
Unread sign. Maybe it is an arcanum for the twenty-first century.
A challenge for it.
——Svetlana Alexievich

Introduction

The explosion at the Unit 4 of the Nuclear power plant at Chornobyl¹, Ukraine, on April 26, 1986, according to the United Nations, is considered to be the biggest nuclear catastrophe in the history of mankind (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl's Legacy*). Thereafter Chornobyl, “an obscure town in Soviet Ukraine—has become part of the world’s lexicon” (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*). For many times, its reasons and effects, influence on people and environment were the focus of representation and comprehension in literary and scholarly works. The author of “The Chernobyl Prayer” (1997) Svetlana Alexievich said in her Nobel lecture that she resisted writing about Chornobyl for a long time, because “didn’t know how to write about it, what instrument to use, how to approach the subject” (Alexievich). Writing about global disasters, one “must give the truth as it is,” and “(t)he witness must speak.” That’s why Alexievich started to “collect the everyday life of feelings, thoughts, and words. [...] collect the life of my time” (ibid.) and became a creator of “the novels of voices.” Among other literary non-fiction works about Chornobyl, the Ukrainian author Yuriy Shcherbak’s documentary narrative “Chornobyl” (1987) receives a special attention by scholars. Polish scholar Pawel Sekula states that Shcherbak combines the documents, facts, narratives of eyewitnesses with his own thoughts and impressions, endowing the story with an artistic expressiveness. The work became one of the first literary and documentary receptions of Chornobyl events. Also, Sekula admits that Shcherbak was restricted by censorship in his narrative, “even in the conditions of a relatively liberal restructuring” (407).

A non-fiction story “Chernobyl: The Final Warning” (1988) by an American

1 In the article we use all Ukrainian names and toponyms in transliteration from the Ukrainian language (for example, Chornobyl instead of Chernobyl), except the cases when we quote the original or translated (and published) works in the English language

Dr. Robert Peter Gale, co-written with Thomas Hauser, represents a vision of an atomic catastrophe from a free of political censorship perspective, in a prospect of potential (un)safety of nuclear power industry. In a Foreword to the 2020 edition of a book, the authors admit with sadness that thirty-four years ago they had hoped that:

the global cooperation in response to Chernobyl would herald a new era in securing the future of our planet. But this scenario hasn't emerged. Instead, we see a world that's falling apart rather than people uniting in common cause. (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*)

Unfortunately, “the lessons of Chernobyl are more important now than ever before” (ibid.). The authors highlight that for “citizens in a democracy, it is our obligation to understand what is involved and to act upon these issues without self-deception, exaggeration, or demagoguery” (ibid.). It could be said that the problem is treated by the authors not even in a planetary but in a cosmic scale. From the first page of a work, they postulate the expressive eco-philosophical statements: “man is in and of nature, not above it” (ibid.); “splitting the atom, man has crossed a threshold that threatens us all. When environmental systems reach certain extremes, changes occur rapidly, unpredictably, and often without warning¹” (Gale and Hauser, *Ostannie* (a) 145).

At the beginning of a story, the narrative is dramatized with a description of a sorrowful image of Mitinskoe Cemetery and dead patients from Hospital number 6 in Moscow—the first victims of Chornobyl. But the failure to save their lives demonstrated “how deadly nuclear power can be and how helpless the world is when radiation rages wild. In the end, we all live near Chernobyl” (Gale and Hauser, *Ostannie* (c) 167).

Tamara Hundorova states that in the post-Soviet Chernobyl discourse it was a transformation of a real event into the media event, a hot atomic explosion into the cold information explosion (414). The works by Shcherbak and Gale give us an opportunity to rethink Chornobyl catastrophe due to vivid impressions of eyewitnesses, who became the participants and mediators of an event in a context of contemporary environmental problems.

