



# Perspectives of Comparative World Literature and Cultural Studies

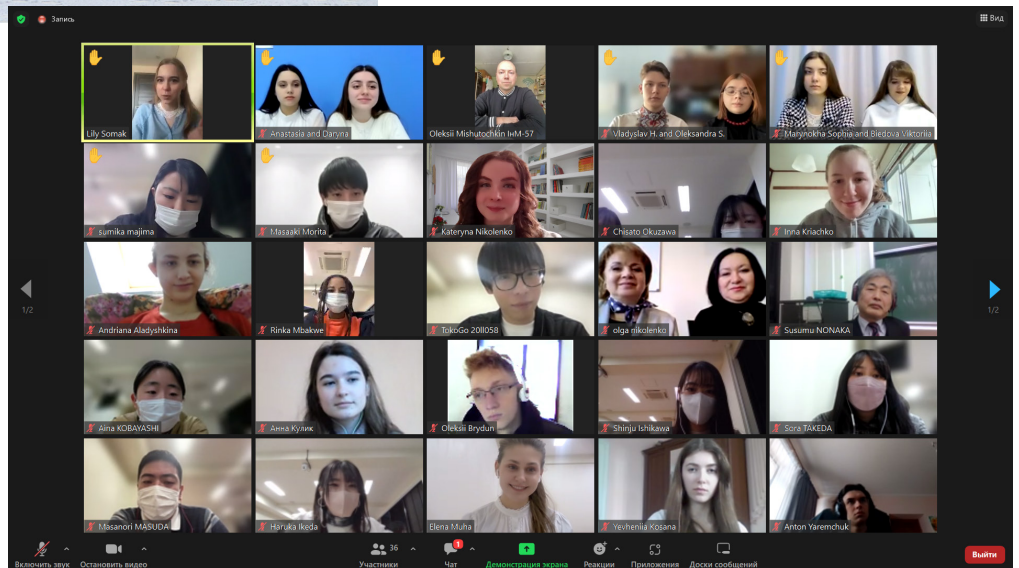
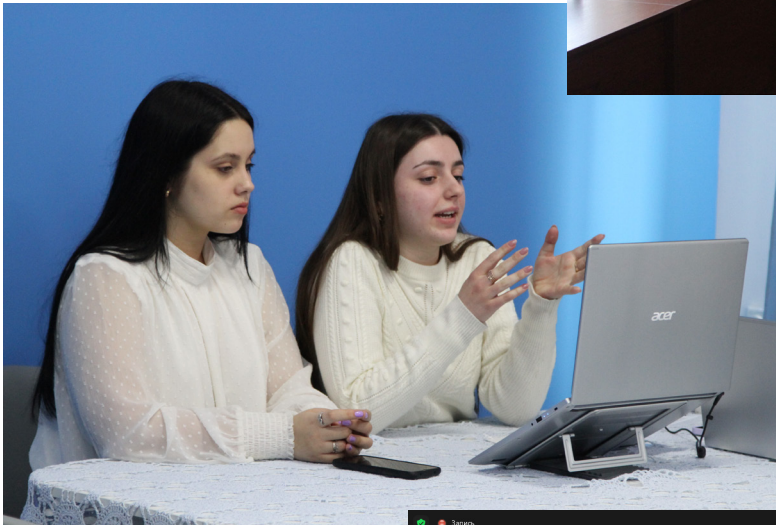
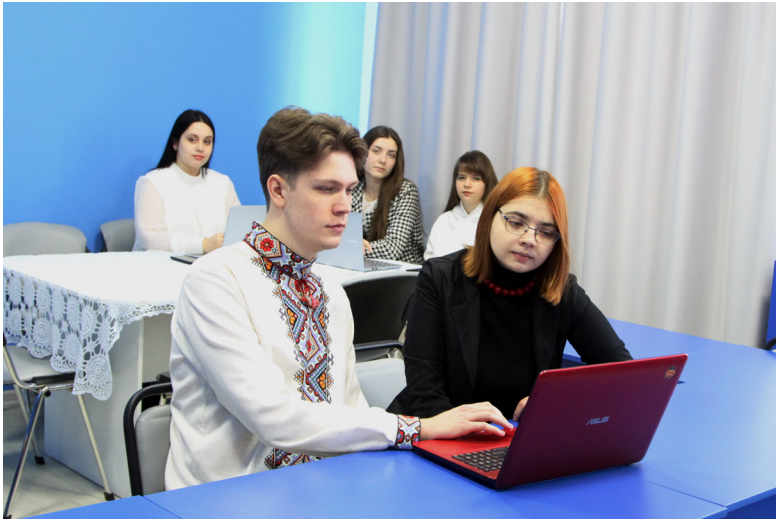
Collection of research papers by students  
and PhD students of Saitama University  
(Japan), Poltava V.G. Korolenko National  
Pedagogical University (Ukraine) and Ivan  
Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine)

## Volume III

2023







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ISBN 978-966-97859-7-8

*Reviewed by: Doctor of Philology, Professor Shin'ichi Murata, Doctor of Philology, Professor Olena Kobzar.*

*Perspectives of Comparative World Literature and Cultural Studies: Collection of research papers by students and PhD students of Saitama University (Japan), Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University (Ukraine) and Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine) / Ed. by Susumu Nonaka, Olga Nikolenko, Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska, Alan George Milne, Kateryna Nikolenko. – Vol. III. – Kyiv: Lebed', 2023. – 81 p.*

The publication includes scientific papers and reports by students and PhD students from Saitama State University (Japan), Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University (Ukraine) and Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine), which were presented during international seminars within the framework of a joint scientific project “Perspectives of Comparative World Literature and Cultural Studies,” which took place online from 29 November 2022 until 31 January 2023. The papers are dedicated to topical issues of Japanese and Ukrainian culture, classical and modern literature, gender issues, challenges of today's society, national traditions and art in Ukraine and Japan.

For students, graduate students, postgraduate students, and anyone interested in art, literature, and culture.

This collection of research papers is published at the discretion of the academic council at Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University (protocol № 9, 23 March 2023).

Edited by Susumu Nonaka (Saitama State University), Olga Nikolenko (Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University), Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv), Alan George Milne (Saitama State University), Kateryna Nikolenko (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv).

ISBN 978-966-97859-7-8

## FOREWORD

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## FOREWORD

Dear friends!

We present to you a collection of scientific works which is the result of the Ukrainian-Japanese scientific project “Perspectives of Comparative World Literature and Cultural Studies.” The project took place from 29 November 2022 to 31 January 2023. Undergraduate students and PhD students of Saitama University (Japan), Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University (Ukraine) and Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine) participated in this project.

In a difficult time of global challenges, when the world has been shocked by the military aggression in Ukraine and natural disasters in different regions of the world, teachers and students of universities in Ukraine and Japan were engaged in humanitarian research, which raised the problems of preservation of life, nature, national values, culture and humanity.

As part of this international project, five scientific seminars were held, during which Ukrainian and Japanese students had the opportunity to listen to lectures by professors and to present their own papers in English, as well as exchange valuable experiences in science and education.

The seminars were organized by Doctor of Philology, Dean & Professor, Honorary Professor of PNPU Susumu Nonaka (Saitama University, Japan) and Doctor of Philology, Professor, Chair of World Literature Department, director of the Scientific and Methodological Center of English Language and Literature Studies Quality Control Olga Nikolenko (Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Ukraine). Doctor of Philology, Professor, Chair of World Literature Department, director of the Scientific and Methodological Center of Research and Teaching of Literature Lidiia Matsevko-Bekerska (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine) also contributed greatly to the organization of the event.

The seminars took place online in real time on Zoom. The results of the seminars were presented during a roundtable discussion, in which participants shared their impressions and opinions on the issues raised in the presentations.

We sincerely thank all the participants of the Ukrainian-Japanese seminars as part of the scientific project “Perspectives of Comparative World Literature and Cultural Studies” and wish them further success!

*Olga Nikolenko (Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Ukraine)*  
*Susumu Nonaka (Saitama University, Japan)*

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## FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

*Susumu Nonaka*

*Saitama University*

### **“SPIDER THREAD” BY RYUNOSUKE AKUTAGAWA: WHAT IS A LITERARY STYLE?**

I am pleased to have a chance to talk about a Japanese writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892–1927) and his short story “Spider Thread” (1918) which is used as a material of “Foreign Literature” at Ukrainian schools.

The theme of my lecture will be “What is a literary style?”, especially for a country which started modernization later than some Western countries. True, I will talk mainly about Japan, but my talk will hopefully be applicable to many other countries including your own.

#### **Akutagawa’s Position in Modern Japanese Literature**

Ryunosuke Akutagawa was born in 1892 in Tokyo. As is well known, Tokyo was the new name for *Edo* which had been the capital of Japan with a Shogun system which was a Samurai run state governed by the Tokugawa clan for over 260 years. The Tokugawa Government was dissolved in 1868 and a new government, led by the Emperor himself, began its rule. This is known as the “Meiji Restoration” after the name of the emperor at that time.

The main goal of the new government was to achieve modernization in a similar form as Europe, which Japan was forced to begin under pressure by Europe and the United States. As part of this process, Japan had to change a lot of things: the name of the capital, the system of government, education, sciences, clothes, food, and... language, Japanese itself. Every country which has started modernization needs innovation of national language, especially its written form in order to accept new knowledge efficiently and express new notions and ideas in its mother language. In this process writers, journalists, translators, and education bureaucrats play a central role. Modern literature takes a special position in that it helps the formation of a new language and new styles suited for modernization and a new society, new ideas and ideals.

In this respect, one should note that those generations to which Akutagawa belonged made a great contribution to these changes. Akutagawa is well known for trying various literary styles in his works. He was a master of literary adaptation whereby he made use of Japanese, Chinese and other old tales as well as modern European literature. It is often said that he was weak in his own creation, but strong in literary technique and stylization. Maybe it is true, but some of his best short stories occupy a unique position in the history of Japanese literature as they record moments of the birth of a new Japanese language and literature in the early stages of modernization of the country.



### **Akutagawa and Gogol: the Role of Adaptation**

As an example of Akutagawa's adaptation, let me introduce some of his short stories which are said to have something connected with Gogol. "Nose," a work which made his literary career, is not so Gogolian as expected from the title. It is a story about an old Buddhist monk who lived in medieval Japan. He had a tremendously big nose of which he was ashamed. He was a high-ranking monk whom they respected, but at the same time they secretly laughed at him behind his back about his nose. He himself had a complex about it and tried several measures to lessen but all in vain. But one day a solution his apprentice recommended had some success and his nose was reduced into a normal range although it was still comparatively big. But to his great surprise, after this change, they started to laugh at him openly. The monk could not understand why their attitude had changed. The narrator explains about "two contradictory sentiments in human hearts" which show a real sympathy for other people's misfortunes while at the same time they cannot help but feel dissatisfaction if they succeed in getting through to them. The story ends that early one morning the monk's nose became as big as before, and he said to himself, "No one will laugh any more if it stays like this." What would you say? Is there something Gogolian about this story?

Another short story of Akutagawa's, "Potato Porridge" is more clearly Gogolian. There was an old samurai who worked for a high-ranking aristocrat in medieval Japan. He was poor in appearance (his nose was reddish), intelligence, and human relations. Young samurais did not show respect to him and even had fun teasing him. He usually did not care, but only when their teasing became unbearable, he said to them, "Not good, you comrades." One young samurai was impressed by his words which had a deep humanistic tone. Of course, it is Akakii Akakievich! The old samurai had his "ambition," too. It was to eat potato porridge as much as he wanted which was very expensive at that time. Then the main episode starts but let me omit it as I just wanted to show how Akutagawa loved Gogol and he was good at adaptation.

As is well known, translation and adaptation which sometimes goes closely to imitation plays an important role in the establishment of national literature. National literature in the early stage of its development needs to import new literary formats and devices from those countries which started their modernization earlier. Writers of late-starting countries learn and make experiments as to how to depict their own countries in the processes of tackling the problems of nation-building and modernization.

### **Literary Tasks of Akutagawa**

From the viewpoints described above, it is possible to say that Akutagawa had two literary tasks intertwined with each other. One of them was the task of making a new literary Japanese language which was still in the making at the beginning of the twentieth century. A writer and a literary critic Shinichiro Nakamura (1918-1997) wrote of him: "Young Akutagawa decided to become a writer. That meant for him also to "produce" a new colloquial form of literary Japanese, which was a situation different from ours" (Nakamura 2015, p. 207). Nakamura emphasized that various stylistic experiments of Akutagawa were made not only by his own literary disposition, but also by the demands of the times in which he lived. His most successful works have been considered as being highly influential in this regard.

## FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

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The second task Akutagawa worked on was a question “What is literature for?” which he “inherited” from his literary master Soseki Natsume (1867-1916). Both Soseki and Akutagawa asked themselves what modern literature is for. As they studied English literature at university, they knew well that modern European literature was very different from ancient and medieval Chinese and Japanese literature to which they had been accustomed regarding their methods, goals and social functions. After he made a brilliant literary debut with Soseki’s praise, Akutagawa continued to make literary experiments and to write works with various techniques and tones. He continually changed his styles as if he feared repeating himself. Therefore, each reader who likes him usually has his or her own favorite type of his works: for example, stories for children like “Spider Thread,” adaptation stories for adult readers based on old Japanese tales such as “Rashomon,” or autobiographical stories with neurotic tone written in his last years like “Life of an Idiot.” In my opinion, Akutagawa’s literary changes, which did not stop until his death, show that he was consumed by the question as to what modern literature is for or how he should make it by his artistic creation.

As a result, Akutagawa’s literature continued to inspire other writers by its multifarious literary styles. For example, the literary prize named after him (“Akutagawa-sho”) has been regarded as the most prestigious for young writers in Japan.

### Akutagawa’s Literary Dilemmas

As a leading writer of the trend of “art for art’s sake” Akutagawa had some literary dilemmas. Shinichiro Nakamura writes: “Akutagawa had in himself so keen a sense of beauty that he earnestly aimed for perfection in composition and style of his works. But he aimed also for variety in their perfection. For that purpose, he wanted to prepare different material, contexts, composition, and style in each work” (Nakamura, 2015, p. 45). In other words, Akutagawa refrained from repetition. One can even say that he was afraid of repeating himself. He wrote in an essay about the arts: “You always make regression if you do not make progress. When artists make regression, they always start a kind of automatic action, that is, they make only similar works” (Akutagawa, 1977–1978, v. 3, pp. 264–265).

But ironically enough that tendency made him a writer whose repetition stands out. Even a slight similarity makes readers remember another work of his which is more successful. He was deeply conscious of those expectations of his readers who wanted more and more innovations in his literary technique. This dilemma was characteristic for many writers of modern literature who are expected to continue to entertain readers by continual innovations or newness.

Another dilemma of Akutagawa was a question as to the use of literature. Most of his literary rivals were so-called “naturalists,” a term which means something different from European literature. It is recognized that one of the characteristics of modern Japanese literature was the rise of autobiographical trends with which writers tried to write about their real lives without fictional elements. Such works had been regarded as “authentic” literature about human life. Of course, Akutagawa was critical of the trend as he believed that modern literature should be composed with imagination, fictionality and literary devices. Shortly speaking, he emphasized the importance of “literariness.” On the other hand, Akutagawa especially in later years, when he was exhausted and burnt out by constant invention of new techniques, envied

some leading naturalist writers, for example, Naoya Shiga (1883–1971), whose major works are evidently autobiographical. Perhaps respect and envy towards Shiga's works made him also write some autobiographical short stories, some of which were his masterpieces in his last period. Believing that modern literature should be imaginative and artistic, Akutagawa also wanted his works to be regarded not only as just artistic, but also as authentic or "real."

In my opinion, such a dilemma is characteristic for writers in countries which started to modernize later because they imported new literary formats mainly from European literature, which helped them make a new, modern literature on one hand, but at the same time let them see how imported European literary formats were not completely suitable to depict their own society. It is possible to say that this discovery with surprise and disappointment helps to make a real start for young writers to construct their national literature. In that sense, Akutagawa's dilemma between "artistic" and "authentic" literature is one example of the birth of a national literature representative of late-starting countries which actually comprised the vast majority of the world.

### On Sources of "Spider Thread"

"Spider Thread" was first printed in 1918 in the first issue of *Akai Tori (Red Bird)*, a new journal for children's literature. Akutagawa wrote some stories for children, and "Spider Thread" has been regarded the best work among his catalogue of children's literature.

One can even say that "Spider Thread" is suitable also for adult reading in that it represents some of the main features of Akutagawa's literary creation. First, he made an adaptation of a Buddhist story, which is his most representative technique. Second, he made most use of stylization with elaborate metaphors and fantastic imageries of *Gokuraku*, a Buddhist Paradise, and Hell with a pond of blood and a mountain of needles. As a result, an originally religious story was transformed into an aesthetic fairy tale with a hint of a moralistic message about deep human egoism. As a literary scholar has stated, "it is not a thread of faith, but as that of beauty that remains in readers' hearts" (Hiraoka, 1982, p. 308). We should say that it is aestheticization of a religious motif which is dominant in this story.

Literary scholars have conducted a lot of research about the source of this story. The established theory is that Akutagawa got an idea when he read a Buddhist story "The Spider-web" originally written in English by Paul Carus (1852–1919), a German American writer and scholar of comparative religion, which had been translated into Japanese by Daisetsu Suzuki (1870–1966), a famous Japanese scholar of Buddhism (Yamaguchi, 1978).

Interestingly enough, a Russian writer and thinker Lev Tolstoy also was interested in Carus's story and translated it into Russian (Yamaguchi, 1978; Тулиманов, 1995). And it is also well known that Fedor Dostoevsky makes use of a similar folktale in a chapter "Onion" of his last novel *Brothers Karamazov* (Yamaguchi, 1978; Тулиманов, 1995).

But here let me introduce to you a Ukrainian version with the same motif which was recorded by a Ukrainian folklorist Panteleimon Kulish in *Zapiski o Yuzhnoi Rusi*. The story is about an old sinful woman who now suffers in hell like Kandata:



Була вона богата, та скнара, що од неї ніхто й хліба куска не бачив. Ото раз полола вона цибулю, аж иде поуз вор'є дид-старец. «Подари, каже, паниматко, ради Христа!» Вона вирвала стрилку: «Прийми, каже, старче Божий». Тільки ж од неї и бачили. От, як умерла, то вжо звісно — тут своя дорога, а там тебе поведут. Взяли її небогу та й потягли в пекло. А Онисим [його син — S. N.] и побачив з неба, що вона велику муку приймає, та й каже: «Боже мій милий, Спасе мій Христе! за всю мою щирість, за всю мою правду, зроби мині таку ласку — нехай и моя мати буде в раю зо мною». А Христос и рече ему: «Ні, каже, Онисиме! вельми грішна твоя мати. Візьми хіба оту цибульку, що лежить перед нею, та коли витягнеш її с тиї бездни, то нехай и вона буде в раю с тобою». Узяв він тую стрілочку та й подав матері. Схопилась вона за неї... от, от витягне, от, от витягне с пекла! бо що-то Божому святому? Аж ні: як поначіплювались їй и в плахту, и в намітку грішні душі, що б и собі с того пекла вибратьця, то й не здержала тая цибулька: перервалась, а вона так и бовтнула в гарячу смолу! (Кулиш, 1856, т.1, с. 307-308)

It is true that the Ukrainian version is different from Akutagawa's as to the reason why the onion broke up in the end, but still we can see a striking similarity among these stories. It is possible to guess that this motif has some elements which attract human imagination generally. What is important is that they are not only religious or moralistic, but also aesthetic, which is especially conspicuous in Akutagawa's story.

