

## REVIEW

### UKRAINIAN AND ENGLISH PROSE WORKS IN THE LIGHT OF EXISTENTIALITY

*Devdiuk I. V. Existential Discourse of the Ukrainian and British Prose Works of the Interwar Period. Ivano-Frankivsk: Publisher Kushnir H. M., 2020. 484 p.*

Scientific interest in the comparative and typological studies of multinational literary phenomena, considered in a discursive aspect, has noticeably revived recently. Ivanna Devdiuk's monograph belongs to this type of research. There is no doubt about the topicality and relevance of the research since it carries out a comparative analysis of the existential discourse of Ukrainian and British interwar prose works for the first time in Ukrainian literary science. The subject area of the research is the intellectual, philosophical, and psychological prose of the interwar time (1918–1939), marked by the congenial features of the artistic implementation of existential images and motifs at the level of character presentation, conflict development, and compositional structure.

The monograph substantiates and consistently implements the research strategy represented in the introduction. Literary, philosophical, culturological, cultural, and historic problems, considered in the first part, are the theoretical and methodological basis of the practical sections, which focus on the artistic modifications of the spatiotemporal existence in the works of Ukrainian and British authors, the analysis of emotional and behavioural paradigms of the characters in borderline situations as well as the specifics of understanding the entity through the prism of the category of sex.

In the first section, the author singles out the comparative component of the study, determines the methodology of her work and argues the need for a set of methods (comparative and typological, phenomenological, existential, hermeneutic, cultural and historical, psychoanalytic, etc.), which, depending on the problems of subsections, allowed to solve the outlined tasks. Basing on the works of Ukrainian and foreign literary critics, the author justifies the use of the typological analogies classification by D. Diuryshyn, according to which an important condition for the validity of comparative studies is a systematic coverage of all the typological relations at the level of ideological and thematic proximity, social and political, cultural, philosophical and world views, psychologically conditioned analogies, etc. These attitudes form a set of the research tasks aimed at elucidating the dynamics of the critical reception of the existential discourse of Ukrainian and British literature of the XX – early XXI centuries, determining cultural and historical, individually authorial factors of its actualization in the literary and modernist context of each country, defining common and distinctive features of the ideological and thematic, plot and image manifestation of the existential concepts in the fiction of the interwar period.

It should be noted that a thorough analysis of the problem of existential discourse as a subject of comparative analysis, presented in the first section, deepens and concretizes the theoretical and methodological aspects of the study of the artistic phenomena created in a typologically similar cultural and historical context. Defining “existentiality” as the central ideological category of the research, Devdiuk I. V. dwells in detail on the differences between the concepts of “existentialism”, “existentialist aesthetics”, and “existentiality”. The first one is understood by the researcher as the direction in philosophy, the second one – as the scientific theory of aesthetics, and the third one – as the qualitative specificity of the relation of the person to being, artistically shown in existential. In fact, the focus of the research is on the existentials that appear in the texts as phenomena.

The monograph raises a number of important historical and literary issues, including the reception and transformation of the worldview ideas of existence philosophy in the Ukrainian literature of the twentieth century, starting with the early models and ending with the middle of the twentieth century. Ivanna Vasylivna considers the existential worldview to be spiritually close to the mentality of Ukrainian and British, and, therefore, its

penetration into the cultural space of Ukraine and Britain was natural, because, in the works of H. Skovoroda (Ukraine), W. Shakespeare (Britain), writers of the XIX century one can trace the tendencies which have found the full-blooded embodiment in the modern thinking of representatives of the new generation. Taking into account the above considerations, the author thinks about existentialism as a worldview and stylistic dominant of the Ukrainian and British interwar prose, which correlates with the modernist intentions to subjectivization of the creative process.

The theoretical positions have formed an existential conceptsphere of the practical parts focused on the basic ontological problems of "being-in-the-world", "choice (borderline situation)", "gender existence" in the prose of the Ukrainian and British authors. Taking into consideration the works of modern writers (V. Melnyk, I. Kurylenko, R. Movchan, S. Pavlychko, H. Tokman, Zh. Yashchuk, etc.), I. Devdiuk reveals the key patterns of functioning of the philosophical ideas, artistic images, motives of the existential philosophy in Ukrainian and British literature, confirming her generalizations with successful examples from the works of V. Pidmohylny, M. Khvylovy, Ye. Pluzhnyk, M. Mohyliansky, V. Woolf, A. Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, V. S. Maugham, and others. It is important that in the first place in the work – the literary aspect, the author skillfully "balances" between theory and practice, focusing primarily on the problem of the artistic actualization of existential ideas in the prose works of Ukrainian and British authors.

At the centre of the comparative analysis of the third section there are the ontological problems of human existence in space and time ("here and now") in the social and cultural, geopolitical, national, and individual aspects. Particularly successful in the monograph is the analysis of the topos of the "city" as an urban existence caused by ambivalent experiences of the realities of the metropolis. The researcher's views on the city as a kind of metaphor of modernity, in which the expression acquires a new worldview, different from the traditional, is worth noting. Focusing on the peculiarities of the actualizing the experience of characters in the city, I. Devdiuk emphasizes the mode of fallenness, by which the Ukrainian (V. Pidmohylny and I. Vilde) and English (D. Lawrence, R. Aldington, A. Huxley) writers indicate the state of the characters in borderline situations when the "I" either projects itself into the future, or plunges, "falls" into everyday existence, or abandons himself. As a result of a careful analysis of different images of the city, V. S. Devdiuk comes to a reasonable conclusion about the dominance of a concentric model of the city in the Ukrainian prose works, the semantics of which indicate the authors' understanding of the city as an important cultural and educational centre. Instead, in English novels, the eccentric and eschatological visions of the metropolis are more noticeable, signalling the ideas of destruction and decline.

The typological study of space and time existence in Ukrainian and English works of the interwar decades finds a logical continuation in the fourth section, devoted to the analysis of the textual representation of the emotional and volitional states of the characters who face a choice between themselves and others, between freedom and dependence, authenticity and non-authenticity. Revealing in the works of M. Mohyliansky, Ye. Pluzhnyk, V. S. Maugham, V. Woolf, and others, different modes and levels of the characters' awareness of their own existence, the researcher emphasizes the transcendental ability of the phenomena of 'creativity', 'solitude', 'love', 'death', etc, which are considered an important prerequisite for the personages' existential awakening and access to a higher level of self-awareness.

Guided by the principles of a comparative approach, I. V. Devdiuk pays special attention to the problem of analogies and differences in the writers' descriptions of the crisis consciousness which asks and searches. The profound study of Ukrainian and British intellectual prose works leads the author to the convincing conclusions about the predominance of the decadal denial of the reality in the English works, while in the works of Ukrainian authors, a tendency to search for the national and cultural identity in the communicative dialogue between "I" and "You" is observed.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the monograph of Ivanna Devdiuk makes a positive impression by the author's awareness of Ukrainian and world literary context, the specifics of the modern approaches to the literary interpretation of texts, the ability to systematically present the results of the study. The above statements give grounds to assert that the analysed book is a thorough scientific study that will promote the further study of the cultural interactions of our literature with the world's artistic and intellectual discourse. It will be useful for philologists in preparing special courses on the history of Ukrainian and English literature, comparative literature, and discursive analysis.

*Zhylenko Iryna,  
Doctor of Philology, Associate Professor  
Sumy State University*