The different aspects of the Chornobyl accident are studied in fiction and

1 In 1989 a documentary story *Chernobyl: The Final Warning* by Gale and Hauser was published in Ukrainian translation in the magazine *Vsesvit*. In our article all quotations are taken from original text, published in 2020 (Kindle version).

documentary literature. The ecocritical issues are represented predominately in a context of broader problems, but even sporadic cases prove their importance and necessity to continue the research. In the article about the image of Chernobyl in fiction, Larissa Zaleska Onyshkevych rises a problem of contrasting the natural disasters and man-made catastrophes with the help of images of Atlantis and Guernica (29). She points out that in Chernobyl discourse the authors used to divide the things which caused by nature and a man, emphasizing a search for the guilty. She states that in Shcherbak's work an attention is paid to the conditions of living after a catastrophe, also the author seeks for reasons and those who responsible and descripts their vindication. Zaleska Onyshkevych says:

... it seems as if everybody is guilty, although several definite persons are also pointed out. Drawing attention to the specific threats from numerous nuclear power plants in Ukraine and Belarus, in an extended sense the author speaks about a threat to whole mankind, which has the final warning: '...we came—to Chernobyl. We have come to a crisis of faith. We have come to the edge of precipice...' (ibid. 30)

A documentary prose is also actively studied nowadays by researchers. Kamila Gieba in the article "The Chernobyl zone in the Ukrainian and Belarusian context—On the example of reporter narrations" considered the journalistic reports to be valuable because they present the information of eyewitnesses and give an opportunity to define a place of reporter in described events. She defines that the Chernobyl accident has a transboundary character, and it could be treated in many aspects, particularly in anthropologic, natural, political, and geopolitical. She comprehends the image of nuclear reactor both as "a dark metonym for the fate of the Soviet Union" (Gieba 181) and as a core of worries about "the fate of future generations, extinctions of species and the damage to the environment" (ibid.).

The accounts and impressions of Chernobyl eyewitnesses are studied in different genres, also in poetry. The researchers state that poems have a unique quality to recapture a horror of the atomic destruction. Alison Miller and Cassandra Atherton are interested in studying the poems produced by Chernobylites or those which were derived from witness testimonies. According to them, an author of such "dark poetry" "confronts the anxiety of existentialism in the nuclear sublime and simultaneously resists the romanticisation of suffering and fetishisation of nuclear spectacle" (Miller and Atherton 16).

In the article "His own Chernobyl: The embodiment of radiation and the resis-

tance to nuclear extractivism in Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life*," Vivek Santayana writes about the problems of nuclear energy in South Africa on a ground of the history of colonial extractivism and racial oppression. Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence" is proved by the example of Paul Bannerman's life, the protagonist of Gordimer's novel. The logic of colonialism to the exploitation of the non-human ecosystem in the interest of capital is criticized (Santayana 15).

Film texts are a special subject for researching the theme of Chornobyl. Johanna Lindbladh compares seven films from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, devoted to this tragedy. The results of the narratological analysis prove that Chornobyl accident is represented as an apocalyptic event, but influenced to a personal rebirth (political, emotional, sexual, religious, or existential) of many people. The narratives of these films are similarly structured rather according to a temporal pattern of *kairos* (an elusive and favorable moment; refers to the qualitative characteristics), than *chronos* (a continuity and natural course of events; quantitative characteristics). It means that an apocalyptic moment was defined as the supreme time to act (*kairos*), rather than the end in a historical chain of events (*chronos*). That's why the final scenes are marked with the absence of tragical feelings and finality (Lindbladh). Chornobyl is a sad and painful lesson for the mankind, but not the end of it.

Thom Davies deals with the visual materials, using photography as the means to study "hidden spaces of everyday life." With the help of visual (photographs) he researches the invisible (radiation, tragedy, memories) and its influence on people (primarily the communities near the Exclusion Zone), those who "call the nuclear landscape 'home'" (Davies 116).

Sarah Phillips writes about the symbols of Chornobyl as a set of resources, that produce memory and ever-present awareness for the mankind. The ethnographic research on the effects of the accident to rural and urban life of Ukrainian people let her states that "Ukrainian culture has become infused with Chernobyl's sixth sense. [...] Chernobyl is always present—in word, in thought, and in embodied action" (178). This "sixth sense" (a kind of a collective memory) was produced by Chernobyl and structures people's perceptions of the world. It is about "embodying an event whose effects are immeasurable and potentially terrifying" (179).

Inna Sukhenko in the article "Reconsidering 'The Chernobyl' narration within the contemporary tendencies of ecocritical writing" defines Chornobyl accident and post-Chornobyl literature, predominantly memoirs, as an important orienteer of Ukrainian ethnic consciousness in a process of comprehension of interaction between a Man and Nature. She considered the Chornobyl theme in Ukrainian literature to be one of the sharpest places of a struggle for creation the new cultural

identity, based on the highest moral principles, which could let us avoid “future Chernobyls” (13).