Some critics and scholars point out that Akutagawa omitted some Buddhist doctrine in Carus's original story while he emphasizes the pure psychological horror of Kandata who saw so many inhabitants of hell climbing the spider thread behind him that it looked like it was going to break. He cried to them "This thread is mine! Get off!" and it suddenly broke and they all fell back down into hell's pool of blood. Shakyamuni (Buddha) who had wanted to help Kandata sadly looked at that, but said nothing and continued to walk around in Paradise. The story ends:

The lotuses of the Lotus Pond, however, were unperturbed. They swayed their perfect pearl-white blossoms near the feet of Lord Shakyamuni, and from their golden centers wafted forth each time a never-ending fragrance wonderful beyond description. I think it must have been close to noon in Paradise. (Akutagawa, 2009, p. 41)

True, it is Buddhist Paradise (*Gokuraku*) written here. But Akutagawa evidently is much more interested in imagining another world generally rather than a peculiarly Buddhist one. Shinichiro Nakamura explains the meaning of another world written by Akutagawa: "when we encounter another world created by Akutagawa, we feel a kind of strong and pure realistic impression. (...) The farther his works go away from our everyday experience, the nearer they come to the essence of our life, so they are opposite to something like an escape from reality" (Nakamura, 2015, p. 105). From this point of view, the main theme of "Spider Thread" is not religious, but artistic and in a way realistic.

### Moral Elements of “Spider Thread”

Still, we should take account of the moral elements of “Spider Thread” because Akutagawa felt free with them in children’s literature. While he dealt with moral themes mainly with irony and a parodical tone in works for adult readers, Akutagawa was straighter and more open with it in children’s literature.

It is worthwhile to note that morality is one of the most important topics in societies which started modernization later than others because traditional morals often collide with new and imported ones in those countries. Some people endeavor to adapt to new moral ideas imported from Europe such as liberty, equality or individualism while others tend to stick to traditional ones as they believe that it is better to live like their ancestors. As is well known, such conflicts among various generations and social groups often serve as a popular theme of modern literature in each country.

Akutagawa was very conscious of the difficulty in establishing new moral standards in Japanese society which was changing very rapidly. A short story of his “Husband of Enlightenment” (1919) is about a husband who acquiesced to his wife’s cheating as he tried to follow the ideal of free love. Having listened to his confession, his friend makes a remark: “Perhaps, your ideal was a childlike dream. But the Enlightenment itself which we are aiming at will be another children’s dream in one hundred years” (Akutagawa, 1977–1978, v. 3, pp. 25–26). Akutagawa lets readers think of the impossibility of making stable moral principles in a country changing with such a speed as Japan during that period.

In a lecture titled “Tomorrow’s Moral” Akutagawa gives a distinctive scheme: yesterday’s moral was feudalistic, today’s one is individualistic, and tomorrow’s one will be “such principles orientated toward a social community” (Akutagawa, 1977–1978, v. 7, p. 155). It is typical that he was not quite satisfied with morality based on individualism which was regarded as a European idea. He was one of so many people who wanted to establish their own morality which would integrate old and new, traditional and modern, national and universal ideas.

In this respect, one can think that “Spider Thread” gives a clue to Akutagawa’s moral message to children who will make “tomorrow’s moral”. Although the moral of the story seems rather traditional and educational, it seems to have also something suited to the new conditions of the modern society.

A literary critic and writer Tsuneari Fukuda made an interesting remark as to Akutagawa’s description of good and evil. According to Fukuda, the writer has acute “eyes that see human dignity and ugliness at the same time” (Fukuda, 2018, p. 135). He continues: “Akutagawa’s works tried to create something in an empty vacuum located between good and evil, ideal and reality; they represent the very vacuum” (ibid.). One can easily see that “the dangling short end of the spider thread from Paradise, delicately gleaming in the moonless, starless sky” (Akutagawa, 2009, p. 40) symbolizes his tendency toward the “vacuum” between good and evil.

However, we should not see here only Akutagawa’s skepticism or relativism, which is actually distinctive of his literature, but also something humane toward “the poor in spirit.” In an essay written at the age of nineteen, he talks about the necessity of breaking “worlds of formalities” (Akutagawa, 1977–1978, v. 12, p. 81), which seems to mean poor, old societies full of meaningless conventions in Japan. But he adds that they should break them with “a

warm heart” (ibid.) because there are also poor children and old people in such worlds with nobody to take care of them. The young Akutagawa writes quite candidly: “Even if we try to break “worlds of formalities” in order to find Truth hidden in them, we should do that with a warm heart. (...) It is our task to break “worlds of formalities” always with a warm heart” (ibid.).

I think we can count Kandata as a resident of “worlds of formalities,” where he had been so poorly taken care of as to live a villain’s life. If so, Akutagawa broke the spider thread in his story perhaps with “a warm heart,” too. Slight warmth which the broken thread keeps with it might comfort our hearts.

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*Olga Nikolenko*

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### **HOW DO YOU OVERCOME FEAR? (BASED ON “MIO, MY SON” BY ASTRID LINDGREN)**

Astrid Lindgren lived in Sweden, which is located in Northern Europe, on the Scandinavian Peninsula. Sweden, together with other countries (Denmark and Norway), is part of this historic territory.

The ancestors of the Swedes are called *Vikings*. They were very brave and courageous, and they sailed a lot on their boats to other lands. Vikings sailed from Scandinavia to Byzantium and further to Arab countries. Thus, the Vikings reached the historical territories of Ukraine – Kyivan Rus. Some of the Kyivan princes even trace their lineage back to the Vikings. Some Vikings served in the Kyiv army and then settled in the Ukrainian lands (they called Ukrainian territories *Gårdarike*, which means “the land of cities”).

The house where Astrid Lindgren lived in her childhood is called *Näs*. Swedes often name their houses. *Näs* is situated on the outskirts of a little town called *Vimmerby*, where the writer was born. She wrote, “We have two things that define our childhood: security and freedom.”

A. Lindgren’s fairytale “Mio, My Son” is a story about overcoming your fear, about how a lonely and resentful boy overcame his fears and became a real hero. He and his friend were able to overcome evil and free children and adults from captivity.

The main hero of Astrid Lindgren’s book “Mio, My Son” is a nine-year-old boy living in Stockholm. His name is *Bo Vilhelm Olsson*, but nobody calls him that. They simply call him Bosse. He also has a friend named *Bengt* or simply *Ben*. They lived and often played on Uppland Street in Stockholm. But Ben was happier than Bosse because he had a family – a father with whom he built planes and went for walks, and a mother who allowed him to invite friends home.

Bosse felt unhappy because he had neither a father nor a mother. He was taken from an orphanage by aunt Edla and uncle Sixten. They treated him severely and did not allow the boy anything – to speak loudly, nor to laugh merrily, nor to invite friends... And he was often bullied by the boys from Uppland Street. And there was no one to protect him. So Bosse often felt very lonely and sad. He wanted so much for Ben’s dad to be his dad... But it was impossible in the real world.

By the way, any violence against children – physical or psychological – is prohibited in Sweden. Parents have no right to hit children or raise their voice. In Sweden, there is a principle called *Barnets bästa*. It means “*what is best for children*.”

But Bosse had neither parental respect nor love. However, even when there seems to be no way out, some new door to another world can open ...

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Bosse lived in Uppland Street. *Uppland* is the name of a historic province on the east coast of Sweden, north from Stockholm. What is it famous for? It turns out that Swedish kings liked to live here. Soon, we will find out that Bosse is a prince – son of a fairytale king. Uppland also has the largest number of Viking rune stones preserved since ancient times. *Runes* are inscriptions or writings that were left by Vikings in ancient times – about their travels, events of their lives, relatives, etc.

Bosse, who at first glance is weak, sad and hurt, is actually a descendant of Vikings and the son of a king! He, a small and lonely boy, has a great inner strength. Only at first he did not know what power was hidden in him... Astrid Lindgren believed that every child, every person has a great gift. First of all, the gift of fantasy, dreams. And if you strive for something very much, the dream will become a reality.

Bosse dreamed a lot about having a father like Ben's and a warm and cozy home like Ben's. And Bosse's dream came true! He went on the wings of his imagination to the Faraway Land, where the one who had been looking for him for a long time was waiting for him ...

From Uppland Street, where nobody loved him, the boy set out on a fairytale journey. Neither aunt Edla nor uncle Sixten saw him again in the ordinary world. But in the fantasy world Bosse will travel, discover new lands, perform feats and tell us about it on his own behalf in the story.

The park where Bosse's adventures begin was based off Tegner Park in Stockholm (*Tegnérunden*). This is a real park where Astrid Lindgren liked to walk. It has existed since 1890, and today, there is a sculpture in honor of the writer installed in this park.

Mrs. Lundin, the fruit shop seller, gave him a beautiful apple and asked him to put a postcard in the box. And on the card, there were words: "To the King, Farawayland. The one you have long searched for is on his way. He travels by day and by night, and he carries in his hand the sign, a beautiful golden apple."

Busse looked at his apple, and it was golden! And then another miracle happened! From an ordinary empty bottle in the park, a spirit appeared (similar to a jinn from "A Thousand and One Nights"). He saw a secret sign in the boy's hand – a golden apple. And he said, "You're the one that I've come to bring back. You're the one that the King has been searching for so long!"

They flew to Faraway Land on a green island. There was a white castle on the island, and father the King was walking along the shore toward the boy.

"Mio, my son, how much you've grown again," he says when we measure. "Mio, my son," he says, and it sounds so warm and comforting. It turns out that my real name isn't Bosse at all.

"I searched nine long years for you," says my father the King. "I used to lie awake at night saying to myself, 'Mio, my son.' So I'd know your name well."

That shows you. Calling me Bosse was a mistake, like everything else when I lived on North Street. Now it's all been set right. I love my father the King, and he loves me."

The boy's dream came true, but the father's dream also came true. This could have been the end of the fairy tale, but the main and most interesting events are still ahead.

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Bosse got a rose garden with thousands of flowers and silver poplars. He also got a friend with an unusual name – *Yum-Yum*, Master Rose Gardener's son. Yum-Yum looked like Ben, with the same eyes. He became a true and loyal friend to Mio.

Mio and Yum-Yum built a hut in the rose garden, listened to the birds singing and laughed merrily. And this laughter pleased father the King so much, because he knew that his son was happy.

His father the king knew what Mio loved most. He loved horses. And the king gave him the best horse in the world – a white horse with a golden mane. And they named him *Miramis*. Mio and Yum-Yum often sat on a horse and traveled to different parts of the Faraway Land. It was a great kingdom. Greenfields Island, where the King's palace stood, was only a small part of the kingdom.

In the Faraway Land they sang and played one ancient melody. Mio and Yum-Yum heard it from the shepherd Nonno, who made them flutes and taught them to play this wonderful melody.

You can hear the melody played in Faraway Land in the movie "Mio in the Land of Faraway," which was created in 1987 by a team from Sweden, Norway and other countries. The script for "Mio in the Land of Faraway" was written by William Aldridge. The movie starred Nicholas Pickard and Christian Bale, Christopher Lee, Susannah York and others. Music was created by Benny Andersson and Anders Eljas.

"We must be careful with our flutes," I said to Yum-Yum, "and if we ever become separated, we'll play this old melody."

Yum-Yum held his arms tightly around me with his head leaning against my back, so he wouldn't fall off the horse. "Yes, Mio," he said, "we must be careful with our flutes, and if you hear my flute playing you'll know that I'm calling you."

"Yes," I said, "and if you hear me playing, you'll know that I'm calling you."

Apart from shepherd Nonno's melody, there is also a song called "Mio My Mio" in the film. Astrid Lindgren wrote its lyrics herself. This song was performed by Karin Glenmark, a member of the Swedish band "Gemini." This band existed in 1984-1987. It consisted of a brother and a sister, Karin and Anders Glenmark.

Through the garden of roses  
With the silver poplars  
I walk with my father, holding his hand hard  
And from the highest tree  
I hear a lonely bird  
Sing about the cruel country outside  
And my heart trembles when my father's voice is heard  
Mio, my Mio  
Over the garden of roses  
Dusk is coming  
And I see my bird  
Throwing itself towards the sky



With its broad wings  
It flies straight towards the heavens  
Flies towards the black country outside  
And my heart trembles when my father's voice is heard  
Mio, my Mio  
Mio, my Mio

After a while, the friends found out that apart from Faraway Land, there is also THE CRUEL WORLD OUTSIDE. If you wanted to go from Faraway Land to the Land on the Other Side of the Water, you had to go over the Bridge of Morninglight. But at night, the King draws the bridge up, so that everyone can sleep calmly on Greenfields Island.

"Why?" I asked. "Who would come at night?"

"Sir Kato," said Yum-Yum. The moment he said it I felt an icy wind, and Miramis began trembling.

It was the first time that I'd heard Sir Kato's name. "Sir Kato," I said to myself, and the sound of it made me shiver.

"Yes, the cruel Sir Kato," said Yum-Yum. Miramis neighed loudly, almost a scream, so we stopped talking about Sir Kato.

Who is Sir Kato, whose name makes nature go still? Beyond the Faraway Land, there was an Outer Land. Sir Kato ruled there. He had a heart of stone and an iron claw. He took children and turned them into Bewitched Birds. That's why many sad Bewitched Birds lived in Outer Land. With his iron claw, he took a living person's heart out and put a cold stone in its place. Everything Kato touched became black and dead... That's why there is a Dead forest, a Dead Lake, a black castle in his Outer Land... Eternal night and eternal darkness reigned in the Outer Land. And everyone was watched by Kato's servants – spies.

Mio and Yum-Yum learned about all this from the shepherd Nonno. His two brothers were taken away by Kato. And Totty told the boys about it, because his sister was also taken by Kato. And from the weaver who wove the magic cloth, Kato took away her daughter Milimani, who turned into a bird...

So, Sir Kato made many people and many children unhappy. His land – Outer Land – has turned into a land of evil and darkness.

Only the king's son Mio could free the world from Kato. He was destined to do so. At first he did not know it, and he could not even guess that he came to this world for this purpose. But his father the King knew about this. He knew that his son was destined to become a hero.

"As we rode out of the Garden of Roses I heard my father the King shout. "Mio, my son!" he cried, and it was the saddest voice I'd ever heard. But I couldn't turn back. I couldn't."

Mio's father the King knows that someone has to take this responsibility for the world. He does not hide his son from the fight. He does not shield him. On the contrary, he knows

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that he must go – to protect, fight, save the people. Just as the Ukrainian military are doing now, defending our country.

“As we sat on Miramis’s back, far beyond the Forest of Moonbeams I saw a country where it was completely dark, and the darkness wasn’t peaceful. I couldn’t look at it without shuddering.

“What’s that terrible land over there?” I said to Yum-Yum.

“Outer Land starts there,” said Yum-Yum. “It’s the border country of Outer Land.”

“Sir Kato’s land?” I asked.

When he heard this Miramis trembled with fright, and a large boulder broke loose from the mountain and rumbled down into the valley below.

Yes, there was only one danger – Sir Kato. He was the one I was scared of. So scared, so scared. But I tried not to think about him any more.”

Still, Mio was able to overcome his fear. When did this happen? It happened when he met a Weaver weaving the cloth of dreams and heard the Sorrowbird sing.

“I stood there in the middle of the floor in the cottage and listened through the open window, as Sorrowbird sang outside. He had sung to me for many nights in the Garden of Roses, but I hadn’t understood what he was singing about. Now I knew. He sang about all the stolen ones, of the Weaver’s little daughter, of Nonno’s brothers and Totty’s sister and many, many others whom the cruel Sir Kato had captured and taken to his castle. This was why people mourned in the little cottages on Greenfields Island and in the Land on the Other Side of the Water and Beyond the Mountains. They mourned for their children, for all the children who were gone.

Sir Kato! I was so scared of him. So scared, so scared! But as I stood there in the cottage, listening to Sorrowbird, something strange occurred to me. Suddenly I knew why I had ridden through the Forest of Moonbeams tonight. Beyond the forest the border country to Outer Land began. It was there that I actually must go. I must go there to fight Sir Kato, though I was so scared, so scared. Yes, I wanted to cry when I realized what I must do.”

This is how courage began to be born in the heart of little Mio. When compassion for others and the desire to free them become greater than fear. Yum-Yum didn’t leave his friend, and they set out on a dangerous journey together.

“The path narrowed. The dark mountains rose higher. The darkness thickened. At last we came to something that looked like a door, a narrow opening between the rocks. Behind it was a darkness blacker than any other darkness in the world.

“Outer Land,” whispered Pompoo. “It’s the entrance to Outer Land.” <...>

I knew that I must go into the darkness. And yet I wasn’t scared any more. Now that I knew it had been foretold for thousands and thousands of years that I was to pass through this dark doorway, I felt braver. I knew that no matter what happened, I was going. Maybe I would never return, but I made up my mind not to be scared.”

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To fight, our heroes need weapons. The old man Eno, whom the boys fed with bread, showed them the way to the Swordsmith, who was to give Mio a magic sword that cuts through stone, because Kato has a heart of stone.

Eno said another important thing. Everywhere in the Outer Land, there are spies. Spies are Kato's servants who look for "enemies" for Kato to destroy. They spy and they search all day and all night... That's why you cannot trust anybody there.

But at the same time, like Eno said, "There are still a few people in this land who aren't traitors. And there are still some who forge weapons." Eno sent the boys to the Swordsmith to get a sword, but the way was not easy...

Mio's heart shuddered from the moaning of Bewitched Birds flying everywhere. "I longed to meet Sir Kato, even if it meant I would die. The promised battle must be now, even if there wouldn't be a Mio anymore when it was over."

But the spies got on the trail of the boys. And they stole the most precious thing Mio had – his horse Miramis. And FEAR returned to the boy again.

"I wanted to shout at them to leave my horse alone, but I didn't. Who would fight Sir Kato if I was captured by the spies? Oh, why must I be the one who would fight Sir Kato? I regretted it terribly, as I hid behind the rocks. Why hadn't I stayed at home with my father the King, where no one could take my horse from me! I heard the Bewitched Birds wailing out over the lake, but I didn't care about them. I didn't care about them at all. They could continue being bewitched, if only I got back my Miramis with the golden mane."

When he was lying behind a rock, he heard his father the King's voice.

"I wish that [father had] been there and could help me. I wish that I could've talked to him for a little while. Then I would have said to him, "I know you want me to fight Sir Kato, but won't you please let me off? Help me get Miramis back and let us leave! You know I've never had my own horse before and I love him. You also know I've never had a father either. And if Sir Kato captures me, I will never be with you again. Help me leave! I don't want to be here any more. I want to be with you. I want to go home again to Greenfields Island with Miramis."

As I was hiding behind the rocks, I thought I heard my father the King's voice. Of course I only imagined it, but I thought that I heard his voice.

"Mio, my son," he said.

Nothing more. But I understood that he wanted me to be brave and not lie there crying and screaming like a child, even though they took my Miramis away from me."

Mio's father-king wanted to provide moral support to his son so that he could be courageous and fulfill his duty. And Mio has changed!

"I was a knight. I was no longer the Mio that built huts in the Garden of Roses and wandered over the hills on Greenfields Island playing the flute. I was a knight, a good knight, not one like Sir Kato. And a knight must be brave and not cry."



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At first, the hero was a lonely boy who was insulted by everyone and could not resist the circumstances. Then he became a happy and cheerful prince, the son of his father the King. Now he is a good knight who does not turn from his path. But he still has to go to the end to defeat Sir Kato and become a hero who will free the whole world.

On this heroic path Mio will have many more dangers. The boys will be chased by spies, but the old tree will protect them. When the spies caught up with them again, the rock parted and they found themselves inside the mountain.

Here was a new test – Mio and Yum-Yum got lost in a dark cave. AND FEAR RETURNED TO MIO. But he heard his father the King's voice again.