The aim of our article is to define and analyze the literary means of ecocritical discourse in non-fiction prose about Chornobyl as exemplified in the works by Shcherbak and Gale&Hauser. The novelty of the research refers to a comparative perspective the texts which represents of axiology of two different social systems—socialism and capitalism, on the ground of ecocritical interpretational field. Gale & Hauser’s work deals with Dr. Gale’s experiences on his trips to the Soviet Union (Moscow and Kyiv) with the primarily aim to provide the bone marrow transplantation to the first victims of Chornobyl accident. Doctor of Medicine in epidemiology Yuriy Shcherbak is a famous Ukrainian writer, screenwriter, scientist, environmental activist, politician, and diplomat—Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Ukraine to Israel (1992–1994), the USA (1994–1998), and Canada (2000–2004).

Searching the Literary Form: A Frame of Idyll

In a documentary narrative “Chornobyl” Shcherbak writes that the catastrophe needed its own forms of depicting: “all traditional literary forms, all subtleties and tricks of composition, all these seemed to me overwhelmingly far from the truth, artificial and needless things¹” (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 21). The desire to depict the accident as truly as possible made Shcherbak to add to his narrative the stories of eyewitnesses. This gave the narrative a character of documentary one. Personalized monologues of eyewitnesses recreate the timeline, reasons, and accident aftermath at the Chornobyl nuclear-power plant. They provide coverage to a personal and collective experience of participants in a moment of the accident and during a short period after it. It is estimated that the stories of witnesses can depict “the inexpressible and abject horror of nuclear destruction” (Miller and Atherton 2). Miller and Atherton’s research is devoted to a study of Chernobylites stories in a context of accounts of Japanese atomic bomb survivors. By analogy, they call Ukrainian victims as “The Chernobyl hibakusha” (ibid.).

Shcherbak uses literary means for generalization of acquired experience, for instance the elements of idyl have a special significance in his work. A frame of idyll is a contrast (antithetic) outline for reader’s reception of the first part of a documentary narrative “Chornobyl,” which begins and ends with representation of an abstract idyllic landscape. According to Terry Gifford the idyllic worldview in literary texts is characterized by emphasizing fertility, resilience, beauty and unthreatened sustainability in nature. He states that in an idealized text the “complacent and

1 All translations from Ukrainian of Shcherbak’s *Chornobyl* are ours.

comforting representations of nature that strategically omit any sense of elements that might be counter to this positive image” (Gifford). Ernst Robert Curtius defines minimum of inseparable elements of an ideal landscape—*locus amoenus*—a tree (or several ones), a meadow, a spring or brook; also, flowers and birdsong may be added. According to Curtius, in Late Antique literature (Libanius’s works) there were six components of *locus amoenus*—such “charms of landscape” as springs, plants, orchards, gentle breeze, flowers, and birdsongs. In Medieval times this list was enlarged by description of fruit (211–228). The images of idyllic landscape serve the means of catastrophic discourse.

In his work Shcherbak represents the period when nature loses sustainability and becomes dangerous because of a technogenic catastrophe. The beauty of Ukrainian nature, depicted by author with the help of permanent images of flowering gardens and flooded rivers, is not self-sufficient anymore. A specificity of an ideal landscape in Shcherbak’s story lies in the fact that it loses its ideality. The external features of the landscape seem to be as perfect as hundreds and thousands of years ago, but now it becomes deadly for every living being. A traditional description of fertile nature is an expression a harmonious and joyful reception of the world, but in a story about the catastrophe it becomes the mean of representation of traumatic experience:

A danger in Chornobyl and around it was dissolved into the fragrant air, in the white-pink blossom of apple-trees and apricots, in a dust on the roads and streets, in a water of village wells, in the milk of cows, in fresh herbs of kitchen-gardens, in all idyllic spring nature. But where it was only spring one? (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 20)

An idyllic beauty of environment which is expressed in snow-white blossoming of gardens and flood of rivers contrasts with perception of Chornobyl accident both as catastrophe and tragedy. In reception of Chornobyl tragedy, Tamara Hundorova defines the coexisting of two metaphors—“tragedy” and “catastrophe,” detailed by different discourses (425). It could be seen that in the first part of Shcherbak’s story the discourse of catastrophe is dominating, and in the second one prevails the discourse of tragedy.

Gale also uses the metaphor of idyll in a context of description of a tragic circumstance for the evacuees, and contrasts with a pastoral landscape:

They had no homes, no possessions, only their lives. Hastily constructed

camps lacked electricity and running water. People slept on the floor or several to a mattress. Most knew that in all probability they would never return home [...]. Still, none of their hardship was evident from the air as we flew toward Chernobyl. It was quite peaceful and idyllic below. Another flock of birds flew beneath us. Nature, I realized, knew no artificial bounds. (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*)

A story of Gale and Hauser is closer to the discourse of a tragedy. It represents the main eco-philosophical concepts of the final warning and death.

In the first part of his work, Shcherbak frequently uses apocalyptic symbolism. He writes not about dividing of the world but about its “split.” According to him, witnesses associate the destructive mode of the accident with the model of war. By the words of Alexievich, in the newspapers the information about Chernobyl accident:

was in military language: explosion, heroes, soldiers, evacuation ... The KGB worked right at the station. They were looking for spies and saboteurs. Rumors circulated that the accident was planned by western intelligence services in order to undermine the socialist camp. (Alexievich)

On April 26, 1986, for many people the world one more time was divided into “before war” and “after war” periods, by analogy with “antebellum” and “postbellum,” or “pre-war” and “post-war” in the history of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An idyll of life before the accident is described by usage of synonymic rows. The rhythm of repetitions recreates the coherence and stability of existence: “a world before Chornobyl was calm, unhurried, self-confident, as if for years it was immersed in a half-sleepy, indulgent, all-permissive complacency” (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 19). This description correlates with cozy atmosphere of childhood when all responsible decisions are made by somebody else but not a child. For a reason Shcherbak notes the important changes in psychology of all generation with the help of age-related lexis: “all of us recovered our sight rapidly and came of age for the whole epoch” (ibid.).

At the same time, the writer emphasizes not age-specific changes, but those which connected with the worldview of people. It needs a deep restructuring of thinking. An author gives us the keys both in text and in paratextual complex of a story, more specifically in a preface and epigraphs.

The first part of a story is ended by Shcherbak with a providing of a model

of happiness, a core of it is a classical topos of *locus amoenus* with traditional images of a river, grass, fragrances of a land. A narrator names it as “idyllic remembrance.” And this name gives us an opportunity to reconstruct an idyllic landscape as the antithetic frame to discourse of catastrophe. A narrative of such discourse is presented in ascending order—from a model of catastrophe to a model of happiness. The landscape description depicts the mental balance and permanence of existence:

I went on a bank of a small river Khorol, laid down on the grass, and closed my eyes partly. Near I heard the love piping of frogs, felt a freshness of grass and proximity of water. On the opponent bank the cows were mooing and waiting for the time they’ll give their hot milk into the tin buckets. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 49)

Then, in a process of modeling, a narrator doesn’t give any concrete characteristics to a description—the river loses its name, a single completed action is replaced by imperfect hypothetical action. A landscape turns to be a basis for the generalized utopian vision of a world:

And suddenly I realized what the happiness is. It is a grass, on which one can lie without a fear of radiation. It is warm river, which you can have a swim in. It is the cows, whose milk one can drink securely. And a provincial small town, which live an untouched life. And a sanatorium, on the alley of which the vacationers slowly take a walk, buy tickets to the open-air cinema, and make friends—it is also a happiness. But not everybody understands this. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 49)

A paradigm of generalization is formed by several causes and based on the ground of features of sustainability, fertility, and absence of danger. Sustainability is provided by the fact that a town for a definite period of time is a place of prosperity. Shcherbak recalls a description of Myrhorod, written by Mykola (Nikolai) Gogol in nineteenth century:

A wonderful town is Mirgorod! How many buildings are there with straw, rush, and even wooden roofs! On the right is a street, on the left a street, and fine fences everywhere. Over them twine hop-vines, upon them hang pots; from behind them the sunflowers show their sun-like heads, poppies blush, fat pumpkins peep; all is luxury itself! (ibid.; as transl. in Gogol)

It is an idealized description in which wellness, fertility and beauty is accented. The buildings as signs of material culture impress by their variety; the fence doesn't bend from a wind but after all is beautiful; the plants are presented in a period of flourishing; the fruit is ripe. The author points out that chosen locus remains constantly beautiful during long period of time: "It's been a long time ago! From what naïve and fair remoteness these words came. Yet in May of 1986, Myrhorod was wonderful" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 49). But now the foreground are safety and absence of prohibited actions: "It is wonderful because there was no radiation here, even a little increased. And nobody gives the advice to close the windows" (ibid.).