“For the first time I almost thought that my father the King had been a little unfair wanting me to take such risks. But as I lay there crying it was like I really heard my father the King's voice. I know it was my imagination, but I really thought I heard him.

“Mio, my son,” he said.

No more. But it sounded as if he meant there was nothing to be sad about.”

Mio didn't despair. The magic flute melody helped the boys find each other.

“We walked and walked, and we didn't feel so small and lost anymore. Because we were together and we played on our flutes. The old melody sounded clear and pretty in the Blackest Mountain, and it was as if it wanted to comfort us and help us to be brave.”

Nature itself (the forest, the lake, the mountains..) helps Mio and Yum-Yum on the way to victory, as well as the Bewitched Birds. One Bewitched Bird sacrificed herself and extinguished the torch with her wings so that the scouts would not see the boys. It was the daughter of a weaver – Milimani. Poor Milimani burned in the fire, saving the heroes at the cost of her life...

The Swordsmith gave Mio a magic sword which could cut stone. And it was with this sword that Mio was to kill Kato with. But the boys ended up in Kato's dark prison. Kato threw Mio's sword into the lake. The boys were dying of hunger. But again, help came unexpectedly. The spoon of Totty's sister turned out to be magical and fed them.

The Bewitched Birds took the sword from the lake and brought it to Mio.

And Mio's cloak was also magical – it made him invisible. Mio does what he has to. In an Invisible Cloak, he sneaks into Kato's castle. And he has changed again. He is not just a knight or a good knight. He is a knight preparing for battle.

“I was no longer scared. I have never been less frightened. I was not the Mio who built huts in the Garden of Roses and lived on Greenfields Island. I was a knight preparing for battle. And I ran on toward Sir Kato's room.”

Mio fought with Kato, and after that only a pile of stones and an iron claw remained. Courage and goodness defeated the universal evil. And the world began to change!

The Bewitched Birds turned into children again. Eno and the Swordsmith became free, as well as other people who, pale and exhausted, sailed their boats on the lake. And even in

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the Dead Forest, green leaves began to appear.

Even Milimani, according to the laws of fairy tales, resurrected and was able to return to her mother. Other children also returned to their parents. They flew on white horses in the moonlight, and Miramis flew ahead... And the Bridge of Morninglight shone with golden rays.

And Mio's father the King met his son in a rose garden with silver poplars, he hugged his son and whispered joyfully, "Mio, my son!" And the ancient melody of that land sounded everywhere ...

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### **SUBJECTIVE MARKERS OF ARTISTIC PRESENTATION**

The paradigmatics of modern narratology testifies to the manifestation of the methodological phenomenon when each next turn of the “polaroid lens” highlights new possibilities for expanding the scientific discourse, unfolds an ever wider terminological and analytical perspective. Obviously, classical, and then post-classical narratology took the next step after its “revolution” and turned toward cognitive science. Narrative theory productively assimilates the ideas of convergence with cognitive psychology, whose interest is “how people acquire information about the world, how this information is presented by humans, how it is stored in memory and transformed into knowledge, and how this knowledge affects our attention and behavior” (my translation from Russian – L.M.-B.) [Solso 1996]. And if cognitive psychology considers “the entire range of psychological processes – from sensations to perception, image recognition, attention, learning, memory, concept formation, thinking, imagination, memorization, language, emotions, and developmental processes” [Solso 1996] – to be important and valuable, it is quite obvious that the stages of artistic presentation are directly related to each of these elements of the cognitive chain.

Therefore, among the numerous concepts of cognitive narratology, the subjectivity/subjectivity of the presentation of history with its subsequent representations in the reader’s mind is prominent. We also agree with the researcher’s outlining of two key issues that should be considered in the discourse of cognitive narratology: 1) “how the cognitive status of a narrative is determined and what determines it” and 2) how to ‘recognize the way we construct and understand narrative, including fiction, given our cognitive competencies’ [Savchuk 2013: p.218].

Thus, the plane of objectification of the literary narrative takes on a slightly modified form: the reader becomes an active participant in the “coming to life” of the narrated world, activating a certain cognitive stage in the implementation of a holistic perception of the literary and artistic phenomenon. The reader has a significant responsibility: first, he or she must follow the author’s path (in order to return to the origin of the intentional idea in the receptive plane), then reproduce the sequence of narrative elements in the unfolding of the primary idea, and finally form his or her own intentional attitude towards the story and its representation, while observing all the essential coordinates of the presentation (in terms of time perspective, duration, modality, perceptual aspects, etc.).

In order to outline the receptive paradigm of a literary narrative, we should take into consideration the three forms of manifestation of the reader’s presence in the matrix of literary and aesthetic communication identified in contemporary literary studies: “1) a real historical personality that we restore on the basis of historical documents of a certain era; 2) a reader whom we imagine based on our knowledge of the social and historical situation of a particular era; 3) a reader whose role is programmed in the text” [Zubrytska 2004: p.221]. From the standpoint of cognitive narratology, each form of manifestation of the receptive

essence emphasizes a certain element of the psychological chain of meaning generation.

The “real historical face”, given its objective involvement in the spirit and mood of the era, will almost synchronously actualize sensations in the process of perception (acting by analogy), recognize images through instant reproduction of what is observed in reality, and the formation of aesthetic experience will last much longer than the process of direct (pro) reading and first interpretations. The cultural and historical context is a reliable guarantee of the identity of the cognitive-creative and cognitive-receptive processes, with the least room for (little) (un)justified expectations, and the reader can harmoniously take place as a co-creator of meaning, regardless of his or her personal attitude to the real (historical) author. For this type of reader, markers of reality play only an additional role, since he understands the language of signs and symbols, and the semantics of subtext is an integral attribute of his understanding of modernity. The modeling of the receptive plane is more influenced by the reader’s self than by the creator’s intention. Thanks to the common coordinates of the era, the worldview vectors bring the two cognitive chains of creation and perception as close as possible.

The second type of reader is the result of secondary subjectivation: having imagined or researched the historical and cultural context, we try to model other (= different from the first perception) receptive reflections of the artistic narrative. The farther away from the historicity of the creation, the greater the degree of uncertainty and hypotheticality. The time interval significantly transforms the cognitive chain. It unfolds from imagination and thinking in the opposite direction: through image recognition to perception and the formation of a holistic range of aesthetic reactions (from sensations to evaluation).

Subjectivity becomes an attribute of reception and interpretation; in a literary narrative, the reader is looking for himself or herself, and communication takes place within the receptive consciousness. At the level of cognitive processes, each stage is a question and an answer to itself: the reader addresses the question not to the author with his or her intentional assumptions, but to himself or herself with his or her own expectations or hopes. The proportion of the reader’s projection changes: he or she becomes “active rather than passive” and demonstrates much more signs of “a complex of individual reactions”, than positioning himself or herself as part of the “actualization of collective competence”. The artistic narrative ensures the life of the work, preserves its textual identity, but the aesthetic coordinates appear on a much broader interpretive plane. For this type of reader, the problem of preserving the author as a meaning-making basis is essential, since the distance from historicity multiplies ontological meanings. On the one hand, reader’s freedom is allowed, but on the other hand, there is an urgent need to follow the rules and restrictions set by the author himself. The cognitive process becomes more complicated, because memory and image creation must be actualized synchronously, feelings and knowledge are not in a cause-and-effect relationship, but balance within the artistic world as real and imaginary, etc.

The third type of reader, the “reader whose role is programmed in the text”, postulates constant attributes of reception and implements the cognitive process in a way that is primarily and directly determined by narrative means. Generally speaking, “in order to be realized, a literary text requires the reader’s imagination, which gives shape to the interaction of correlates outlined in the structure by the sentence order” [Iser 1996: p.352]. Similarly, the “order of sentences” ensures the movement of receptive efforts, shapes the mood of the



first perception and determines the reading strategy in general. Formal means of organizing the narrative focus on clearly defining the “points of support” in sense-making, in imagery, in the paradigm of problems or poetic techniques. The reader’s reflection is based on the sum of the first and current readings of the work, but also includes both the meaning already gained and multiplied by this text: “reading removes the synchronicity of collective reception, it hierarchizes, structures and transforms it into a complex multi-stage process” [Zubrytska 2004: p.26]. The cognitive foundations of these transformations are of considerable interest for the study of forms and methods of organizing a literary text. The reader who is exposed to the narrative not only absorbs the sum of the meanings acquired by the text, but also anticipates possible questions to the author, and can identify certain concerns about the original meaning, the author’s intention, and various extra-literary influences on the creative process.

In the literary discourse, two topical issues are equally important: Thus, the two main modes – “modus of potentiality” and “modus of reality” – of modeling the reader’s presence in the artistic space, according to A. Compagnon, are consistent with the fundamental approaches to literature: “with the formal-objective approach to literature, the main attention is paid to the work; with the mimetic approach – to the outside world; finally, with the pragmatic approach – to the public, the readership” [Compagnon 2001: p.164].

Thus, the cognitive and narratological differentiation of the reader as an organic component of literary discourse brings the pragmatic approach to literature closer to the possibilities of studying text transformations in the projection on perception as a psychological process and as the beginning of the development of a multitude of interpretations. Taking into account the quite reasonable question formulated by O. Sobchuk: “what is the subject of study of cognitive narratology: textual structures or structures of human thinking?” [Sobchuk 2012: p.12], we can assume that the emphasis on a certain type of reader’s revelation gives grounds for finding ways to ensure the mutual transformation of the structures of both classes.

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## DISASTERS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIONS IN THE ARTS

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### **TWENTIETH CENTURY'S MOST PAINFUL ISSUES: NAZISM, EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN JOHN BOYNE'S NOVEL "THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS"**

John Boyne is an Irish author who has won numerous literary awards. He is the author of ten adult books, five children's novels, and two collections of short stories. His writings have been translated into over 50 different languages. His novel "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," which was written in 60 hours, touches the subject of the Holocaust.

War is always horrible, especially when children are suffering. The novel "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" by John Boyne is one of the most heartbreaking portrayals of the Second World War. There are many pieces of literature which deal with the life of soldiers, convicts, and ordinary citizens, but the majority of them tell the story on behalf of an adult. This piece is unique in the way it illustrates the conflict through the perspective of children.

In 2008, the novel "The Boy in Striped Pajamas" was adapted into a film. Several significant cinema awards were given to this film. It is shot extremely close to the text, expressing the entire atmosphere in grey tones, but it is still weaker compared to the book, since the psychology of the boy and his parents is eloquently revealed, their actions are explained, and attention is drawn to extremely touching details in the book that are not depicted in the film.

The novel won two Irish Book Honors, the Bisto Book of the Year Award, and other international awards. The 80-week novel also won the Irish Bestseller List and the New York Times Bestseller List, along with becoming a best-seller in Spain in 2007 and 2008. The book has sold more than 9 million copies worldwide.

Bruno, a nine-year-old German boy, lives happily in a lovely five-story building in Berlin with his father, mother, and sister. However, their father's job requires them to move to a new location known as Auschwitz. Bruno's world is portrayed more completely, lavishly, and voluminously in the narrative; nonetheless, it is diverse and arranged, and it is also capable of motions. For example, because of migration, Bruno lives in Berlin on a regular basis; he has a family (father, mother, sister), grandparents who live apart, and three best friends. Bruno feels unable to accept the relocation, especially after learning that it is not a short-term vacation and that it is a long distance from Berlin. He loves his family and friends. The boy can't imagine his life without his small room upstairs with slanted windows.

When the family arrives to Auschwitz, they see numerous soldiers enter and exit the house. Bruno is annoyed since he has never liked soldiers. Every day, the teacher visits their home and educates his elder sister and Bruno. Although his educators respect history lessons and see art and reading as a waste of time, Bruno prefers to read adventure novels and despises

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history. Gretel, on the other hand, becomes a full-on Nazi because of her teachers and because the place where they reside. Bruno feels lonely since there are no houses near him, but there are hundreds of men and children dressed in the same striped pyjamas on the other side of the wire fence surrounding the garden. Bruno witnessed all of this from his room's window.

Bruno, who is attracted by adventure literature, decides to go on an expedition to the garden one day. After a long walk, he notices a boy in striped pyjamas with a shaved head on the other side of the wire fence. The child seems weak and depressed. And Bruno, like the other boy, sits on the fence's side and begins to talk. He discovers the boy's name is Shmuel. Soon after, Bruno decided to go to the wire fences every night, sit on the ground, and talk with Shmuel; it became a habit, and they became close friends. Sometimes he takes food from the kitchen and puts it in his pocket, takes it for Shmuel, and enjoys it when he sees the child's smile.

Bruno no longer misses his best friends from before, because Shmuel is now his best and only friend. Bruno eventually told his father that he wanted to return to Berlin since there were too many soldiers surrounding them and that two children could not grow up in such an environment. Although his father was angry at first, he later admitted that it was a logical assumption that everyone was happier there. As a result, they begin planning for the journey. Bruno, on the other hand, does not want to go back to Berlin. He refuses to leave Shmuel: "You're my best friend, Shmuel," he said. "My best friend for life."

When Bruno goes to meet Shmuel the day before the relocation, he notices that he is much more upset than he is. According to Shmuel, the father was transported to work and then did not return. They then decide to look for Shmuel's father together, with Bruno dressed in striped pyjamas. Despite hours of trying, they are unable to find his father. When Bruno was on his way home, the soldiers approached him and informed him that they would be taken for a stroll. Nobody understands what a stroll is. Bruno and Shmuel, on the other hand, will never return from their walk. They find themselves in a gas chamber with other boys and men. John Boyne wrote, "Their lost voices must continue to be heard."

In his writing, John Boyne addresses to several of the twentieth century's most painful issues: Nazism, equality, and human rights. He does not avoid the issue of education. The author observes what leads a nice, sincere child to turn into a cruel tyrant willing to harm millions of people for the sake of their ambition. John Boyne writes simply, showing history through the perspective of children.

This book has no long descriptions, author's musings, or "complicated" terminology. It is significant to note that the novel's language is not dramatic, and there are no violent scenes in the book. The author avoids them, but the reader recognises their existence and recognises the injustice and tragedy of these events.

The work's composition is as fragmented as a child's ideas when he or she does not understand anything. Such description clearly demonstrates John Boyne's style. The writer knows how to write about the most tragic pages in human history in an extremely simple way; he does not emotionally exhaust the reader, does not bring him to uncontrollable tears, but his books cannot be forgotten for a long time, they leave a lot of questions, and for quite a long time put a person in a state of shock. Bruno's extreme innocence, which does not correspond to the reality of the moment, is the only thing that can confuse the reader. In the 1940s, Nazi ideology infected the minds of German children.

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Is it surprising that an energetic German and a barely alive prisoner with “dried twigs” for fingers might be “alike as brothers?” Despite this, the piece has a pleasant aftertaste. In addition, the final phrases in the novel, in which the word “war” is not even mentioned once, sound like a call to all humanity to understand its foolishness and horrible effects, as well as a belief in a better future: “Nothing like that could happen again. Not in this day and age.”

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## EARTHQUAKES AND ARTS

### Introduction

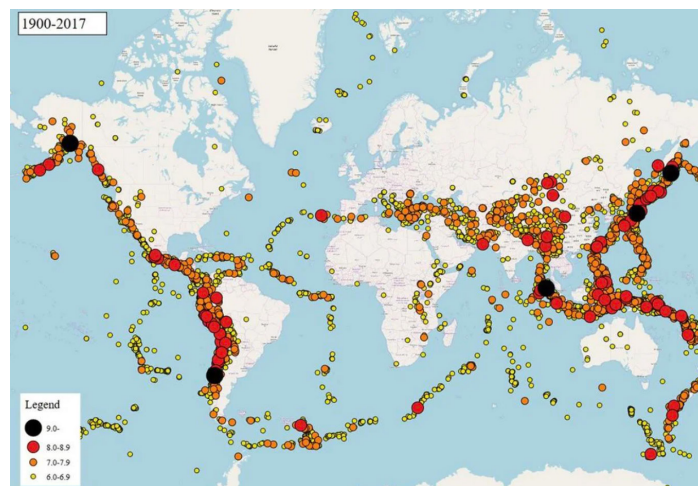
In 2023, over ten years have passed since the Tohoku disaster in 2011. It has been said that Japanese people have started to forget it over these years. However, artworks related to the Tohoku disaster have been increasing these days.

We would like to discuss the reason why artworks and art projects concerning the Tohoku disaster have become popular recently. The purpose of this paper is to show how earthquakes and fear of them are represented in Japanese arts. We will compare traditional and contemporary arts which thematize earthquakes in Japan and see what is common and different among them.

### What Earthquakes Are Like in Japan

First, let us explain what earthquakes are like in Japan.

Japan is one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world which means in effect that earthquakes are quite a common occurrence here. Their intensity varies depending on whether they are big or small, vertical or parallel.



The picture highlighted above shows earthquakes that occurred between 1900 and 2017. The darker color of the circle, the bigger scale of the earthquake. Japan is under so many circles that we could barely see Japan itself. Black circles signify earthquakes of the magnitude of 9.0 or higher. In addition, the number of earthquakes observed in 2021 was 2,424. This means that there are 6.64 earthquakes per day.

One example of an earthquake disaster is Kumamoto castle, one of the most famous castles

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in Japan. It was built in 1607. However, a big earthquake in 2016 hit Kumamoto prefecture and almost destroyed it. Full restoration is expected in 2052, meaning that it will take over 40 years to restore it.

If an earthquake occurs in a big city in Japan, it will likely bring about many problems. For example, old buildings may be vulnerable to damage. As a consequence, it will likely be impossible to drive a car in some roads due to traffic jams. Furthermore, communication failure would make it impossible to use smartphones so that people could not communicate with their family. In addition, in the case of a large earthquake, some supplies are often unavailable, such as electricity, gas, and water, so it would become difficult for people to maintain their daily life. In this paper we examine how such disasters have been represented in traditional Japanese arts.

### How Earthquakes Were Represented in Traditional Japanese Arts

Interestingly enough, many Japanese painters used catfish to represent earthquakes. This was because there was a legend that when the ground shakes in an earthquake, it is because a huge subterranean catfish gets angry, and this was believed to be the reason why earthquakes occurred. Here we present two examples. The first is a Japanese proverb “Earthquake, thunder, fire, and father,” which tells about what we should fear in Japan. This painting visualizes the proverb: the leftmost character in the painting is a catfish representing an earthquake, and the demon (*oni*) next to it represents lightning. The character on the far right represents a fire as his head in a flame.



The next example is a hanging scroll depicting a catfish. Craftsmen and merchants who profited from the post-quake reconstruction economy worshipped the hanging scroll of the catfish, which is protected by a Shinto priest. Immediately after the earthquake, earthquake catfish were depicted as the evil source of disaster. However, when reconstruction work began after an earthquake in the former capital *Edo* (now Tokyo), and the reconstruction economy boomed, the catfish became a popular sight for those who profited from the economic boom, and they started to depict the catfish as a symbol of fortune.



### Art Expression in Today's Japan

We will now turn to the contemporary Japanese arts which represent natural disasters.

First, we need to know about the Tohoku Earthquake. The Tohoku Earthquake occurred on March 11, 2011. The area was severely damaged by the earthquake, fire, and a big and destructive tsunami. A lot of works of arts and artistic projects have been created in relation to that day. Let us introduce an art project and an artwork.

The first one is Reborn-Art Festival. This festival is a comprehensive art festival of “art,” “music,” and “food” with Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, as its main stage. Ishinomaki is one of the cities severely damaged by the Tohoku Earthquake. This festival uses the town under reconstruction as a venue for an art festival and exhibits works of art. The disaster area is being enlivened through this festival as a center for the arts.