In a story "Chornobyl," a topos of prosperity is related associatively to the images of plant, which symbolize Ukrainianness—such as hop, sunflower, and pumpkin. Not only Myrhorod and Horol were small provincial towns on the bank of a river, but also Chornobyl and Prypyat.

"We All Live Near Chernobyl": The Ecological Components of Consciousness

An epigraph to Shcherbak's story—a quotation from the brothers Strugatsky's novel "Roadside Picnic" (1972)—is associated with such notions as "the Zone" and "stalker" from a primary literary source. A confirmation of semantics of the concepts and their further spread in a culture happened after Andrey Tarkovsky movie "Stalker" (1979), based upon the book by Strugatsky. Yet at the end of 70s of twentieth century the notions were known only by a narrow group of science fiction fans or those who interested in works by Tarkovsky. But after catastrophe on 26 April 1986, while Shcherbak was working on his non-fiction story, the mentioned words became known to almost everybody.

The epigraph could be understood as a manifesto of a model of existence in a technologically insecure world:

That's all, the Zone! And immediately it gives me cold shivers ... Every time the same feelings. I still don't know the reason: either the Zone meets me in such way, or my nerves of stalker were shot. [...] A mind is an ability to use the forces of the world around without destroying it. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 19)

In a last sentence the attitude to the nature as supplier of resources become visible. For sure, it is not about a supremacy of men over nature, but at the same time it's not about a partnership and harmonious existence in ecosystem; the usage of

environment is declared. The epigraph to the first part is received as a focus of catastrophic discourse. An appeal to reason activates the rational perception and first of all it associates with a model of catastrophe.

The brothers Strugatsky's novel sounded as a warning but only within limits of fiction. In a documentary story "Chornobyl" a mode of narration has changed. In genre of non-fiction any text represents both as a real-life fact and as a phenomenon of the literary process. Narration is dramatized and associative semantics of the epigraph receives an efficient verbal expression: "Chornobyl explosion brings a mankind in a new phase of development of civilization, the possibility of which intuitively was guessed only by science-fiction writers" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 20).

Documentary narrative has details which not only lend credibility to event but also helps to recreate the chronological order and its "fast" comprehension forthwith. For example, after analyzing the representation in journalistic-speak an explosion of shuttle Challenger and Chornobyl accident, Mark and Carver state that the first event was discussed in much more detail (Mark and Carver).

In "Chornobyl" we read about several views on the matter of an accident, the reasons and chronological order of events, which at the beginning experts considered to be even theoretically impossible. In a second part of a story Shcherbak quotes excerpts from Arkadiy Uskov's diary, who was senior operation engineer at the reactor shop #1 of the first block at the Chornobyl nuclear-power plant. The author refers to his diary as to a document of a high importance. The written form of diary entries differs from oral monologues, which Shcherbak recorded on tapes. A writer notes, that during the process of transcription the oral stories he tried:

to save a structure of the language, the special aspects of terminology or jargon, intonation of my partners in conversation, editing only if absolutely necessary. It seemed to me very important to save a documentary and nonfictional character of those confessions. I wanted the truth was preserved. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 22)

However, Shcherbak reduces and selects evidence according to his own vision of an accident.