The second example is an artwork titled “Ebb and Flow, Another Step”. This work was on display in an exhibition called “3.11 and the Artist: Imagining 10 Years Later,” and viewers see this work at the very beginning of the exhibition. The two artists had visited Rikuzentakata City, one of the disaster areas, many times to record the recovering landscape and the victims words. This work focuses on Rikuzentakata, where a new town has been built on the top of the damaged town by raising the roof, and tells the story of the relationship between the upper and the lower town in 2031, 20 years after the earthquake, through paintings and words. While people live in the upper town after the earthquake, the work is also oriented toward a story that can connect with the memories of the lower town that once existed. Through this work of art they try to remember the reconstruction at the time of the earthquake and after the disaster and the memories before the disaster.

### Conclusion

Japan continues to suffer from earthquakes. In the past, earthquakes were represented abstractly in paintings. As we noted, a giant catfish was depicted as an earthquake motif. On the other hand, today's artists convey concrete images of earthquakes.

It is important that we do not forget the terrible effects of earthquakes and tsunamis. Therefore, to make images of art is an important way to keep the memory of disasters from fading away. In addition, art should be used to help the next generation imagine and share predecessors' memories.

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### **THE PROBLEM OF GROWING UP DURING THE WARTIME IN MARKUS ZUSAK'S NOVEL "THE BOOK THIEF"**

Markus Zusak was born in 1975 in Sydney, Australia, as the youngest of four children of German and Austrian immigrants. His novel "The Book Thief" is the tale of orphan Liesel Meminger, who finds companionship and a new family in a tiny village in Germany during World War II. Zusak picked the topic in part to relate the experiences his parents told him about growing up during the war in Austria and Germany. "What I wanted to do... was write someone's favourite novel," Zusak explained in an interview.

"The Book Thief" is set in Germany in the years 1939-1943 and relates the narrative of Liesel, as told by Death, who has in his hands the book she wrote about all these years. In that sense, they are both book thieves. Liesel steals haphazardly at first, then deliberately, yet she is never greedy. Death takes Liesel's notebook when she leaves it in her torment, among the ruins of what was once her home, and carries it with him.

The beginning of the book tells us that Liesel is almost an orphan. Her father was never known to her, her mother vanished after giving her to her new foster parents, and her younger brother died on the train to Molching, where the foster parents dwell. Death first meets nine-year-old Liesel after her brother dies, and he stays long enough to see her grab her first book, "The Gravedigger's Handbook," which was left lying in the snow beside her brother's grave.

Her foster parents, Hans and Rosa Herbermann, are impoverished Germans who were granted a little stipend to care for her. Liesel becomes close friends with her next-door neighbour Rudy, a child with "lemon-coloured hair." Zusak writes, "A snowball in the face is surely the perfect beginning to a lasting friendship."

One night, a Jew appears in their home. He's the son of Hans's WWI fellow, the man who taught him to play the accordion, and whose widowed wife Hans promised to help if she ever needed it. Max and Liesel become good friends, and he creates a stunning narrative for her called "The Standover Man," which can be called heartbreaking.

The subject of books, which is hinted at even in the novel's title, is related to words and language. The Nazi book-burning is a crucial aspect of the story which depicts both the restriction of free speech and the power of books themselves – Hitler is afraid of books that contradict his propaganda. By grabbing a book from the flames, Liesel is able to combat Hitler in her own little way.

Language, reading, and writing are presented as metaphorical components of self-expression and freedom throughout the story. They provide the characters who have or achieve the power of literacy with individuality and personal liberation: "the actual power of words." They also serve as a framework for Liesel's growth and development.

Books are nearly like characters in the narrative. Each of the novels is linked to a tale of a girl's life. Liesel's adventure begins with "The Gravedigger's Handbook." Her brother's

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death marked the first gloomy point in the novel. Liesel was damaged and disturbed by this for the rest of her life. It's her sole recollection of her brother and mother.

Liesel rescued "The Shoulder Shrug" from the ashes of a flaming celebration of Hitler's birthday. The novel is about a Jewish man who is depicted positively, which is why it was condemned. She steals it because she is filled with rage for Himmel Street, her mother, and the Führer.

In the bomb shelter, she reads "The Whistler." Frau Hermann hands Liesel "The Whistler" and invites her to come and read in the library. It represents her complicated connection with Ilse as well as a significant point in her personal development.

The book "Mein Kampf" exemplifies the hate-filled ideals of Hitler and his supporters that Liesel and her foster family fear. Despite their fears, they conceal Max in their basement, where he records his own struggles and experiences on the pages of Hitler's writings. The meaning of this scene is that anything bad or wrong may eventually be used for good. Max is eventually able to paint over the pages of "Mein Kampf" and compose a tale for Liesel, allowing him to get revenge on Hitler by painting over the horrible words with his own compassionate language.

Ilse lends Liesel a black diary in which she may write her own stories when she is alone at home. Liesel walks down to the basement to compose her narrative. She is mute and unable to read at the start of her narrative. "The Book Thief" is the title of the book Liesel writes in the months leading up to the Himmel Street explosion. It is the book that Death retrieves from the ashes and gives it to Liesel after she dies. Liesel's own book literally and metaphorically saves her life. It keeps her in the basement for the final bombing, and writing it allows her to dissolve all of the pain she has witnessed and experienced. She says, "I have hated the words and I have loved them, and I hope I have made them right."

The author establishes the premise that books mean considerably more to Liesel than it appears as the tale progresses. They nourish her spirit, provide food for her mind, and provide the basis for her development. She steals the book to exact revenge on her new sworn foe. In the girl's terrible existence, books are her sole source of happiness. Books are more than simply an occupation for a girl; they are her salvation and her heart.

This novel shows us the frightening example of war, violence and Nazism. Here we can see little Liesel go through her horrible reality. If only it happened in books and books only. But, nowadays, Ukrainians have to face the same problems. The terrorist state has been trying to deprive our culture, our freedom of speech and our lives. They destroy our museums and steal our cultural heritage. They burn books written by Ukrainian authors. Our children have to spend their childhood in the bomb shelters because Russia is shelling Ukrainian territory. For us, "The Book Thief" is more than just a novel. It is the portrait of our reality.

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### **WHAT BOOKS TEACH US ABOUT WORLD WAR II (BASED ON OLEKSANDR DOVZHENKO'S BOOK "UKRAINE ON FIRE")**

Oleksandr Dovzhenko is a Ukrainian writer, film director, film dramatist, artist, the author of famous novels "Earth" and "Arsenal." When World War II began, Dovzhenko was evacuated to Ashgabat. Appointed a colonel of the quartermaster service, he could not stand inaction and asked to be sent to the front and witness liberation from the occupation, after which he wrote his most famous work, "Ukraine on Fire."

The idea of the work, according to the author himself, is the indomitable strength and steadfastness of our people's spirit, their ability to fight for liberation and confidence in victory over the enemy. What can impress the reader is the strength of will of Ukrainians who went on to protect their country. It was very difficult to fight the fascists, but our people persevered and defeated them. The main story is the gigantic epic image of Ukraine, plundered by fascists and Bolsheviks. The family from Zaporizhzhya is a micromodel of Ukraine. The song "Oh, I'm going to go for a walk" serves as a kind of framing. Zaporizhians sing it at the beginning of the piece. It symbolizes the unity of the family and harmony within it, and therefore, the unity of the Ukrainian people. At the end of the film, the family gathers again. And although there are not many of its representatives, there is hope that the family line of the Zaporizhians will not be interrupted.

The story "Ukraine on Fire" is still relevant today because this book teaches us to be courageous, strong in spirit, not pay attention to obstacles, to fight for our native country and for our family, to appreciate each other and never betray. Therefore, "Ukraine on Fire" is one of the strongest, most impressive works of Ukrainian literature about the tragedy of the people during the Second World War and throughout its history.

Reading books about the Second World War, we can learn how to survive during the war and save other people's lives. Despite its tense plot, "Ukraine on Fire" has a romantic moment with a soldier and village girl. This young guy said that he will go to war and will definitely come back.

Thanks to books, we can learn many ideas and values, for example, to support and respect our country, to value loved ones, to help them at home, to be considerate with people, to quickly find a way out of a situation, to be kind, brave and sincere. Oleksandr Dovzhenko's book "Ukraine on Fire" is unique, based on real events, interesting, so everyone will be able to imagine the events that took place in Ukraine during the Second World War. It showed that our nation is invincible, brave and strong.

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### **LIFE, SELF-SACRIFICE AND HUMANITY AS THE BASIS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE IN ERIC-EMMANUEL SCHMITT'S NOVEL "NOAH'S CHILD"**

Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt is a prominent writer and dramatist, a doctor of philosophy, and the creator of several plays and performances that are now being staged in theatres around the world. Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt, raised by his parents in the spirit of atheism, claimed to be an agnostic, but recently the famous author recognized the importance of religion in his work and declared himself a Christian.

"Noah's Child" is a narrative that consists of numerous elements. This is a puzzle story. Everything is there: the terrible battle, the formation of a religious worldview, and simple human actions. The Jewish child Joseph tells the story from the first-person perspective. Little Joseph found himself in the middle of a violent and devastating time, on the eve of a huge flood. This was only possible since he was born in a Jewish family. It all began on the tram. Joseph and his mother were leaving towards the other side of the town. He was only seven years old at the time. When the German troops appeared in the carriage, Joseph pretended to be a mute child because of the agreement with his parents, who were frightened that Yiddish might reveal his identity. They were obligated to wear a yellow star, but Joseph's father, a brilliant tailor, was able to create them jackets that kept the star invisible, yet it could be seen if necessary.

Mother stepped out of the wagon with Joseph at the next stop after she had overheard the soldiers' conversation and said that they were going to meet a great woman, Countess de Sully. The countess warned Joseph and his parents that they were in serious danger because Jews would be arrested in their neighbourhood. Mom and dad stated there was a roundup, so the parents had left in the afternoon the next day and they never returned.

The police surrounded the home one morning, then broke into the countess's bedroom, where she had already placed Joseph. The police departed murmuring apologies after an unsuccessful investigation, and the Countess promised them that Priest Pons would visit the next day to care for the boy.

The priest put his own life at danger by sheltering Jewish children in an orphanage. Father Pons is an example of a priest who has never pushed his beliefs or Religion on others. On the contrary, he attempted to develop in Jewish children a love for their parents' faith. According to Schmitt's perspective, the figure of Father Pons is the personification of an ideal priest.

Shemle is a village in Belgium where Father Pons resides. Mademoiselle Marcel, a pharmacist, decided right away that Joseph's new surname would be Bertin, and that his name would stay unchanged. The boy was now a year younger.

Joseph was meant to be a guest. He was relieved that he had a locker and a godson named Rudy. Rudy was frequently punished and he did not do well in school. He instantly figured that Joseph was Jewish. And Rudy was Jewish as well. The boys instantly became friends and



respected each other as brothers. Joseph promised his father that one day he would become a Catholic. The boy's father thought that he should stay a Jew. He said that Hitler began by completely destroying Jews since there were fewer of them, but that he would eventually kill Christians as well.

The father kept a Torah scroll and a picture of Jerusalem which showed where to turn during the prayer. The father's collection included prayer books, and mystical poetry. According to Father Pons, Noah was the first collector in history: he found the male and female of every living creature to preserve and rescue from the flood on his massive ship. God created humans with the instinct and intellect to save themselves. As a result, Noah acted as a model for his father.

The Gestapo attacked the Yellow Villa that evening at eleven o'clock. The children were identified. Father Pons came up with a new lie: police had broken into the Yellow Villa, the students were beaten and tied to beds, and the Jews had escaped.

Joseph and Rudy were on their way to have tea with his mother one day when they ran into his parents. The adults informed Father Pons that they survived by working as field labourers on a huge farm not far from here, and they sent the boy to Brussels. Because the child was lonely, he ran away from home and came to Priest Pons. He said Joseph was one of the few surviving children of a beautiful nation that had recently been mostly destroyed.

Six million Jews were murdered. The father convinced Joseph to speak about the Jews who were no longer alive. To take care about the Jews, now there is Joseph, who will be known as Noah. Those events occurred half a century ago. Joseph took over the priests' advice, and did not become a Christian. He actively learned his parents' faith and carried it on to his children.

Schmitt's characters are real and honest people who represent a specific stage in their life while feeling extremely close to the reader, as if they are great friends. The heroes have doubts, but they listen to the voice of their inner world and heart. Goodness always triumphs because it is deep, diverse, and genuine!

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## CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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### **WHAT MESSAGE ATTRACTS YOUNG PEOPLE IN JAPAN: FROM THE NOVEL BY MIZUKA TSUJIMURA, “THE LONELY CASTLE IN THE MIRROR”**

Have you heard about “The Lonely Castle In The mirror”? This book was written in 2017 by Mizuki Tsujimura, a female writer in Japan. The book won several awards including “Japan Booksellers’ Awards” which is based on votes by bookstore clerks from all around Japan. The book has been read by many young people in Japan.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss why this book has gained such popularity among the young and to also examine the message from this book which is “There is the place where you are / There are people around you”.

#### **The Reasons Why This Book Became So Popular**

Before discussing the book, we would like to introduce a brief outline to make it easier to understand.

The story begins with seven children gathered at the castle in the mirror. One day, each of them found a mirror shining in their room and entered the magical castle through it. After that, a group of schoolers were given the task to find a key hidden in the castle. The story follows one of the children, Kokoro, who is in her first year of middle school.

There are some factors which make this storyline quite complicated.

First, seven children are all middle school students, but they refuse to go to school because they have many problems in their lives such as being bullied.

Second, the castle would be closed in one year depending on whether or not they could find the key. Thus, they could not stay forever in the castle to avoid their problems.

Third, the key is important. This key has a magical power to make their wishes come true. However, only one child who finds the key could use the power. Therefore, even though they have chances to become friends, they are rivals at the same time. In addition, if a child got the power of the key, the castle would disappear, and they all would forget everything they experienced in the castle. These factors make the story more complicated but also attractive.

We would like to discuss in greater detail why this book attracts young people.

First, as we mentioned, the characters’ situations and their aims seem fancy and unrealistic. The castle in this story is a kind of shelter for the students. They can avoid going to school or staying at home by being at the castle. However, the time limit is only a year, and they could not gather forever at the castle even if they have a good relationship with each other.

Hence, the time-limit and the rules make them struggle. They must face their school or family problems in their lives after the castle closes. If somebody finds the key, students must forget everything about the castle and their relationships will also disappear.

Second, through communication in the castle, students come to understand each other. Gradually they find people support them too. For instance, Kokoro realizes her mother worries about her all the time and a friend who lives next door shares the same feeling about going to school. Sooner or later, they must face their problems because the magic of the key does not solve everyone's problems in the story. The one thing that supports the characters after they leave the castle is the hope they got from their communication in the castle. The struggles of the students in the story depict the movement of emotions. As a result, we can conclude that the emotional depiction of the problems are realistic, even though the story unfolds in a magic realm.

These are the reasons the book's story creates sympathy among young people who may have school or home problems in Japan.

### **The Message from the Novel**

We discussed some reasons why this novel attracts young people in Japan. In conclusion, the story of this book is complex, and it focuses on issues from a psychological perspective. The struggles of the characters make a sort of suspension of each scene in the mirror castle/real world in the story.

Here, we would like to present one of the most impressive passages from the book.

When Kokoro was going to school on time, mom asked her, "Are you fine?", "Do you need me to go to school with you?"

Kokoro replied, "I'm alright."

Although they talked several times about this topic (whether to go to school or not) last night, her Mother still worries about her.

Kokoro also thinks it is natural (for her mother to say that).

She decided to go because now Kokoro understands that school is not the only place for her to be. She accepts that there are other places where she can receive support. If she found or faced any problems there, she could change the place. Wherever she goes, there will be someone who cannot get along with her. But now she does not need to fight for it because also there is someone who will support her.

Therefore, she decided to go back to school.

(M. Tsujimura, *The Lonely Castle In The mirror*", pp. 350—351, the explanations in parenthesis were added by the authors)

Reading this scene, one can notice the change in Kokoro's mind. In the beginning of the story, she refused to go to school. But through the interactions and communications with friends in the castle and her mother, she eventually changes her thoughts about school and her problems. The same can be said about the other characters. They also find ways to cope with their problems. Though not all problems are solved in the story, their decisions to reframe bad situations and face their problems encourages the reader.

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When bad things happen, we are often just fixed on them. In such situations we cannot think about other things around us. This novel tells us that we have our own places where we can be and there are certainly people who will support us.

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### THE RECEPTION OF SERHIY ZHADAN IN EUROPE

*“Of course, books are not able to end the war.  
But books can help us stay ourselves during the war.  
And it is books that will prevent us from  
losing ourselves and disappearing.”*

Serhiy Zhadan is a famous Ukrainian writer, translator, musician and social activist. In today's Ukraine, he has become one of the most vocal opponents of war and supporters of Ukraine's independence. German newspaper “Die Zeit” called him a “poet against fear” (German: „ein Dichter gegen die Angst“). While Zhadan's poetry undoubtedly explores some heavy topics including death, loss of loved ones, loss of home, loneliness, despair, and abandon, it is still full of vivid energy, liveliness and hope for a better future.

His bestselling works include prose novels “Depeche Mode” (2004), “Voroshilovgrad” (2010), “Mesopotamia” (2014), “The Orphanage” (2017), and poetry collections “Life of Maria” (2015), “Templars” (2016), “Antenna” (2018) and others.

Originally from Starobilsk (Luhansk region), Zhadan has taken an unequivocal anti-war stance since 2014, when Donetsk and Luhansk regions were occupied by Russian troops. Marci Shore, who is an associate professor of intellectual history at Yale University, has referred to him as “the bard of Eastern Ukraine” in her 2016 New Yorker publication. According to Zhadan himself, “It is impossible not to write about the war. One must write about the war. The war doesn't need to be romanticized, but it needs to be documented. It needs witnesses who will speak less about themselves than they will about the war.”

In 1991, Zhadan moved to Kharkiv and became part of the neofuturist literary movement “Chervona Fira.” It was an important part of the Kharkiv literary underground of the early nineties.

Today, Zhadan's work is read all over the world. His novel “The Orphanage” (2017) has been translated into Polish, Italian, Danish, English, Romanian, Lithuanian ... Polish newspaper “Gazeta Wyborcza” included the Polish translation of the novel into their top 10 list of the best books published in 2019.

Other works by Zhadan (incl. “Antenna” (2018), “Depeche Mode” (2004), “Anthem of Democratic Youth” (2006)) have also been translated into different European languages (German, Polish, Estonian, French etc).

In 2019, a selection of Zhadan's poems was published in English under the title “What We Live For, What We Die For: Selected Poems.” Bob Holman states in his foreword, “Here in these poems is all that we've been waiting for: a voice that tells us everything we've never wanted to know. Even if we're not ready for it, we cannot refuse to understand. The job of the poet is to turn words into worlds. It is what we live for, what we die for. Welcome the work of a master poet, now in English, the poetry of Serhiy Zhadan.”

Tamara Hundorova views Zhadan's work in the context of punk culture, mentioning "a road leading to nowhere, homelessness, and fatherlessness" as the key spiritual coordinates prioritized by Serhiy Zhadan in his work. The writer himself is a big lover of rock and punk music. Among his sources of inspiration, he names artists like Pink Floyd, Oasis, AC/DC, The Stooges, Patti Smith, Depeche Mode... For his most recent birthday, punk legend Patti Smith even gifted him her book "Year of the Monkey" (2019).