A written narration of a diary was created by Uskov but represents his reception of an accident in different periods of time—in a critical moment and postfactum, that is, it contains the elements of comprehension. A first note records the message about an accident on 26 April 1986 at 3.55 a. m. and express the confusion

and absence of any concrete information. But in a note at 9.20 a. m. a conscious reception of an accident is represented. It characterized by a contrast of catastrophic discourse and image of a seemingly vital and abundant nature, what in general is attributed feature of Shcherbak's documentary story:

Whereas above the ruins, above this awful invisible danger the generous spring sun is shining. The mind rejects to believe that the worst that ever happened. But it is a reality, a fact. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (c) 19)

The motives of a natural world lost the usual signs, and this meaningfully marks a discourse of catastrophe. The changes in reception of the world around determine a physical and mental health of the narrator:

Today our girls brought some lilac. They put it in the everyone's ward. The bunch is beautiful! I tried to take a smell; does it smell like a dish soap?! Maybe they decontaminated it with something? They said no. The lilac is real. That my nose refuses to work. The mucous membrane is burnt. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (c) 22)

Unusual details show the irreversible loss of a natural harmony, fill the documentary narrative with apocalyptic pictures:

He drove us through the Red Forest. The picture is quite fantastic. The pine trees were not rusty red, nor autumnal, nor burnt. The colour was fresh, the tint of yellow. A horrible scene. From top to bottom it was such colour (ibid.)

The idyllic landscapes of the first part of a work are replaced by scenery of ruins:

It was a desolation of Chornobylian yards, covered with black fallen apples. There were piles of rubbish in the backyards of dormitories—discarded respirators, old things that 'indicate', smashed and ransacked cars with numbers painted on their sides, stacks of yellowed government papers—the remains of forever disappeared 'pre-war' life. And there is a portrait of Brezhnev, which rising high above one of such radioactive dump sites. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (d) 78)

Shcherbak structures a grand-scale vision of a world, in which the accident hap-

pened, with the help of metaphoric images of the world behind a looking-glass, “a long and dangerous journey into antiworld,” the last warning.

The metaphor of a last warning is a key for Shcherbak’s story. One of the chapters has a name “The Final Warning.” The author quotes Volodymyr Vernadsky’s words from the letter to his wife from June 2, 1887 about “unknown terrible forces in different bodies” as the first warning to all mankind; and develops it in a context of relatively new concept of omnicide—a total destruction of the human race (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 36–37). Shcherbak writes a lot about the origin of a new ecological factor, that relates to the Chornobyl catastrophe. At the same time, he proves in a convincing manner that a matter of industrial safety in general and nuclear-power plants in particular was of a high interest much earlier, since nineteenth century. But people prefer to do not hear such warnings and to choose inertial inaction rather than high level personal responsibility.

By the way, as an epigraph to a story “Chernobyl: the Final Warning” were taken the words of Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein from their Manifesto (1955) about the consequences of a nuclear war: “[...] consider yourselves only as members of a biological species which has had a remarkable history, and whose disappearance none of us can desire” (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*).

At a moment of an accident the average people know less or almost nothing about a potential danger of the nuclear-power plants for the environment. A discourse about a nuclear industry was featured with an acceptable and pleasant word combination “the peaceful atom.” Before the Chornobyl accident a common man believed in a mind that able to manage the highly technological processes. Unfortunately, people still aren’t ready to consider themselves as a part of nature and worry about a balance of the natural environment.

Shcherbak’s work encourages the mankind to big changes in many spheres, particularly in ecology. In post-Chernobyl world a man must take into account a threat which “does’t even have the taste, colour and smell, and only can be measured with special devices” (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 20). For surviving, the mankind should rethink own attitude to the environment and start with developing of a new way of thinking.

Donna Haraway writes about the role of metaphors in a process of forming a new paradigm (2). Based on the ideas of Kuhn on paradigms and Mary Hesse concerning metaphor as an intrinsic part of science and its predictivity, Haraway considered the metaphor to be “the vital spirit of a paradigm (or perhaps its basic organizing relation)” (9). Miller and Atherton define that Chornobyl is entwined in “metaphors of abjection, loss, and chaos” (12). So, it is suggestive to investigate the

use of metaphor to direct research and its interpretation. A metaphor of “the final warning” is equally important for works by Shcherbak and Gale. Both authors believed that it would lead to a change of worldview paradigm of a mankind.