Some 15 years ago, Serhiy Zhadan began collaborating with a ska-punk band from Kharkiv named "Dogs in Space" (*Ukrainian*: Sobaky v Kosmosi), which resulted in the subsequent name change to "Zhadan and the Dogs." Ska is a music genre that originated in Jamaica in the late 1950s and was the precursor to rocksteady and reggae. It combined elements of Caribbean mento and calypso with American jazz and rhythm and blues. Ska punk, being a synthetic genre, strives to combine the provocativeness of punk with an uplifting spirit of ska. It tends to feature brass instruments, especially horns such as trumpets, trombones and woodwind instruments like saxophones, making the genre distinct from other forms of punk rock.

Today, Zhadan and the Dogs' concerts sell out in hours – and not just in Ukraine, but in other European countries too (incl. Germany, Poland, France and others). It is not coincidental that The New York Times and Deutsche Welle have referred to Zhadan as a "rock star poet." His lyrics are angry and full of satire. In his mocking of social vices like bribery, vanity, greed, or bureaucracy, Zhadan is merciless. His music is for those who think critically, act decisively and are not afraid to voice their opinions. But at the same time, his lyrics are full of life, humour and love for his native country. By combining the rebellious punk spirit with upbeat ska melodies and discussions of contemporary Ukrainian realities, Zhadan has created a singular phenomenon in Ukrainian music.

During the horrible spring of 2022, Zhadan and the Dogs released two new songs. They are called "Children" and "The Subway." I translated a few lines from the latter:

*Angry and merry children of the Kharkiv basements,  
Children living in the depths of the subway.  
The world that has seen it all has grown gray and old.  
But love is work, and we have to do this work every day.*

When the war started, people in Kharkiv and other big cities fled to subway stations to hide during missile attacks. Compared to apartment buildings or parking lots, subway stations were a lot more secure. Because people were forced to stay there for many days, volunteers (including Serhiy Zhadan and his colleagues – artists, musicians, actors) brought food, medicine and blankets into the subway. Children studied there. Zhadan and the Dogs periodically came down into the subway and gave free concerts to cheer up the citizens of Kharkiv.

One of Serhiy Zhadan's most famous novels is "The Orphanage" (2017), which depicts the first weeks of the war in Eastern Ukraine. It tells the story of a teacher who sets out on a long and arduous journey to save his nephew, who is currently staying in an orphanage in an occupied town. Portraying the daily life of people amid the horrid realities of war, Zhadan exposes the wounds of our society. He discusses the problems of collective memory and personal responsibility, bravery and cowardice, patriotism and national consciousness.

In a German translation by Sabine Stöhr and Juri Durkot, this novel won the Leipzig Book Fair Prize (*German*: Preis der Leipziger Buchmesse) in 2018. It also received the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Literature Prize in 2022. As of right now, “Suhrkamp Verlag” has sold the translation rights for “The Orphanage” for 26 languages.

In 2022, Serhiy Zhadan was awarded with a number of literary prizes. One of these is the Hannah Arendt Award for Political Thought. This annual award was created to honor individuals who identify critical and unseen aspects of current political events and who are not afraid to enter the public realm by presenting their opinion in controversial political discussions. The Hannah Arendt Award is a public prize, and therefore not based solely on academic achievement. It is funded by both the state government of Bremen and the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Bremen. The prize is endowed with 10,000 Euros and is awarded by an international jury.

Today, the writer is in Kharkiv, and he is fighting against the full-scale Russian invasion. He gathers and distributes humanitarian aid, purchases cars and technical equipment for the Ukrainian military, gives literary readings and concerts for charity.

Zhadan’s Facebook posts constitute a truthful chronicle of war – a chronicle of struggle, courage and resilience. He traditionally concludes these posts with the words: “Our flags are flying over the city.” Or: “Tomorrow we will wake up one day closer to our victory.” A certain formulaic character of these endings actually has a powerful psychological effect: Zhadan’s supporters from Ukraine and other parts of the world, reading his posts, have the opportunity to see every day that the city is still standing, the city is fighting and is not giving up despite all the occupiers’ attempts. In the fall of 2022, these posts were used to create and publish the book “Sky Above Kharkiv: Dispatches from the Ukrainian Front” (*German*: “Himmel über Charkiw: Nachrichten vom Überleben im Krieg”). In her online review, one reader wrote, “I’m waiting for the sequel and I want to continue reading every evening that Ukrainian flags are flying over Kharkiv, just like in this book.”

We now have to live in a different world – a world with destroyed schools, burned books, and ruined human lives. This new reality, no matter how frightening it is, poses many complex and ambiguous questions that require reflection, discussion, and the search for new spiritual supports and life meanings.

In October 2022, Serhiy Zhadan received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (*German*: Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels) for his artistic and humanitarian work. In his acceptance speech, he formulated his own questions:

“How do we talk about the war? How do we cope with intonations that contain so much despair, rage, resentment, but at the same time – strength and readiness not to abandon our own, not to retreat? <...> In fact, war changes our memory, filling it with memories too painful, traumas too deep and conversations too bitter. You cannot get rid of these memories, you cannot fix the past. It will be a part of you from now on. And it probably won’t be the best part. <...> As long as we have our language, we have at least a vague chance to explain ourselves, to speak our truth, to put our memory in order. So let’s speak, let’s speak. Even when our words hurt our throats. Even when they make us feel lost and empty. Behind the voice is the possibility of truth. And it is worth using this possibility. Perhaps this is the most important thing that can happen to all of us.”

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### RELATION BETWEEN *OSHI-KATSU* AND JAPANESE RELIGIOUS VIEWS

#### What is *Oshi-katsu*?

Firstly, we will explain what *Oshi-katsu* is. *Katsu* means ‘activities.’ *Oshi* refers to people or things which you want to cheer for. Most people regard *Oshi* as what you love the most and it is similar to “fave.” Some younger people think *Oshi* is central to their lives. For example, idols, entertainers, voice actors, youtubers and fictional characters. In close relationship, we think of our favorite teachers as *Oshi*.

Let’s look at your *Oshi*. Anything is right. What do you cheer for?

Then, we will talk about *Oshi-Katsu* in detail. People say many young Japanese do *Oshi-katsu*. One can even say that *Oshi-katsu* is a new part of Japanese culture. But why do they do those activities? We think there are some reasons. First, they can feel a sense of purpose in life through *Oshi-katsu*. Second, *Oshi-katsu* can become their identities; young people represent their own personalities with *Oshi*. Third, they can be positive about themselves through *Oshi*. They can do *Oshi-katsu* anytime and anywhere. For example, when people go to school, they bring *Oshi*’s goods and they give people power.

#### How and Why is *Oshi-katsu* Popular in Japan?

Why has *Oshi-katsu* become popular in Japan? In our opinion, it has something to do with the popularity of subculture.

In Japan, there are an estimated 6.8 million people who love to watch animation movies, 4.5 million people enjoy digital games, and 3.6 million fans are involved in Idol contents. Therefore, a vast number of Japanese enjoy subculture in many ways, and *Oshi-katsu* often takes place within those social contexts.

By researching the economic effects of “*Oshi-katsu*”, it is said that there is about 2.1 billion dollars consumption from animation contents, and 1.1 billion dollars consumption from Idol contents. We can say that *Oshi-katsu* has a great impact in the Japanese economy.

#### What Activity is *Oshi-katsu*?

How do people enjoy *Oshi-katsu*? We can divide *Oshi-katsu* activities into three groups.

1. Reactive and low consumption activities: for example, to imagine *Oshi* and fancy, check SNS, DVD, CD, magazines.

2. Proactive and high consumption activities: for example, to join events such as live concerts or fan meetings, and related places like animation/film locations.

3. Creative activities: for example, to make fun goods, arrange self-outfits and so on.

*Oshi-katu* can be subdivided into many parts. It is because there is no answer for how to express your love for *Oshi*. Therefore, **Oshi-katu** may cost a lot of time and money although people can be cheered up and get power to live through *Oshi*.

Let us introduce some words which have special meaning in *Oshi-katu*.

1. *Precious*: for example, “My *Oshi* is a star but he is humble and friendly. How precious he is ...!”

2. *God*: “Oh my god!! *Oshi* waved at me!!”

3. *Donation*: “I must donate for my *Oshi*’s Birthday event...!”

4. *Propagate*: “I propagate the charm of *Oshi* to my sister.”

One can see that people use several “religious” words. In our opinion, *Oshi-katsu* has a tendency to focus on religious behaviors. For example, the behavior in which people visit a model place or where *Oshi* visited is called “Pilgrimage” among the young Japanese. By visiting such places, they would like to feel their *Oshi*. Some people bring *Oshi*’s goods and take photos to make a memory between them and *Oshi*.

People even make “altars” to celebrate their *Oshi*’s birthday. In *Oshi-Katsu*, an altar means a place or decoration where goods and pictures of *Oshi* characters and idols are collected and displayed in one place like a kind of shrine.

### Why Do the Young Japanese Worship *Oshi* as if It Were a Religion?

Religions such as Christianity consider it taboo to use the word “God” carelessly. However, young Japanese casually refer to *Oshi* as “God” and worship them. Many religious words are used in *Oshi-katu*, and it is very similar to religious behavior. Why do young Japanese people worship *Oshi* like a religion?

In our opinion, the religious character of *Oshi-katu* might be related to “animism” which is a notion that all phenomena and things have spirits. Animism traditionally was strong in Japan. It is said that gods reside in everything, including nature, tools, and words. As is well known, natural disasters have been common in Japan since ancient times, for example, earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis and floods. Some people think that is why Japanese have come to believe in various gods.

Animism evolved into a unique Japanese religion called *Shinto* which merged with Buddhism and other religions. Unlike other religions, *Shinto* has neither a founder nor a scripture. It is more of a folk religion that arose from animism, and it is closer to a philosophy than a religion. *Shinto* is so thoroughly integrated into the lives of Japanese that they are not conscious of their religious behaviors which certainly influence their thought and behaviors.

*Shinto* is also one of polytheism. Unlike monotheism such as Christianity, polytheism has several gods in the same way as Hinduism. By believing in several gods, people can find their activities in anything. If gods reside in everything, *Oshi* also can be gods. People feel their *Oshi* as if their gods are things or entities who influence their lives. That is why *Oshi-katu* looks like religious activities.

In conclusion, we can say *Oshi-Katsu* is one of the new Japanese cultural phenomena. It has a high amount of consumption contents. In addition, younger people can be cheered

up by *Oshi* and get the power to live. To sum up, *Oshi-Katsu* use a lot of religious words and do religious behavior which seem to have something to do with traditional Japanese polytheism.

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### **THE PROBLEM OF “OTHERNESS” IN “JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL” BY RICHARD BACH**

Richard David Bach was born on 23 June 1936. He was born in Oak Park, Illinois. He attended Long Beach State University. He is known for his love of aircraft. Richard Bach served in a fighter squadron of the US Navy and the New Jersey Air National Guard. His books are mostly autobiographies inspired by events in his life. He also worked as a technical writer for Douglas Aircraft and Flying magazine.

Most of Bach's books are related to aviation in some way. Aviation was his passion, but his teachers at school made him realize his talent for writing. So he decided to capture his love and talent in book form. His early works were about flight, such as “Stranger to Ground,” and later flight was used as a metaphor; “Jonathan Livingston Seagull,” published in 1970, was a popular work featuring seagulls. The book tells the story of a seagull that flies because it prefers flying to foraging for food. The book was published by Macmillan because other publishers refused to publish it. “Jonathan Livingston Seagull” has beautiful photographs of seagulls in flight. The book became a number-one bestseller. In less than 10,000 words, “Jonathan Livingston Seagull” sold over a million copies in 1972, breaking the record set by “Gone with the Wind.”

#### **To Be the “Other”**

In our modern world, where we are constantly bombarded with how different everyone is, you would think that people would get used to the fact that other people have other views on the world, other ideas about projects, and other dreams... right?

Depending on which part of the world you live in, people around you enforce different ideals. Some despise the idea of being open-minded and wanting to blend in, while others hate ordinary people and cherish the unique and quirky ones. Most people are somewhere in between these extremes and the book of Richard Bach “Jonathan Livingstone Seagull” showcases an instance of a white crow.

A white crow is a person who differs from other people in his/her appearance, behavior, views, or interests. That is, he/she is a person unlike others. This expression has been used to denote any “otherness,” unusualness, uniqueness, or sometimes even eccentricity of a person. Otherness is not a bad thing. You and I are different. We may not be the same as someone around us, but we must recognize and respect others' right to exist and to have their own opinion.

Richard expresses the idea of a white crow finding others like him, thus making the white crow ordinary and accepted. Jonathan found “his” flock, and became part of it, no longer an exile. He was surrounded by like-minded souls, and among them he became ordinary. Once



you find the right people who share your ideals and dreams then you can truly feel at home, feel like it's heaven. We believe that this is what one of the main messages of Richard Bach was, to find those who are similar but different from you. Such things will strengthen any relationship, friendship, romance, and so on.

### **“Other” Thoughts from the Book**

The amount of symbols present in the story is remarkable, and if looked at by two different people they will say different things about most of the symbols. Because everyone understands this story in their unique way.

In the work of Richard Bach, it is said that many trials, disappointments, and even painful moments will await us on the way to the goal. During those moments you are given a chance to learn from them, for every person you meet, every challenge you beat, and every step you take leads you to a better version of yourself. It is also necessary to pass your knowledge on to others. Not only this is how the development of humanity, the development of culture, and development of civilization continue, but also the “development” of your relationships with the people around you, your loved ones, or your friends.

In this story-parable, we find Christian ideas of love, forgiveness, and self-sacrifice for the sake of others. But at the same time, some ideas of Eastern religions and philosophical teachings of Buddhism appear. The blend of all of these ideas is seamless and impactful in the story.

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## WISH FOR PEACE FROM “HACKSAW RIDGE”

### Story of Hacksaw Ridge

We will present what we learned from the movie Hacksaw Ridge. We have two main topics. The first is the story of the movie, Hacksaw Ridge. What is Hacksaw Ridge? And who is Doss Desmond? And why is Doss the main character in this movie? In second part, we will talk about what we interpreted from the movie. From our perspective, telling history to the next generation and the world and learning from it presents us with the chance to learn from the past.

The movie, Hacksaw Ridge, is about the Pacific War where Japan fought against the US and allied countries seventy years ago. Doss Desmond was born in 1919 in Lynchburg, Virginia and died in 2006. He was 87 years old. His family are devoted Christians and he attended the Church School until 7th grade.

As portrayed in the movie, Doss is a Seventh-day Adventist who wouldn't touch a weapon or work on the Sabbath. His lifestyle was based on the observance of the Sabbath, non-violence, and vegetarianism. He served as a combat medic with an infantry company in WWII. His parents raised him and his brother in a pious setting and told them to shun weapons as they believed “all violence is considered an offence against God and against humanity.” However, Doss believed in the cause of WWII and decided to serve even though his parents did not want him to join the war. Another reason why Doss decided to serve is that his brother and friends also served in the army.

There was a dilemma between the cause of the war and no violence. That is why he served as a combat medic. He served without firing a shot. But he earned respect and adoration of his comrades for his bravery, selflessness and compassion. It is said that he saved 75 men in the battle of Okinawa including Japanese soldiers. After WWII, Doss became the first man in American history to receive the Medal of Honor without firing a shot.

### What We Want to Say about Hacksaw Ridge

Our second topic is what we took away from this movie. We have two points we would like to highlight. The first one is that it is important to tell history to the rest of the world and the following generations. It is true that there are some advantages and disadvantages with telling a historical story to those who didn't experience it. We can tell history to anybody, and they will get new knowledge and perspective about what happened. We can say this is an advantage of telling history. On the other hand, when we watch a movie like Hacksaw

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Ridge, some people might think, “This is the true story about the war,” even though it is just a small part of war. Also, it can hurt people’s feelings, especially of those who experienced the incidents that the movie shows. These might be disadvantages of telling and representing history.

Based on what we have described above, we have a question for you. After the war in Ukraine ends, what kind of legacy would you like to leave for next generation? Also, how do you think you would feel if such a work from “the other side’s point of view” were to remain? In your case, that would be movies or stories made from the Russian perspective. We know it is a difficult thing to think about in this current situation, but please try.

Let me tell you what I felt through this movie. The first time I saw this, I had very mixed feelings. Because I am from Okinawa where the Japanese and US military had fierce battles and a lot of citizens were killed. At first, I thought, “The US used the war in which many of our ancestors were killed and the islands were devastated for making a beautiful story about one man.” I had a complicated feeling because my grandmother was almost killed in the war although the movie is beautiful and moving. After a while, I realized it is difficult to make a movie about a war with completely equal perspectives. But in retrospect, “to tell the history” is the most important thing. The movie creates an opportunity for us to think and learn about the war even if the story is not good for the people who experienced it. The worst thing is not to tell the history. And it is not only about war, it is important to watch incidents from multifaceted perspectives. As for me, the movie made it possible to see the war in Okinawa from a “second-person angle” and multifaceted perspectives for the first time. Young people in Okinawa were always told about war as “victims” including me. I think it is important to see the history with multifaceted perspectives.

The second point of this topic is that “acceptance of difference” is important, too. In this movie, Doss was very different from the others in the army. During the war, the first objective is to kill as many of the enemy as possible. But Doss does the exact opposite action to save as many lives as he can. As a result, the army accepted it because there were lives which were saved by him.

That is our presentation. We hope the war in Ukraine will be over as soon as possible and the world becomes peaceful and lovely from bottom of our heart. Please stay safe and healthy. Thank you for this opportunity. And we hope no war will occur in the future.

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### **PANDEMICS IN TERMS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY BASED ON GEORGE ORWELL'S ANTI-UTOPIA "1984"**

Social epidemics are part of history and to some extent influenced the course of state-building processes, having a direct impact on the formation of public opinion and consciousness of an individual and community.

Winston Smith, the main character of the dystopian novel "1984," was repeatedly influenced by totalitarianism. In fact, he is a representative of the public who became a victim, a rebel and a victim again. The totalitarian machine was intended to wipe out any resistance from the face of the Earth. "Who controls the past controls the future; whoever controls the present controls the past." It shows that in order to achieve its ultimate goal, the government controlled its own "truth."

The "truth" mentioned in the novel is clearly visible in the slogan that governs the totalitarian society of "1984": "War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength." It indicates an order of principles of power that contradict common sense and has elements of an oxymoron. The authorities only seek to spread their power, regardless of the real welfare of citizens, guided exclusively by their own interests.

People are affected by the government in Orwell's masterpiece. The dystopian world is terrifying. It caused big problems among humanity and people felt widespread pressure.

The totalitarian propaganda presented in the novel is a powerful tool of understanding the problems of such society under real conditions, as it clearly reveals the elements of the propaganda policy of Hitler and Stalin, who were gaining the favor of their supporters in this way.

The novel concretizes the idea that one person has enough courage and strength to go against the whole system, as if he is the one chosen to overcome the wall of cruel idealism, the illusion of social standards, but these intentions are destroyed. Precisely, the collective social pandemic makes such a goal practically unattainable. People gradually become pawns in the Big Brother's game. It leads to the fact that they feel a lack of inner strength, suffering from weakness, which is correlated with the ideological law of power. This influence occupies a key place in a dystopian world accompanied by a large number of social problems.

In "1984" there is no mention of the symptoms characteristic of physical epidemics, but those that the author discovers in the novel are much more dangerous for humanity, because they harm the greatest value in human life as a social unit – humanity. The government fears the possibility that the citizens will understand the game and rise together.

As far as I see, the government is too cruel and complicated in 1984. It controls every step of the person and doesn't give any chance for wellbeing and personal space. The Big Brother is the main character who ruins everyone's life. It became a common situation



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and everybody became depressed, lost the idea of life and started to live in an artificial way. There is the idea that one member of society can try to break the illusion of the social standards but this collective social epidemic doesn't let people do it. The ruling power and the effects of it destroy people's conscience and then humans stop being individuals.

Problems described in "1984" are relevant now. They show us the destruction of identity. "We're in an age where we're all more aware of media manipulation, fake news and alternative facts," Dr. Jerry Dickey said. I completely agree as the world became a bit different. Although there is more space for privacy nowadays, most people are easily manipulated by the Internet, advertisements, and posters.

That is why the authorities choose a simpler method, which consists of destroying apostasy in the very beginning, in fact, in the very thought of disobedience or apostasy. We note this in the example of the concept of "unanimity," which is used in the novel to depict the only correct view of the world and the only correct perception of power. "Big Brother is watching you" – this phrase is a leitmotif in the content structure of the entire novel and conveys the main idea embedded in the ideology of the analyzed society.

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### **GENDER BIAS: TAKING ROOT IN JAPANESE CULTURE**

The gender gap in Japan is a serious problem. In world rankings, Japan is placed 116th out of 146 countries, which is the lowest rank in the G7. According to a graph related to this, it can be seen that Political Empowerment for women in Japan is also significantly less when compared to the global average. It means that gender issues are not fully supported by Japanese government. Today, we are going to talk about gender bias taking root in Japanese culture. First, we will introduce what the gender gap is like and how serious it is in Japan. Second, we will examine the difference between *distinction* and *discrimination* according to one's lifetime. Third, we will talk about the gender issues in contemporary Japanese society. Finally, we will present our conclusion and propose some solutions based on our interpretation of the facts.

A good starting point for this discussion is to ask why there is such a gender gap in Japanese society. One important reason is that a lot of it is based on Japanese history and culture. To be more specific, we have cultural values which depend on gender and they are cultivated in our daily life. Sexism in Japan is a mixture of distinction and discrimination, and we tend to regard it as "natural." For example, in the United States it is illegal to discriminate against workers based on gender. This came about through great efforts by the women's rights movement. But such movements did not play a central role in Japanese history. Sexism in Japan exists so "naturally" that hardly anyone notices it. Therefore, it's not easy to solve this issue.

It has long been taken for granted in Japan that males and females are treated differently. How serious is the problem? We can say that we experience it even from the time when we are babies. When a boy is born, he will be wrapped in blue blankets. If it is a girl, she will wear pink blankets. *Randoseru*, Japanese standard school bags, also have a form of gender distinction: boys usually have a black bag, girls are expected to have a red one. For example, when I entered elementary school, I wanted a blue *Randoseru*, but my parents didn't allow that and bought me a red one.

Another example is *Shichi-go-san* (Seven-five-three) which is a traditional event to celebrate the healthy growth of children as they turn three, five, and seven years old. But the content between boys and girls are quite different. Girls can choose their kimono from various colors; however, boys cannot do so. They usually wear a black and simple kimono.

We have gender bias from our childhood as well, and it continues into adulthood without being noticed to any significant degree. The viewpoint on marriage is peculiar to Japan in that girls have to polish their cooking and sewing skills etc., to prepare for a married life; and husbands are often dominant, believing they are the boss in the

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house. In European countries, it is common for husbands and wives to cooperate with housework and childcare; something that is quite alien to the culture of our country. What these examples have in common is that they are based on the notion of “gender role.” These issues are not often regarded as “gender discrimination.” Japanese children grow up with daily inequalities since childhood, so we don’t notice the bias. Therefore, it has developed into a social problem. In addition, the social structure of Japan itself is designed to promote gender discrimination. This is what we call “systematic sexism” and it is one of the reasons that the situation continues until now. We would like to introduce three examples of systematic sexism.

In politics, the gender ratio is unbalanced. The Japanese parliament has much fewer female members than male ones. Even today it is more difficult for women to be a politician. Strong political connections among male politicians are a feature of the political landscape even today. It is also difficult for female politicians to balance their job and family life. If female politicians prioritize child-rearing, their supporters may not vote for them, and female politicians may be slandered. Systematic sexism is also seen in the workplace. The number of Japanese women in managerial positions has been growing very slowly over the last decades, although the number of women in regular employment remains low overall. Those circumstances are related to the perspectives on marriage. The custom that “women should do housework” remains in Japan. Therefore, a lot of Japanese women work part-time or as contract workers.

Women-only cars are evidence of a wider social problem too. It separates women on the train because it is considered as a solution for incidences of women being groped on crowded trains. However, it is debatable whether it is the real solution for those crimes.

In conclusion, we can say that sexual discrimination has taken root in Japanese culture as it has much to do with Japanese traditional culture. Moreover, gender role is regarded as “distinction,” but not as “discrimination” in Japan. Therefore, reforms of Japan’s gender gap have made very little progress compared to other countries.

In this way, these problems are unique to Japan. In order to solve them we would like to put forward two proposals. Firstly, we suggest reforms from “above.” It means that the best way for changing Japanese society might be through the introduction of some laws. Japanese people are said to respect rules seriously, so if the government produces stronger gender-equality laws, people would be inclined to follow them. Such rules are particularly effective in the workplace.

Secondly, we suggest reforms from “below.” That means creating awareness amongst men about how to notice unconscious discrimination. We would like to introduce some examples of movement in Japan. #Kuttoo movement is one of the biggest. It is influenced by #Metoo movement which is famous for sharing sexual harassment experiences on SNS. The #Kuttoo movement is to free women’s footwear choice in workplace. It comes from the Japanese word “*kutsu*” which means “shoes.” Before, there was a norm “women should wear heels in a workplace.” But a lot of women suffered from pain in their feet and posture related health issues. So many women have posted about their injuries on SNS and have called for much needed change in society regarding gender awareness.

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To sum up, there are no simple answers to reducing gender discrimination. But it needs to be considered in the light of the country's cultural history. Maybe then there will be more substantial progress.

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### **SOCIAL ISSUES BASED ON “INFERNO” BY DAN BROWN**

The book “Inferno” by Dan Brown explores the topic of the epidemic of overpopulation. The title of the novel is based on Dante’s “Inferno,” which was the first part of his poem “Divine Comedy.” “Inferno” is the Italian word for “Hell.” The setting of the story is Florence, where Dante lived and worked.

In the novel “Inferno,” Harvard professor Robert Langdon is recruited by the World Health Organization to help locate a deadly pathogen. The virus is believed to have been created by Bertrand Zobrist, a Transhumanist who thought that the world was in danger of collapse because of overpopulation.

#### **Overpopulation against the Black Death**

Dan Brown decided to explore the theme of global overpopulation, referring also to the Black Death of the 14th century, which killed a third of Europe’s population. In the novel, I found out the origin of the word “quarantine” which is well-known for all of us. Ships arriving in Venice from infected ports were required to be isolated for 40 days before landing. This practice was called quarantine.

In the novel, the growth of population is being compared to cancer, which spreads on the Earth, like cancer does in a human body: “Mankind, if unchecked, functions like cancer.” The antagonist, Zobrist, comes up with a terrible solution to sterilise one-third of the humanity. He declares that our species would not survive another hundred years.

The events of the novel reveal that a billionaire scientist Bertrand Zobrist believes that the human race is out of control, so humans are overpopulating the Earth and will exhaust its resources. He has no doubt that he is supposed to bring human overpopulation under control, but the solution he comes up with isn’t so great: Zobrist invents a virus, the purpose of which is to eliminate half the human race.

Therefore, the book assumes that our population will continue to grow quickly and exponentially. We all know what the situation looks like in countries like China and South India, but apart from this, many countries that have conducted campaigns to reduce the fertility rate, such as Iran and Turkey, are now trying to encourage people to have more children. It gives us the possibility to assume that if these trends continue, the population will level off after increasing to a little over 9 billion.

In fact, there is no magic number of humans that the Earth can hold. The real danger to our planet may not be our number, but our actions, because the challenge facing the environment is that consumption is rising much faster than population. We use natural resources daily, and we will undoubtedly run out of them one day. Furthermore, overpopulation leads to such problems as degradation of environment, water and food shortage, rise in unemployment, diseases, and even pandemics.



### Cultural Symbols

Speaking of symbols, Professor Langdon stands in front of the Gates of Paradise by Lorenzo Ghiberti when he notices a plaque on the wall of the Baptistry of Florence, with the inscription “the Black Death.”

In “Inferno,” the plague mask is used to depict the Black Death. This mask is described as a black mask with a long beak, allowing doctors to avoid contracting the disease during their visits to plague victims. By mentioning this mask the author refers to the disease, and correspondingly he refers to the theme of global overpopulation.

As a result, this symbol is significant to the understanding of this novel, and such notion as pandemic and its relation to the problem of overpopulation. Black Death caused a huge historical change described by most historians as a demographic catastrophe.

However, it is interesting that the author sees this disease not only as a cause of death and suffering, but also a reason for rebirth and changes. The plague created a series of religious, social, and economic upheavals, which had profound effects on the course of European history. In the novel the Black Death is seen as a new chance, a chance to be reborn: “Ask yourself, What followed the Black Death? We all know the answer. The Renaissance. Rebirth. It has always been this way. Death is followed by birth. To reach Paradise, man must pass through Inferno.”

Another symbol is the phrase “cerca trova,” which is essential to the understanding of the message carried by the author. When Langdon discovers a Faraday pointer in his coat pocket, it actually reveals a projection of Botticelli’s Map of Hell, based on Dante’s rendition in Inferno. From clues placed on the Map, Langdon eventually deciphers a message: “cerca trova,” Italian for “seek and ye shall find.” The phrase is famously painted in the background of “The Battle of Marciano” by Giorgio Vasari, which hangs in the nearby Palazzo Vecchio. This phrase “seek and find” acquires a meaning in the course of events in this novel: the characters have to take actions to discover new facts and details in order to save humanity.

### Conclusion

The major problem of this book really gives us food for thought. To think logically, we really cause lots of troubles to the Earth, we literally destroy its nature and resources by making our living comfortable. The author wants us to think about it, and even says that we should not stay silent and deal with the problem of overpopulation: “In dangerous times, there is no greater sin than inaction.”

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### **THE EPIDEMIC OF ADDICTION IN THE SERIES “EARLY SWALLOWS” BY NOVYI KANAL**

The World Health Organization regularly updates the list of addictions with new items. The most common are drug, alcohol, gaming, religious, and food ones. It is difficult to calculate the number of deaths from all types of addictions, but drugs alone take more than 500,000 lives every year. Addiction is a widespread problem for people of different walks of life. There are multiple reasons for developing an addiction such as trauma, stress, abuse, and family issues.

The problem of addiction was raised in a Ukrainian series “Early Swallows.” The action takes place at the beginning of the study year at the dormitory of the university. The careless and bright student life is struck by the horrific news: one of the students is found dead. A group of students starts their investigation under the guidance of their new university professor: a talented journalist and the winner of the Pulitzer Prize. In the course of events it becomes known that each “investigator” has a skeleton in their closet.

The first one is Vlad. He makes a good impression and is usually calm unless someone bothers him. The young man was brought up in a dysfunctional family where he and his mother were abused by Vlad’s stepfather. To release his aggression, Vlad secretly fights at an illegal underground club. Whenever there is a problem in the family he turns to the ring. During one battle, the boy faints and sees a hallucination, where he can see the strongest trauma of his. Vlad understands the reason for his addiction to fighting and by the end of the story he is able to overcome it.

The next character is Kira – a successful journalist, who was kept as a war hostage and was raped for one year. Concealing her trauma and not having fully recovered from it, Kira starts teaching at the university and conducting a journalistic investigation. The woman engages in compulsive sexual behaviors. Kira’s mother tries to persuade her to stay in therapy, but unsuccessfully. Then, the woman puts her daughter in a hospital by force. Kira realizes that the investigation she had started put her students in danger. She admits that she needs professional treatment and agrees to stay in therapy until she fully recovers.

The last one is Nazar. He comes from a wealthy family. While Nazar was growing up, his parents were always away – his father spent most of the time at work and his mother worked as a model in another country. Nazar does not see the point in achieving anything, as he is used to getting whatever he wants. The young man frequently does drugs and spends a lot of time partying. At one point, Nazar comes to the realization that for the first time in his life he met people that do really care about him and it makes him go to the rehabilitation center. By the end of the story, all the characters can fight their addictions, some with the help of other people and some on their own.

Nowadays there are more temptations and opportunities to become addicted than ever. One can run away from reality without even leaving the house. At the same time, there are more opportunities to be helped such as free hotlines, numerous clinics, and many others. It is important to mind the danger of addiction. It is important to be attentive to the people around, especially the closest ones and to help them if they face such a problem. It is important to ask for help if it is needed.

### TRADITIONS AND CHANGES

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#### CONTEMPORARY *TANKA* POEMS ON DEATH

Today, we would like to talk about *tanka*, a form of poetry unique to Japan, particularly about modern *tanka* dealing with death.

First, we will explain what *tanka* is. *Tanka* is a form of poetry unique to Japan, composed of 31 syllables (5, 7, 5, 7, 7). This form of poetry was known as *waka* before the modern era. However, *waka* and *tanka* are different.

Before the modern era, *waka* poetry was largely conventional, focusing on tradition, harmony, and techniques within the poem or rules for doing so, as *waka* poems were sometimes sent by people to each other as a form of greeting.

The content of *waka* poems was often about the seasonal atmosphere, romantic feelings, or one's love situation. In contrast, the modern form of poetry is called *tanka*, which is distinct from *waka*. *Tanka* must emphasize the rules, traditions, and techniques necessary in *waka*.

Modern *tanka* is free in theme and content and can be written about anything. Some *tanka* are just short sentences that ignore the poem's rhythm, while others are rhythmical and playful. There are no restrictions beyond the word count, and modern *tanka*'s main feature and attraction are that it is relatively free and accessible compared to traditional *waka* poetry. Some such modern *tankas* are introduced below.

「この味がいいね」と君が言ったから 七月六日はサラダ記念日  
'Because you said, "I like this taste," 6 July is Salad Anniversary.'

This is a simple *tanka* about a slight chance to commemorate an ordinary day in your life so you can feel the warmth of daily life. Modern *tanka* has a freedom and flexibility to express anything as a *tanka* in this way.

ただけだものあなたにはぼくだけだものだけだものぼくだけけだものだ  
'Only for you, only for me, only for me, only for you, only for you, only for me, only for you, only for you.'

This *tanka* emphasizes rhythm and a repetition of sounds rather than content. Of course, it is easier to understand when it is said aloud, but it is a delightful *tanka* with its repeated string of letters and the rhythm of the words. *Tanka* which incorporates this kind of exciting play on words is one of the charms of modern *tanka*.

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In addition to *tanka*, there is another form of Japanese poem which is commonly known as *haiku* (*hokku*). Although *haiku* and *tanka* seem very similar, they are very different. The differences between *haiku* and *tanka* are explained below.

Firstly, *haiku* overlaps with *tanka* in that it has its rhythm, as it has 17 syllables (5, 7, 5), but *tanka* can express more things using more characters.

Secondly, *haiku* must incorporate seasonal words, known as *kigo*, into the structure. On the other hand, *tanka* has no rules on the kind of words which are used, so it is freer to express seasons, feelings, and so on. One can say that *tanka* has a broader range of themes because it does not have to have seasonal elements.

For comparison, here is one modern *haiku*.

チューリップ 喜びだけを 持っている  
'Tulips, I have only joy.'

This *haiku* describes how beautiful tulips that blossom in spring are as if they have only joy. Compared to the previous poem, 'Because you said, "I like the taste," 6 July is Salad Anniversary,' both have a rhythm. Still, the *haiku* is shorter and differs from the *tanka* in that it shows the season's beauty to a greater extent.

Thus, *haiku* and *tanka* have their own merits and cannot be ranked superior or inferior, but significant differences between them can be seen.

Modern *tanka* can also be classified into different categories due to their free form. Tatsuya Kinoshita, the first named contemporary *tanka* poet, classifies them into three types according to the impression the reader receives such as 'empathy,' 'conviction,' and 'wonder.'

'Empathic' *tanka* is where a reader can strongly empathize with emotions and circumstances described in the poem, saying to him/herself, "Yes, that's it!" For example:

おばさんでごめんねというほんとうはごめんとかないむしろ敬え

'I say I am sorry I am old. Actually, I am not sorry, rather it would be best if you respected me.'

This *tanka* expresses the conflict of wanting to point out the rude attitude of young people toward an adult woman but pacifying oneself in consideration of the young age of the other person by using the Japanese notation. The conflict between what you want to say and whether you can say it or not has probably been experienced by all of us at least once.

A *tanka* poem with "conviction" is characteristic of a fresh and innovative point of view but is also persuasive enough for anyone to understand, where the reader can give a nod to what the poem is saying, even though they may not have noticed it before. For example, the *tanka* 'We laughed at each other's glasses as if we were stealing each other's world' describes two people exchanging glasses as stealing each other's world.

Seeing the world through the lens that another person typically uses to perceive the world is fascinating to describe as stealing the other person's world. However, it is a fresh way of describing exchanging glasses as stealing the world from each other.

The *tanka* of "wonder" is a type of *tanka* with such originality that it is difficult for everyone to understand, even if they read it several times. For example, 'You like it, the tap. It has three parts that stick out, and they are shining.' This *tanka* captures the tap's characteristics, but it is

difficult to understand how they lead to ‘like,’ making them challenging to comprehend fully.

So essentially, most *tanka* fall into one of the three categories listed above, although the classification may change somewhat depending on the poets and readers. As is clear from the above classification of *tanka*, the poet perceives the world from a comprehensive perspective. Even small events, acts, and feelings are seen from perspectives we do not often think of, and the reader receives various impressions from them. The variety of viewpoints can also be seen in multiple *tanka* poems on the same theme. This is one of the essential characteristics and attractions of *tanka* poetry.

To illustrate this, we will give one example: a *tanka* dealing with the theme of death.

What are your thoughts on death? What do you think death is like? Is it sad? Does it come one day? Is it going to another world? To illustrate this, here are some *tanka* poems about different kinds of death written by other poets.

The first is a *tanka* poem,

死は急にくるかゆつくりくるものか心わくわくするにあらねど

You never know whether death is something that comes suddenly or slowly although you don't get excited anyway.'

In this *tanka*, death is not the goal of a human being's life but approaches us in the middle of life. It also expresses that we do not know when death will come regarding its speed. The poet seems relatively unafraid of death's arrival, although he does not look forward to it. Death is often thought of as always being far away, but in this poem, there is a sense of caution that it may come soon and be classified as a convincing *tanka*.

Next is the *tanka* poem about the death of a family member:

もう二度と死ななくてよい安らぎに見つめてみたり祖母の寝顔を

'I gaze at my grandmother's sleeping face in peace that she will never have to die again.'

This *tanka* is interpreted as looking at the sleeping face of a grandmother who has gone to her eternal rest and being reassured that she has already died, which means that she will never have to die again. In this *tanka* we can see the limited nature of death, so to speak, that death comes only once to every human being, no matter how many others have died. This is also an interesting point of view. It emphasizes that no matter how often you lose people around you, death is really close to you only once.

What about this other example of a *tanka* poem?

死期を知り避けむともがき結局は死んでしまった男のはなし

'Here is a story about a man who knew his time of death and tried to avoid it but eventually died.'

It is a common sight to wish not to die even though you know your time of death and understand that there is nothing you can do about it. This is probably the way many people face death in dramas. In this *tanka*, death is represented as something people want to avoid. It



may be intensely colored as a *tanka* of sympathy. Alternatively, the poet may have composed the poem because he thought seeing such a man objectively trying to resist death was funny. Either way, the poem also focuses on the finality and cruelty of death, which in the end is unavoidable.

Here is another example of a *tanka* poem:

会った人が死んでしまうということをなんか思ったコンビニのレジ

‘The cash register at the convenience store where I thought somehow about the fact that a person I met would die.’