Chornobyl as a Stage of Emancipation from Colonial Dependence

The first part of Shcherbak’s documentary narrative “Chornobyl” primarily was published in Russian language in 1987 in a literary magazine “Yunost.” In Ukrainian translation it was published next year in a literary magazine “Vitchyzna.” The second part was published in both issues almost simultaneously at the end of 1988. An author explained the reasons. Only magazine “Yunost” made a special request to write a book about Chornobyl accident. This Russian language issue was very popular and widely read magazine in the USSR and abroad—has an edition of 3,1 million copies. By the way, “Vitchyzna” had just 23 thousand copies. Shcherbak wanted to tell the world about “a real course of events and true dimensions of inational disaster” (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 18) as soon as possible. But there is another reason, which was marked by colonial influence: “[...] a breaking mechanism, worked through the years of stagnation.” In a foreword, Shcherbak articulates his assurance that it is doubtful that in Ukraine such work could be published. In a consciousness of citizens only Moscow as a center has a privilege to share or conceal any information.

Shcherbak explains it by the fact that the processes of transparency in Ukraine just started in spring 1986. At that time, the censored themes still exist. He writes about the power of government to control and regulate the information: “one thing was allowed in ‘the centre’, but the other was locally—in a much less degree and of worse quality” (ibid.). So, the discourse about Chornobyl tragedy represents the colonial dependence of Ukraine and proves the beginning of a process of liberation from it.

Almost synchronous with Shcherbak’s work, a publication of a documentary story “Chernobyl: The Final Warning” of R. P. Gale and Th. Hauser in the Ukrainian translation in a magazine “Vsesvit” helped to clarify the details of the colonial dependence of Ukraine. In a Foreword to Gale’s work, Shcherbak writes that the texts of American authors “expands our understanding of the events happened in the year of 1986” (Gale and Hauser, *Ostannie* (a) 145). A long-term vision of the events from a point of view of the Other helps to observe a common concern and some differences in reception. The texts of both documentary stories are connected with a narration of warning. Not coincidentally, while writing about ecological consciousness in Ukrainian, Sukhenko proves that a degree of awareness of environmental problems is higher in non-fiction literature than in fiction (Sukhenko).

Conclusion

The stories in a genre of non-fiction by Yuriy Shcherbak “Chornobyl” and by Robert Peter Gale and Thomas Hauser “Chernobyl: The Final Warning” represent a reception and comprehension of a global tragedy—the accident on Chornobyl Nuclear power plant. The authors of both texts are at the same time the witnesses and the narrators of stories. And this fact lends a special credence and frankness to the narratives. In Shcherbak’s work, the modus of artistic merit is prevailed, it defines his individual style of writing. The author tries to portray the event as detailed as possible, seeks to comprehend its reasons and aftermath. He generalizes his own observations and reports of other witnesses. However, in Gale’s narration a fixation of own impressions is prevalent. The parts written by Hauser emphasize a responsibility of a mankind for nuclear energy use.

A key metaphor of ecological problems in both texts is an image of final warning. Shcherbak and Gale reveal its essence with the help of an idyllic worldview in the context of pastoral landscapes. In both texts an importance of understanding the interdependency between man and nature for a sake to avoid further global catastrophes is proved. A development the ecological consciousness and a liberation from colonial dependence are treated as interrelated processes. However, many aspects of Shcherbak’s and Gale’s works need further research and are waiting for those who care about the lesson of Chornobyl and fate of mankind.

Works Cited

- Alexievich, Svetlana. Nobel Lecture “On the Battle Lost,” 2015. Available at: <https://www.nobel-prize.org/prizes/literature/2015/alexievich/lecture/> (accessed May 14, 2021).
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *Yevropeyska Literatura i Latynske Serednovichchya* [European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages], trans. from Germ. by Anatoliy Onyshko. Lviv: Litopys, 2007. [In Ukrainian]
- Davies, Thom. “A Visual Geography of Chernobyl: Double Exposure.” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, vol. 84, 2013, pp. 116-139, doi:10.1017/S0147547913000379.
- Gale, Robert Peter, and Thomas Hauser. *Chernobyl: The Final Warning*. 2nd ed. Encore Press Inc., 2020. Kindle edition.
- . *Ostannie poperedzhennia (Spadshchyna Chornobyliia)* [The Final Warning (Chornobyl Legacy)], transl. from Eng. by Volodymyr Romanets. *Vsesvit*, №4, 1989(a), pp. 144-158. [In Ukrainian]
- . *Ostannie poperedzhennia (Spadshchyna Chornobyliia)* [The Final Warning (Chornobyl Legacy)], transl. from Eng. by Volodymyr Romanets. *Vsesvit*, №5, 1989(b), pp. 137-153. [In