This *tanka* poem describes how the strangers who come to the cash register of the convenience store where she works subconsciously realize that they will all one day follow the same path of death. What is being depicted here is the equality of death. It may also be that seeing each person’s face with actual concreteness makes the death of another person, ‘someone dying,’ seem more familiar to them.

Finally, let us examine the *tanka* poem ‘Rainbow, do the buried goldfish see the other half of the ring buried in the ground?’ This *tanka* poem reminds us that the rainbow is in the shape of a circle and that the other half-ring, which has not appeared above ground, may be seen by the dead lying buried in the ground. People often say they become stars or go to the sky when they die. Still, this particular *tanka* primarily reflects the poet’s view of death, that the dead have always been sleeping in the ground and that they are not going to the other world, another world, or a faraway place but will always be in the world where they can see the same rainbow. One can say this is a *tanka* of conviction.

In this paper, we have highlighted five *tanka* poems dealing with death. Even though they all deal with the same theme of death, each poet has his or her point of view, style, and way of perceiving death, and we can even see the poet’s picture of life and death and their way of life in the very 31 syllables. This is also a result of the fact that each poet has a different point of view on a single thing.

Another characteristic of *tanka* poetry is that it often focuses on a single aspect of a theme or a single thing out of the many facets of that theme. One of the main characteristics of *tanka* is that we can gain multiple perspectives on a theme from reading *tanka* poems.

To conclude, we have described the breadth and characteristics of *tanka* poetry by comparing it with *haiku* and *waka* poetry. In addition, we also presented several *tanka* poems on ‘death’ and touched upon the multifaceted nature of a single theme and the breadth of the poet’s viewpoints. In essence, we can explore ways of dealing with multiple things from today’s *tanka*.

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### CHRISTMAS IN UKRAINE

Christmas is one of the most favorite holidays for Ukrainians because it is an opportunity to relax, spend time with family, and enjoy delicious dishes. This year, every holiday has a special touch. Since the beginning of the war, our values have changed, and all Ukrainians have one common dream – victory as soon as possible. However, the traditions that Ukrainians have followed from generation to generation should not be abandoned. Christmas is just one word, but it holds so much meaning, so many emotions, so much power. The power of Christmas is in its presence, in its effect on people. And the impact is nothing short of miraculous by any stretch of the imagination. For Ukrainian people right now, it primarily signifies the sheer fact of survival: we’ve made it to next year, and we managed to not only hold but fight back the devil. It’s also a sign of remaining human – that even in the hardest of times, the darkest days we, the Ukrainian people, don’t forget to honor our traditions, our heritage, the building blocks of our identity. Some people are surely going to say: why celebrate, why have time off? “There’s a war outside, go and fight, or do something for the war effort.” That’s quite a foolish argument. The power of such a holiday can’t be underestimated. That’s a recharge that all of us need. It gives us hope and the future to look forward to. Ukraine has a long history of immigration, its success is evident in how many Ukrainian diasporas there are in the world, and one of the things that made them so strong are traditions and culture. That’s the thing that allowed the Ukrainian people to remain Ukrainian people – to celebrate, to have a little moment of peace and happiness in the foreign environment, to live a little.

The main house decoration that you’ll see is the *didukh* (a sheaf of wheat stalks) that symbolizes our ancestors’ spirits. It is believed that during these holy days our ancestors return to spend time with their families. That is also why some Kutia and other dishes should be left on the table – as a treat for deceased relatives.

Since the evening of January 6, it is customary to sing carols with a big star in their hands: carolers sing Christmas carols. Boys and girls prepare special songs and poems that they take from house to house, entertaining their neighbors in exchange for sweet gifts and coins. It is believed that the more carolers come to the house, the more prosperity and wealth there will be in the family over the next year. Christmas songs are an integral part of the whole holiday season, too. In Ukraine, we have different types of Christmas songs – *koliadky* (comes from the word ‘calendar’ which starts with the birth of Christ) for Christmas and *shchedrivky* (comes from the Ukrainian word for generosity) for so-called Generous Evening, a.k.a. Ukrainians have a tradition of presenting the Christmas pageant in the form of a travelling group of people who interpret the meaning of Christmas that is called “*vertep*.”

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Christmas Lviv is a special place. Old traditions of Ukrainians are still preserved here, but at the same time they are constantly inventing something new, unusual and modern. The city of Lviv was named as the most attractive place to celebrate New Year's and Christmas holidays in Ukraine! Citizens of the city of Lviv treat Christmas and the Holy Evening very seriously and with great respect.

Traditional Ukrainian apparel, the roots of which trace back to the times of Kievan Rus, has many stylistic varieties. Its look depends on the ethnographic region, even though a homemade shirt, made of homespun cloth, has always constituted the basis for both male and female wardrobes. The main feature of this shirt (*vyshyvanka*) is the embroidery on the neck, cuffs and hem. Western Ukrainian apparel reflected its Polish and Hungarian historical past and was distinguished by complex geometrical patterns.

There are small buns made of yeast dough based on wheat flour. For the festive Christmas table, they are prepared in a special way: Ukrainians add the sweet filling, fry buns in oil and sprinkle them with powdered sugar. Such *pampushky* are very similar in taste to donuts.

This year, Ukrainians celebrated Christmas and the New Year against the backdrop of a full-scale Russian invasion, constant shelling, and blackouts. Many Ukrainians celebrated 2023 on the frontlines and could not be with their relatives during these holidays. Millions of Ukrainians celebrated Christmas with refugee status. In those hard times, many people were not sure how to celebrate the winter holidays and whether it was all right to make some preparations. Because how can you celebrate Christmas and have parties while there's a war going on in your country? However, then they say to themselves: "I have the right to live." And the war is now on the front lines so that I can live now. When we live life to the fullest, we can be useful, and we can give other people the opportunity to live better whatever it takes. This war is not the responsibility of one, but helping one or more people is within our power, it is our responsibility, and we can do it. Therefore, thanks to our brave soldiers, we had the opportunity to celebrate Christmas peacefully and we are quite sure that peace will come to our land soon.

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### CHRISTMAS IN WARTIME IN AND BEYOND UKRAINE

Christmas in Ukraine has a long and distinguished history and is deeply rooted in culture and religion. Many deeply rooted traditions in Ukrainian culture can be observed during the Christmas season, including building a *vertex* (a nativity scene) and singing traditional songs like *koliadky* and *shchedrivky*. Nonetheless, the problems posed to Ukrainians have forced people to modify their traditional celebrations to the new conditions. As a result, Christmas has been significantly impacted in Ukraine throughout these turbulent times. Christmas celebrations during the war were more modest than usual since families had to make do with what they could find. Christmas trees were frequently in short supply, therefore ornaments were made from whatever materials were available.

Despite the challenges Ukrainians faced during the war, they were still able to unite and celebrate their beloved customs. Communities developed strong friendships by sharing what little they had and enjoying each other's company. Many went to church to pray and to find comfort and strength in God. Religion played a big part in the celebrations.

Many Ukrainians have been pushed to leave their country today as refugees, frequently ending up in new countries with unfamiliar customs and cultures. Ukrainian refugees have stayed committed to honoring their cultural heritage despite the difficulties presented by their new situation, particularly during the Christmas season.

Ukrainian refugees cook traditional delicacies like *varenyky* and *kutia*, they decorate their homes with straw ornaments. Furthermore, Ukrainian churches and community organizations are essential in assisting refugees in preserving their cultural identity and celebrating their customs. In order to stay in touch with their loved ones, technology has also been a crucial tool for Ukrainian refugees. Social media and video chats have made it possible for families to enjoy Christmas together even when they are separated by hundreds if not thousands of kilometers of distance.

The resilience and strength of the Ukrainian people's cultural identity have been on full display during times of conflict and as refugees. Christmas has served as a symbol of hope, unity, and tradition that has allowed Ukrainians to come together in times of hardship and celebrate their shared cultural heritage. The commitment to preserving their cultural traditions in times of crisis has been a testament to the strength of the Ukrainian people and their ability to maintain a sense of identity and belonging, even in the toughest of times.

In conclusion, the Ukrainian people's unwavering dedication to their traditional heritage is demonstrated by the way they celebrated Christmas during the war and as refugees. The difficulties Ukrainians confront have compelled them to modify their traditional festivities in order to reflect the new reality while preserving the core of their cultural traditions. The Ukrainian Christmas celebration serves as a reminder of the value of tradition, faith, and community as well as the tenacity and power of the human spirit.

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### THE REFLECTION OF UKRAINIAN BELIEFS AND VALUES IN FOLKLORE

Ukrainian fairy tales arose in ancient times and reflect the ideas of the Ukrainian people about the world, work, family and social relations, as well as dreams and ideals, which were determined primarily by the long struggle of Ukrainians for a free and happy life.

The Ukrainian people suffered for a very long time from their own and foreign masters. Until the 20th century, the territories of Ukraine had been divided between different empires, which brought a lot of suffering to Ukrainians. The Ukrainian people have been fighting for their independence and freedom for a long time. Therefore, in Ukrainian fairy tales, many images of heroes who engage in a duel with dark forces have been created. Such tales are called heroic. They teach us to be strong and courageous, not to retreat from evil beings and to win despite difficult circumstances.

In the modern period, our struggle for freedom continues. Currently, Ukraine is fighting against the aggression of the Russian Federation, defending its right to life and freedom. Therefore, the heroes of Ukrainian fairy tales strengthen our spirit and fortitude in this struggle.

In general, the Ukrainian people are very peace-loving, they love their land and love to work. Work on the land or in the city has been the main occupation of Ukrainian people since ancient times. But when the native state is threatened by danger, hardworking Ukrainian people join the battle with the enemies.

#### **Mykyta Kozhumiaka**

Ukrainian folk fairytales are full of wisdom and vivid samples of human bravery and altruism. The story about Mykyta Kozhumiaka is one of many Ukrainian folklore examples that represent the strong attitude and cold mind of the true warrior, who defends his land and people not because of someone's ambitions or financial profit, but for freedom and peace.

This East Slavic folk hero (also "bogatyr") is a character from a legend, whose oldest prototype can be found in the Laurentian Chronicle.

A bogatyr is a stock character in medieval East Slavic legends, akin to a Western European knight-errant. Bogatyrs appear mainly in Rus' epic poems "bylinas." Historically, they were created during the reign of Volodymyr the Great (Grand Prince of Kyiv 980-1015) as part of his elite guards ("druzhina"), similar to Knights of the Round Table. Traditionally bogatyrs are described as fighters of immense strength and courage, rarely using magic while fighting enemies in order to maintain the "loosely based on historical fact" aspect of bylinas.

The fairytale of Mykyta Kozhumiaka tells that a dragon Zmiy Gorynych used to attack the lands of Rus and take beautiful girls as prisoners. Once he even kidnaps the daughter of the Kievan prince. To find out the dragon's weakness, the girl pretends to fall in love with



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him. Gorynych reveals to her that there was only one person that could defeat him: a tanner from Kyiv named Mykyta. The princess sends a letter by pigeon to her father, to the prince. Afterward, the prince goes to the tanner's house to ask for help. It takes a while for him to coax the bogatyr into fighting, and even though Mykyta refuses the wealth and power offered by the prince. That's why the prince decides to gather hundreds of orphans, who lost their families because of the dragon's terror, in front of Mykyta's house, and they beg the bogatyr to save them from Gorynych's attacks. It touches bogatyr's heart so deeply that he agrees to fight.

Then Mykyta goes to Gorynych's lair, and, after a long fight, the frightened dragon offers Mykyta to become allies and rule the world together. Mykyta demands that they plow the border of their halves of the world. For this purpose, he uses the dragon instead of a plowing horse. After they plowed the furrow across the whole world, Mykyta demands that they plow further to divide the sea as well. The foolish Gorynych obeys bogatyr and drowns in the sea.

The idea of the fairytale is to show that fame and respect can only be obtained by those who show their strength and wisdom while accomplishing their mission. Nowadays the actual meaning is not lost; likewise, the fairytale teaches how important it is to follow the right purpose for the sake of life and prosperity.

### Kotyhoroshko

Kotyhoroshko is a Ukrainian folk tale about a boy who was extremely clever, strong and noble. The boy was born after a woman who was washing clothes in the river saw a pea rolling along the path and ate it. She gave birth to a boy who was named Kotyhoroshko. The name Kotyhoroshko is related to peas, a legume crop, because "*Komu*" means "the one who is rolling" and "*Topox*" means "Pea" in Ukrainian. Peas were considered a symbol of life-giving force in agricultural societies: yield, fertility of livestock and prosperity.

There are several versions of this tale, but in this presentation I will take one of the most common and longest versions of the story. In my opinion, this fairy tale can be divided into four parts, for a better understanding of the plot of the story and its moral.

The first part of the tale tells about the appearance of Kotyhoroshko and his family that live in the village. It consists of father, mother, six sons and one daughter. The names of all the characters remain unknown except for the daughter, whose name was Olenka. This family works in the fields and earns food and living in this way.

By the way, this aspect of the tale presents ancient Ukrainian customs and traditions, because Ukrainians have been working in the fields and tilling the land since ancient times. Undoubtedly, such a tradition developed due to the extremely fertile Ukrainian land and the hard work of the Ukrainians themselves.

Before the birth of Kotyhoroshko, an accident happened, which caused his sister and six brothers to disappear. They got into the lair of an evil snake while they were working in the field.

It is interesting that in this tale, as in many other Ukrainian folk tales, the main thief is the snake, which is a three-headed, gigantic creature, very similar to a dragon.

When Kotyhoroshko grows up, he decides to go and free his brothers and sister from the captivity of an evil snake, he asks the local blacksmith to forge him a huge mace and his

mother to bake him bread for the journey.

This aspect of the tale also represents Ukrainian strength, dignity and determination in the fight for family, freedom and land. After all, even realizing that the snake is a terrible and gigantic creature that can be much stronger than him, Kotyhoroshko goes to free his brothers and sister. This fact is clearly confirmed by the events taking place in modern Ukraine. Since the very beginning of Russia's war and full-scale invasion of Ukraine, our people have been desperately fighting the invaders for their freedom. Ukrainians do not want to compromise with thieves who came to their land to kill, destroy and steal.

Bread is also a very important aspect of Ukrainian culture, because traditionally, Ukrainians welcome their guests with bread and salt, which is an ancient Ukrainian custom. For Ukrainians, bread is a symbol of nobility of intentions and friendship, and therefore hospitality. This symbol combines the basis of life – bread, thanks to which everything is born and lives, and the essence of life – salt, thanks to which everything remains itself. So, to meet with bread and salt means to respect a person for who he is, and to respect him as he is.

After that, he goes to the lair of the evil snake, where he successfully defeats it and frees his brothers and sister Olenka from captivity. After going home, the brothers, intoxicated by being in the snake's den, do not accept him into their family, so Kotyhoroshko leaves home in search of a better fate.

The second part of the tale tells us about the acquaintance of the main character with three men who also have extraordinary power. He meets Vernyhora, who can bend mountains, Vernydub, who can bend stout oaks, and Krutyvus, who diverts water to cross rivers. Assembled as a team, they go on their way. When it gets dark, they enter a forest house and decide to spend the night.

In the next few days, three of them went hunting, and one stayed in the hut to cook food. Every day, a small but powerful old man comes to the hut, demanding to step over the threshold. Vernyhora, Vernydub and Krutyvus treat the old man disrespectfully, so he eats all the food they had cooked and leaves. The guards do not admit this, telling the others that they fell asleep and did not have time to prepare food. On the fourth day, Kotyhoroshko himself stays in the hut. He lets the old man in, but the man tries to deceive him in the same way. Kotyhoroshko pinches his beard in an oak tree. But old man uproots the oak tree and runs away.

At this moment, the great and sincere hospitality of Ukrainians is also represented, because unlike other men, Kotyhoroshko is kind to the new guest, who then sneakily tries to harm the hero.

In the third part of the tale, Kotyhoroshko, together with his new friends, follows the footsteps of that old man, which leads to a pit. Vernyhora, Vernydub and Krutyvus are afraid to go down. They knit ropes and Kotyhoroshko gets into the pit. At the bottom there is a palace and a princess, who dissuades Kotyhoroshko from fighting with the old man. Kotyhoroshko still fights him, wins the fight and takes away the treasures with the princess. His comrades pull out three bags of jewels and the princess to the surface, and they decide to throw Kotyhoroshko down. He ties a stone instead of himself and when it is dropped, remains unharmed.

In the fourth part of the tale, the hero travels through the underworld, until clouds and rain come, and he decides to hide under a tree, and notices little birds that are drowning in their nest on the tree. Kotyhoroshko covers them with his shirt and protects them from the rain. A

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father bird arrives, thanks the hero for saving his children, and offers him help. Kotyhoroshko asks the bird to lift him to the upper world. In flight, the bird orders to take six pieces of meat and water to feed it. There is not enough meat, so Kotyhoroshko cuts off his calf and gives it to the bird. After arriving to the upper world father bird notices what Kotyhoroshko gave him as a food, the bird gives the calf back and brings living water. Sprinkled with water, the calf grows in place.

In the final part of this tale, after getting out of the underworld, Kotyhoroshko looks for Vernyhora, Vernydub and Krutyvus in the palace of the princess's father, who lied that they were the ones who saved her from the old and evil man in the underworld. He punishes his friends who betrayed him and marries the princess. The story ends.

In a nutshell, this fairy tale vividly demonstrates the indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian people and their sincerity. The main character, even after numerous betrayals and deceptions by other people, remains a kind and compassionate person. He is betrayed by his six brothers, after he saves them from a snake, his three new acquaintances also betray him after he gives them old man's treasures, and even after that, he helps the little birds, receiving sincere thanks from the papa bird. Thus, this fairy tale teaches children to be cautious and very careful with people, but at the same time to remain open and compassionate people. Also, this tale represents some ancient Ukrainian customs and traditions reflected in the first part of the tale.

At the end of my report, I want to note the similarity of this tale with the Japanese folk tale of Momotaro, about a boy who was born from a peach that floated down the river. He was also very strong and brave, and decided to go conquer the monster island with his sword. But on the way he meets three friends, a dog, a pheasant and a monkey who decide to help the boy in the battle with monsters. Arriving on the island, Momotaro and his friends defeat all the monsters and they beg him to spare them and take all their gold, to which he agrees and spares them.

In my opinion, this fairy tale is very similar in its plot to the fairy tale about Kotyhoroshko, the characters themselves are also not very different, because they are strong, brave, and most importantly, merciful. They know how to forgive even their worst enemies and help everyone who needs it.

### **How Olenka Became a Hard Worker**

Ukraine is a country with a strong spirit, unique cultural traditions and nature. However, these are not the only fortunes: it is also a country of hardworking people. Taking into account the availability and quantity of fertile land, Ukraine has a long history of being among the leading producers of agricultural products in the world. Therefore, it is not surprising that in fairy tales much attention is paid to work on the fields.

Today we would like to draw your attention to the Ukrainian folk tale "How Olenka Became a Hard Worker." The plot of the fairy tale is that a girl from a working rural family with many children was very lazy, this upsets her father. However, there was a young man who wanted to marry Olenka for her personality. The young man believes that she can be caring and diligent. He promises his potential father-in-law that he will make her a working woman.

According to the Ukrainian tradition, the wife went to live in the husband's house with his whole family. Her father-in-law who is the head of the family has a habit of asking each

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family member before eating what he or she has done during the day. Of course, Olenka never works, so she does not get dinner at all on the first day.

The next morning she is hungry and thinks that she should do at least something, so she brings a bucket of water. For this, the strict father-in-law orders to give her a mug of water.

On the third day, Olenka again brings a bucket of water to the house and helps her mother-in-law make a dish called kulesha.

**Kulesha** is a Ukrainian dish made from corn flour. It is especially loved in the mountainous regions of Ukraine, the Carpathians.