Ukrainian]

—. *Ostannie poperedzhennia (Spadshchyna Chornobyliia)* [The Final Warning (Chornobyl Legacy)], transl. from Eng. by Volodymyr Romanets. *Vsesvit*, №6, 1989(c), pp. 155-167. [In Ukrainian]

Gieba, Kamila. "Czarnobylska Strefa w Kontekście Ukraińskim i Białoruskim—Przykłady Reporterskie: The Chernobyl Zone in the Ukrainian and Belarusian Context—on the Example of Reporter Narrations." *Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski*, vol. 11, no 1, czerwiec 2020, pp. 181-190, doi:10.31648/pw.5979.

Gifford, Terry. "Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post-Pastoral as Reading Strategies." *Critical Insights: Nature and Environment*, edited by Scott Slovic, Ipswich: Salam Press, 2012, pp. 42-61.

Gogol, Nikolai. *Collected Works*, vol. 21, Series Two, Delphi Classics, 2013. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5b2pvda8> (accessed July 11, 2021).

Haraway, Donna J. *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields. Metaphors of Organicism in Twentieth-Century Developmental Biology*. New Haven and London, Yale UP, 1976.

Hundorova, Tamara. *Tranzytna Kultura. Symptomy Postkolonialnoyi Travmy* [Transit culture. Symptoms of Postcolonial Trauma]. Kyiv: Hrani-T, 2013. [In Ukrainian]

Lindbladh, Johanna. "Representations of the Chernobyl Catastrophe in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema: The Narratives of Apocalypse." *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2019, pp. 240-256. doi.org/10.1080/2040350X.2019.1608628.

Mark, Hans, and Larry Carver. "Challenger and Chernobyl: Lessons and Reflections." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1987, pp. 241-252.

Miller, Alyson, and Cassandra Atherton. "'The Chernobyl Hibakusha': Dark Poetry, the Ineffable and Abject Realities." *Journal of writing and writing courses*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2020, pp. 1-19. Available at: <https://textjournal.com.au/oct20/miller&atherton.pdf>. (accessed May 10, 2021).

Phillips, Sarah Drue. "Chernobyl's Sixth Sense: The Symbolism of an Ever-Present Awareness." *Anthropology and Humanism*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2004, pp. 159-185.

Santayana, Vivek. "His Own Chernobyl: The Embodiment of Radiation and the Resistance to Nuclear Extractivism in Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, July 2020, doi:10.1177/0021989420933987.

Sekuła, Paweł. *Chornobyl. Społeczno-gospodarcze, polityczne i kulturowe konsekwencje katastrofy jądrowej dla Ukrainy*. Wydawnictwo "Szwajpolt Fiol." Kraków, 2014. [In Polish]

Shcherbak, Iurii. *Chornobyl's Legacy for the 21st Century: 14th Annual J.B. Rudnyckyj Distinguished Lecture*. University of Manitoba, October 20, 2006. Available at: https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Scherbak_Yurii/Chornobyls_Legacy_for_the_21st_Century__en.pdf (accessed July 11, 2021).

—. *Chornobyl. Vitchyzna* [Motherland], №4, 1988(a), pp. 16-55. [In Ukrainian]

—. *Chornobyl. Vitchyzna* [Motherland], №5, 1988(b), pp. 14-49. [In Ukrainian]

—. Chornobyl. *Vitchyzna* [Motherland], №9, 1988(c), pp. 2-26. [In Ukrainian]

—. Chornobyl. *Vitchyzna* [Motherland], №10, 1988(d), pp. 78-118. [In Ukrainian]

Sukhenko, Inna. "Reconsidering 'The Chernobyl' Narration within the Contemporary Tendencies of Ecocritical Writing." *Visnyk Dnipropetrovskoho universytetu imeni Alfreda Nobelya*, 2016, no. 11, pp. 7-14. Available at: <https://phil.duan.edu.ua/images/stories/Files/2016/1/2.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2021).

Zaleska Onyshkevych, Larissa. "Vidbytky Chornobyly v Literaturi" [The imprint of Chernobyl in literature]. *Suchasnist*, no. 4, 1989, pp. 28-38. [In Ukrainian]