When Olenka helps to cook kulesha, her father-in-law shares the dish with her. Later, Olenka begins to work alongside other family members. When Olenka's father visits her in her new family, he cannot believe how hardworking she is, and is very pleased with it. Like Olenka's husband, of course.

No one appreciates or tolerates lazy people. But, as the fairy tale teaches, these people just need the right approach and motivation. This approach to Olena is demonstrated by her father-in-law. The main idea of the fairy tale is that in order to receive any good (food, clothes, shoes or other things), one must work, and hard work is the only tool that helps people stay human and reach prosperity.

In addition to fairy tales, there are many proverbs about work in Ukraine. For example:

- The master's work is great.
- He who gets up early gets things done.
- Good for the blacksmith who forges with both hands!
- You can't build a house without an ax.
- If you want to eat kalachi, don't sit on the stove.

"The real treasure for people is the ability to work," Aesop rightly wrote. And if one works diligently, the result will not be long in coming. Because the sweetest of all fruits is the result of own work.

Everything beautiful and most necessary in the world is created by human labor. Work glorifies a person, makes their life better, more interesting, enriches them spiritually.

After Ukraine's victory in the war, a lot of work will need to be done, and Ukrainians understand this and are ready for it. In my opinion, it is hard work that will allow not only to revive what has been destroyed, but also to achieve a new standard of living which is closer to that of developed countries.

### "Forest Song" by Lesia Ukrainka

I, in turn, want to tell about a literary fairy tale, which is presented by the work of Lesya Ukrainka, in particular in her drama "Forest Song." The poetess is a key figure in Ukrainian literature, because she is a person who inspires to overcome difficulties and obstacles on the path of life. Her poetry sets an example for Ukrainians to overcome difficult life trials, to work and not lose optimism. The writer suffered from a serious disease, bone tuberculosis, so any movement hurt her, but she still enjoyed life, was resilient and looked for reasons to be happy, to see beauty around her.

The fairy-tale drama "Forest Song" is particularly popular because it is based on folklore legends about Mavka, the child of the forest and its protector.



Ukrainians have many legends about forest dwellers – souls who live in lakes, rivers, mountains and forests and communicate with people from time to time.

The plot is based on the legend that Mavka, the daughter of the forest, falls in love with the magical music played by the young man Lukash near the tree where she lives. Having fallen in love, she must make a decision to either give up love or her calling to protect the forest. Mavka decided to move to the village where her lover lives and become his wife. But when she chose love, it is not so easy for her to get used to the human way of life, to find a common language with the villagers, who are mostly focused on material well-being. She had to perform ordinary human work, which seemed cynical and unnatural to her. Having lost contact with the forest, with nature, Mavka began to lose her personality, her cheerfulness. Her beloved did not pay attention to her, he constantly had fun with friends and often forgot about her.

Mavka, who lives far from her forest, gradually loses her vitality. However, she did not give up, she wanted to stay with her beloved in spite of everything. But he cheated on Mavka and found another girl who is used to village life.

In the end, Mavka returned to the forest, and nature again gave her beauty and vitality. Only in harmony with nature does Mavka feel happy and free from greed, envy and evil.

This work by Lesya Ukrainka is full of picturesque descriptions of nature, it calls to appreciate its beauty and protect it, to live in harmony with nature. Also, “Forest Song” affirms the opinion that a person should remain himself, he should preserve his natural essence and moral values.

Each of these fairy tales reflects the eternal ideas of Ukrainians about nature, work, the Motherland and form the moral code of Ukrainians based on the principles of beauty, goodness and love. This is exactly what Ukrainians are fighting for and we believe that we will win!

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### SYMBOLS OF NATURE IN UKRAINIAN BELIEFS

#### Mythical Context of a Natural Phenomenon

Nature has always had a unique, sacred meaning in the beliefs of ancient Ukrainians. Rivers, forests, the sky – everything that surrounded our ancestors had its own spirit and was endowed with human features. In the imagination of our ancestors, the stormy river sang loud songs, the storm shouted, full of human-like anger, and ancient forests often appeared in people's imagination thoughtful and full of strange sadness. Ancient Ukrainians lived in this subconscious, emotional world, and that is why concepts or symbols like *Water, Earth, and Sun* played a big role for our ancestors. They always accompanied the life of our ancestors, they were the main thing that people had once believed in.

**Water** is one of the oldest and most profound symbols in the imagination of Ukrainians, which combines plenty of counterintuitive principles. Water often meant infinity, as a steady unstoppable whirlpool. It also had the meaning of the beginning of human life, and sometimes the end of it – as a stream that carries human souls to the afterlife (this is also reflected in traditions like the bathing of a baby or the canonical washing after death). According to the old belief, Water was sacred and cleaned a person, washed away sins and misfortunes. Water was a symbol of chastity and mystery at the same time, because no one knew what dangers could be hidden deep in the waters.

The next important symbol for the Ukrainian people is **the Sun**, which often embodied the image of God. Even today, the sun appears in human imagination as something special, bigger and deeper than human beings. The sun embodied joy, happiness and calmness that were brought to human life along with sunshine. It is closely connected to another symbol, which became the second incarnation of the sun: **Fire**.

For a long time, **Fire** has been considered a vessel of light and calmness of human life. The fire embodied home and coziness, and at the same time it was its talisman. You can often hear the phrases “*living fire*” or “*holy fire*” in Ukrainian, since fire was a symbol of the life-force that burnt in a person, it also embodied a shrine that illuminated a person's life and was the greatest danger for the evil forces. Fire also embodied a landmark that prevents a person from getting lost in the world. In Ukrainian culture, the embodiment of Fire as a human talisman is *Vatra* – a large bonfire that protected shepherds in the fields from evil and misfortune, a shrine that brought happiness to those who cared for it. *Vatra* was prayed to, people took care that the flame would never go out, because only its eternal flame could protect them.

#### Symbolism of Flowers in the Beliefs of Ukrainians

Flowers are so closely connected with human life that we can say flowers are part of human history. It is not surprising that many plants have become symbolic. They often symbolize a nation, culture, language, aesthetic ideals.

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In Ukraine, flowers have been honored for centuries. Many legends, songs, traditions have kept the memory of the people about them. They were widely used in rituals, everyday life or just as decoration.

The first flower which is often mentioned in Ukrainian culture is **sunflower**. Sunflower symbolizes devotion and loyalty. This flower has long been considered a symbol of love for the Motherland. When the sun sets behind the horizon, the sunflower sadly lowers its head – it symbolizes a person in a foreign land who misses their native land. But when the sunflower turns to the sun, it means that a person turns to their Motherland in thought, word and deed.

**Cornflower** is a symbol of simplicity and tenderness. Ukrainians believe that cornflowers have significant magical powers against evil spirits, bad luck and misfortunes. The cornflower has been sung about since ancient times, the eyes of loved ones are compared to it (“*Oh you, cornflower eyes...*”), wreaths are woven and decorated. Cornflowers have a special meaning for young people: brides were often sprinkled with a bunch of cornflowers at the wedding, and girls often washed their faces with cornflower infusion to make their beauty inaccessible to evil spells.

**Poppy** is a symbol of preservation and procreation of the family. The fragile poppy flower means the immortal memory of the people. In ancient times, they believed that the field after the battle was covered with poppies in the spring. And girls whose families were killed, embroidered poppies and wore a wreath of seven poppies, thus giving a promise to protect their family. Since ancient times, Ukrainian people have believed in the magical power of poppies and their ability to protect from all evil.

**Mallows** are an ancient talisman of the family and home which can shield from all evil. According to popular belief, the good souls of our ancestors settle on the mallow and protect us. Previously, people used to address the mallow with the following words: “*Bless, guardian-mallow, to meet a new day, to wait for joy, to love everyone and everything and never to sin.*”

**Marigolds** are considered the main talisman of our land. They grow everywhere: on porches, in parks, squares and in the streets. This is especially noticeable in autumn, when marigolds warm us with their bright colors. It has long been customary to plant marigolds in the yard where a boy was born. So marigolds blaze everywhere with bright colors. They not only decorate our lives, but also unite our hearts and souls, for luck and for fate. Today, the marigold is a symbol of the deep national and democratic basis of society, its ability to survive even in adverse conditions, a symbol of youth and beauty of our country.

Every nation has its own symbols. By the name of the symbol, you can find out which nation we are talking about. Ukrainians considered plant folk symbols to be the shrines of their people. The plant symbols of Ukrainians include *sunflowers, mallow, marigolds, cornflowers, poppies* and other flowers. They have long embodied the beauty of our Ukraine, the spiritual power of the people, and their love for the native land.

### Ancient Ukrainian Beliefs about Animals and Birds

For our ancestors, nature was their native home. That is why they viewed animals as endowed with human features. Ancient Ukrainians used to have an inseparable connection with flora and fauna. Moreover, animals were considered to be not only equal to humans, but even higher and smarter. That's why ancient Ukrainian beliefs are characterized by adoration of nature and reverence towards it, but not “*fear.*” The idea of totem animals among the ancient *Slavs* formed a rich and diverse folk heritage.

**Horse.** The horse was one of the central images in ancient Ukrainian mythology and was associated with the Sun. People believed that the Sun travels across the sky in a horse-drawn chariot during the day, and swims across underground rivers at night using ducks. The horse, a mediator between the worlds, is able to predict the future. A horse can predict death, wedding or spring twelve days before it comes. According to the beliefs of ancient Ukrainians, a horse could cause both success and death. In ancient times, it was common to bury a horse with the dead. The horse was supposed to transport the dead to another world, and to serve the master there as well. This is confirmed by the research of numerous ancient burials, including *Kozak* burials.

**Cat.** Cats are pets, protectors of the home and family, keepers of the hearth and children. They were the main characters of numerous fables, songs, fairy tales and sayings. The attitude towards them was always special – they were loved, protected and respected by the people. A cat is a symbolic being which can travel between Day and Night, Good and Evil. It travels through the world of the living and the dead, can be a guardian spirit, a predictor of good and a patron. On the other side, it is a small demon, a thief who causes damage, a messenger of dark forces. The cat was often associated with the protective spirit of the house – *domovyk* (house-elf). Therefore, when a family moves into a new house, a cat is often the first to be brought in.

**Rooster.** The rooster has long been respected by the Ukrainian people. He is considered to be a symbol of the sun and fire, a harbinger of the early dawn, a guardian of the economy. With his crowing, he seems to wake up the Sun from a night's sleep. People believe that the crowing of a rooster drives away all evil and bad. The rooster is a time guard. He sees, hears and knows everything. The rooster crows in time with Nature and the Universe at certain times of the day and night: *at midnight – the first roosters, then the second roosters, and finally, in the morning – the third roosters*. This bird appears in many ancient rituals of the calendar, which belong to the agrarian and family-domestic cycles. The rooster is believed to bring good luck, strength, and harvest. The rooster also symbolizes warriors, victory, nobility, and bravery. A few months ago the figure of a rooster was found in *Borodyanka (Kyiv region)*. It was still standing on the shelf after the shelling and later became a symbol of national stamina. This shows that bird worship exists even nowadays.

**Swallow.** The swallow symbolizes a happy family life, kindness, love and tenderness. The love and respect of our people for the swallow is revealed in proverbs and proverbs. For example: *“Like a swallow with little swallows,”* they say about a mother who loves and respects her children. *“Chirps like a swallow.”* Good hosts live where a swallow has built a nest. It also protects the home from thunder, lightning, and fire. Therefore, it's a great sin to destroy its nest. People did not dare to kill it, because they could bring trouble to their home. In general, the swallow symbolizes a girl. Girls' beauty is often compared to swallows in folklore: *“Oh, beautiful girls are like swallows on our side. But here – like crows.”*

Thus, over the centuries, a peculiar system of rituals and customs related to animals and birds has developed in Ukraine. All this was supposed to be a contribution to the prosperity of the family. Ukrainians followed these customs quite strictly, because they believed in the magical power of animals. Some of these customs have survived to this day.

### **“Shadows of the Forgotten Ancestors”**

The theme of nature, mysterious and spirited, is reflected in Ukrainian literature. The brilliant example of it is novel *“Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors”* by Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky., who was a famous Ukrainian writer.

The novel was based on a famous travelling plot, similar to the drama *Romeo and Juliet* by *Shakespeare*. The romantic relationship between *Ivan Paliychuk* and *Marichka Gutenyuk* was born in background of old family hostility, revenge and faced challenge all time. After all, their love was destroyed by envy people and supernatural forces. Firstly, Marichka died during a flood, while Ivan was far away and earned some money. Trying to relief his pain, Ivan married other woman, named Palagna. But he couldn't just live after the loss of sweet one. Then he went insane, and finally fell into a deep abyss. That's how a story of Gutsul Romeo and Juliet was ended unhappily.

However, the reproduction of traditions of the Ukrainian pagan worldview is also unique in the work. Heroes, unlike others, are able to see the evil force hidden in the forests of the *Carpathians*, they see nature alive, spirited, feel the emotions of mountains and forests – they see nature exactly as it was described by our ancestors, Marichka and Ivan are those shadows of the forgotten past, the reproduction of forgotten traditions. They are connected to each other, connected to nature subconsciously, which makes Nature a kind of third main character, some kind of background. Symbolic images of nature complement the story of the heroes, they color the story. For example, the symbol of Water is the most frequent in the work, and appears in various forms: as the song of the mountains, their whisper, as the blood of nature and its life. Water is always in change – sometimes it breaks into a lively dance, then falls into melancholy, then suddenly goes mad. It is interesting that its “emotions” are in line with the emotions of the heroes, their condition, as for example during the fight between the Gutenyuks and the Paliychuks, when the river raged like an echo of the characters' actions.

There are also other images in the work, such as the Sun or Fire in their classic images of luminaries and talismans. In addition, the traditions associated with them are reproduced, for example, the tradition of *Vatra*, the eternal fire, which in answer to the care of shepherds protects their household.

50 years ago the world saw a masterpiece of cinematography – the film *“Wild Horses of Fire”* by *Serhiy Paradzhanov*. It is a screen version of M. Kotsiubynsky's novel (1965), dedicated to his centennial anniversary. The film reveals the whole essence of the deep heritage of Ukraine, it allows the viewers to immerse themselves in Ukrainian ethnos and the traditions of the worldview of the Ukrainian people, and also to feel the mysterious spirit of nature, the horrifying mystique of its soul.

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### THE HOLIDAY OF IVANA KUPALA

Ukrainian people have a lot of national traditions that date back to ancient times. Some of them arose even before the adoption of Christianity. It is surprising that these ancient traditions have reached our days and inspire modern Ukrainians.

In general, **Ukrainian people** strongly feel their own identity. It turns out that modern youth like wearing national clothes, singing Ukrainian songs and speaking Ukrainian (although they also know other European languages). Ukrainian is not only fashionable, but also something that all Ukrainians carry in their hearts. It unites us and gives spiritual strength in the struggle for our freedom.

National holidays play an important role in the life of Ukrainians. These are not just days off, but first of all an opportunity to learn more about our history, beliefs, mythology and folklore.

One of such holidays is Ivana Kupala. I know that the Japanese have many holidays related to the seasons of nature. We celebrate Ivana Kupala in summer, on certain days.

Before the adoption of Christianity, Ukrainian people followed Pagan traditions, then many of them were transformed and adapted to fit the new religion. However, one Pagan holiday has survived in its original form to this day. Ivana Kupala is celebrated on the night of July 6-7, but historically the holiday was celebrated on the day of the summer solstice. This holiday symbolizes the birth of the summer sun – it was called Kupalo. Who is Kupalo?

According to one version, the name of the holiday comes from the word “bathe” (“купатися”), according to another, Kupala was the name the God of flowers, earthly gifts.

According to the beliefs of ancient Ukrainians, on the night of July 6-7 all evil spirits come out of the underworld into the world of the living and wander among people.

Therefore, on this night, the ancient Slavs burned bonfires, the pure fire of which could scare away evil spirits. Bonfires were lit near water basins, so that water and fire could help to expunge evil spirits.

In addition, the fern flower blooms only on this magical night. It is a mythical flower. No one has ever seen it. No one knows what it really looks like. But in ancient times Ukrainians believed that the one who finds a fern flower will be happy in love.

By the way, the celebration of the Ivana Kupala holiday has now been restored in Mykola Hohol National Museum. If you ever get to this museum on July 6-7, you will see Ukrainian boys and girls in national clothes light a bonfire, jump over it (to cleanse themselves from the evil spirits), swim in the river (also to cleanse themselves of all evil); girls throw wreaths down the river (so the wreath would flow to the bank of the beloved), and also look for a fern flower.

This is a stunning holiday, a theatrical event that allows children and adults to immerse themselves in Ukrainian customs and traditions.

### The Main Symbols of the Holiday

***Kupalo and Marena.*** People would make an effigy of Marena (a goddess of the winter, who exhausted the earth and sent diseases and troubles on humans) and Kupalo (a god of flowers) of straw or sticks and burn it on the fire, sometimes they threw the effigies in the water.

***A bonfire.*** One of the main attributes of the Ivana Kupala is a huge bonfire, through which people jump over alone or in pairs. Apart from fun, it was a magical ritual and meant cleansing. It was also believed that if lovers could jump over the bonfire without separating their hands, their love would last a lifetime. The fire scared away the evil spirits, which were believed to leave the otherworldly place on the days of Kupala to the world of living.

### The Traditions of Ivana Kupala

***Divination.*** Before the holiday, girls wove wreaths from wildflowers, because our ancestors believed that on this day all the plants have magical properties. At the end of the holiday, when it got dark, the girls went to the river, where they attached candles to the wreaths and let them float on the water. Next, the girls had to watch the wreaths. Wherever it floats, the bridegroom will come from there. But if the wreath sinks, it predicts a serious illness or death. If the wreath remains in place, the girl will be unmarried for another year. But the boy had to catch the wreath on the other bank – this meant that he would take the girl who wove and released the wreath as his wife.

***Swimming.*** Bathing in open water is considered as well-known tradition of the night. According to the omens, this rite will help cleanse the soul and body, as well as cure diseases. Even dew was considered miraculous on Ivan Kupala. It was enough to wash with it to prolong one's youth.

***Fern flower.*** One of the most romantic beliefs of Kupala is about the mythical fern flower, which supposedly appears on the Kupala night. According to legend, it blooms for just one moment on the shortest night of the year. It is believed that only a young man, often unmarried or the only son in the family, can find the flower. Due to the fact that it is guarded by an evil force, the flower is so difficult to obtain. But if it succeeds, the lucky person will receive the gift of seeing the future, the ability to understand the language of animals and birds, heal the sick, and find treasures hidden in the ground.

There is a belief that on the night before Ivan Kupala, trees move from place to place and talk to each other with the noise of their branches. And only the one who found the fern flower can see it.

Mykola Gogol used folk tales about fern blossoms in his story "The Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala." On the basis of folk beliefs, the writer describes how that fern flower should look and which undead guard this magical flower. This is a small red flower with an unknown power that lights up the lawn and everything on it. Also, he writes that there are incredible riches under the flower.

## TRADITIONS AND CHANGES

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### **Ivana Kupala in the 21st Century**

Ukrainians still celebrate the holiday of Ivana Kupala. It is significantly different from the original holiday, because one of the purposes of the holiday was to find a partner and have some rest before the heavy harvest. However, we still make a fire and jump over it, we always swim in open water, and many girls look forward to this day to guess their fate.

In 2022, we could not celebrate the holiday of Ivana Kupala because of the war. But we hope that next summer we will get together at the Mykola Hohol National Museum with all the students of our university to embrace Ukrainian culture and history. We will sing songs, dance, swim, and most importantly, celebrate the victory of Ukraine.

# Perspectives of Comparative World Literature and Cultural Studies

Collection of research papers by students  
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## Volume III