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TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE NOVEL "KUKOLKA" BY LANA LUX

Abstract. Authors who write in a foreign language have long been of interest to critics and literary scholars. As mediators between languages and cultures, they level national, ethnic and cultural boundaries, giving one or another "national" literature new literary and aesthetic impulses. At the same time, in the era of globalization and (trans)migration, the texts by such authors, characterized by their cultural, linguistic and literary hybridity, acquire a new expression and require reinterpretation. That is why, in recent decades, new research approaches have appeared. They try to overcome the traditional thinking in national categories, as well as limiting the research focus to the biographical or thematic level.

The article analyses the latest approaches to studying the literature of transnational authors. They are characterized by hybrid identities, freely choose their place of residence and the language of literary expression, thus these facts make their placement in national and cultural grids impossible. It is the rooting of these authors in at least two literary and cultural traditions that contributes to the formation of their literary creativity and is often reflected in their texts at various levels.

One of such transnational authors is the modern German-speaking writer of Ukrainian origin, Lana Lux, whose work still remains unreflected in national science. The conducted analysis of the transnational features of the poetics in her novel "Kukolka" allows us to substantiate the thesis that it, with its cultural and linguistic polyphony, belongs to transnational literature, the characteristic elements of which are manifested at the biographical-

referential, thematic-content and text-aesthetic-structural levels of poetics. The author's playing with stereotypes, the use of various forms of multilingualism, dynamic characters, etc. not only overcome the dichotomy between "own" and "other", but also show the interpenetration of different nations, languages, cultures and literatures.

Keywords: literary multilingualism, migration, multiculturalism, transculturality, transnational literature, transmigrant

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ТРАНСНАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ ВИМІР РОМАНУ ЛАНИ ЛЮКС «КУКОЛКА»

Анотація. Автори, які пишуть нерідною для себе мовою, здавна викликають інтерес у критиків і літературознавців. Будучи посередниками між мовами і культурами, вони нівелюють національні, етнічні та культурні кордони, надаючи тій чи іншій «національній» літературі нових літературних та естетичних імпульсів. Водночас в епоху глобалізації та (транс)міграції тексти таких авторів, характеризуючись своєю культурною, мовною та літературною гібридністю, набувають нового вираження і вимагають переосмислення. Саме тому в останні десятиліття з'являються нові дослідницькі підходи, які намагаються подолати традиційне мислення в національних категоріях, а також обмеження дослідницького фокусу біографічним чи тематичним рівнем.

У статті аналізуються новітні підходи до вивчення літератури транснаціональних авторів, які, вільно обираючи своє місце проживання і мову літературного самовираження, характеризуються гібридними ідентичностями і унеможливають своє розміщення в національних і культурних сітках. Саме укорінення цих авторів у щонайменше двох літературних і культурних традиціях сприяє формуванню їхньої літературної творчості і часто відображається в їхніх текстах на різних рівнях.

Однією з таких транснаціональних авторів є сучасна німецькомовна письменниця українського походження Лана Люкс, творчість якої досі залишається невідрефлексованою вітчизняною наукою. Проведений аналіз транснаціональних особливостей поезики її



роману «Куколка» дозволяє обґрунтувати тезу про те, що він з його культурною та мовною поліфонією належить до транснаціональної літератури, характерні елементи якої оприявнюються на біографічно-референтному, тематично-змістовому і текстово-естетико-структурному рівнях поезики. Гра авторки зі стереотипами, використання різних форм багатомовності, динамічних персонажів тощо не лише долає дихотомію між «своїм» і «чужим», але й показує взаємопроникнення різних націй, мов, культур і літератур.

Ключові слова: літературна багатомовність, міграція, мультикультурність, транскультурність, транснаціональна література, трансмігрант

Formulation of the problem. In modern literary and cultural studies, the tendency to blur ethnic, national, and cultural boundaries is growing more and more apparent. As a result, terms such as nation, culture, and identity become conditional, and mobility turns into a sign of existence in the world. Therefore, the modern migrant is often determined as a "transmigrant", that is, a person who "grew up in at least two linguistically, culturally and nationally different contexts and continues to move in these contexts, has experience of living in different countries, cannot or does not want to position him/herself one-dimensionally in such aspects as "homeland", "identity", "place of residence", "integration" or "future", and cannot clearly say where he/she will be or wants to live in three or five years" [1, S. 68].

The phenomenon of migration, of course, is of particular importance for the development of literature. Giving it new literary and aesthetic impulses, migrant authors destroy the monocultural development of this or that "national" literature. That is why in recent decades there has been an attempt to develop new concepts for understanding and describing the impact of the globalized environment on literature. If we consider German-language literary studies, the first attempts to categorize literature written by authors with a "migration background" were mostly directed at the author's biography, while the formal-aesthetic side was neglected. Although terms, such as "migrant worker literature", "literature of migrants", "literature of foreigners", "literature of minorities", "literature of outland" tried to describe new trends in literature, but still they created dichotomy between the national literature and the literature of minorities. Even though the later categorization of such literature as "migratory" attempted to correct this fact, it still could not fully fix the emphasis of literary scholars on the national background of authors. Accordingly, national borders in the field of literature continue to form scientific views, and the texts by (trans)migrant authors, that are written



in a non-native language, still cause difficulties with naming and identifying among literary scholars.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In order to shift the emphasis to the aesthetics of the researched works, as well as to overcome the dichotomy between "own" and "other", since the 90s of the 20th century, the terms "intercultural literature", "transcultural literature" and "transnational literature" began to be actively used in the academic environment. Despite some common features, these terms are not synonymous. While interculturalism still clings to the old spherical model of J. Herder and considers cultures as different entities [2, S. 32-33], the concepts of transculturality and transnationalism, on the contrary, imply the interpenetration of different nations and cultures, showing their conditionality, fluidity and mobility. As P. Jay points out, "transnational literature must be understood as a kind of literature, emergent at a specific historical moment, linked by a shared set of identifiable subjects, and composed of texts connected by the use of similar literary devices particularly well fitted to explore them" [3, p. 2]. At the same time, the researcher formulates two approaches to the interpretation of transnational literature: the first involves considering transnational literature as a model of literary studies that considers all literature as mobile on a potentially global scale, according to the second one, it is a contemporary form linked to a certain set of historical forces [3].

In general, it can be noted that transnational literature with its immanent transculturality offers alternative views on Otherness, which go beyond the perception of Others from the point of view of stereotypes and generalizations. At the same time, transnationality manifests itself not only at the thematic-content level, but also at the text-structural and biographical-referential levels of a text [4, S. 191], and therefore all three levels must be taken into account for an objective analysis and convincing interpretation. Thus, the transnational approach allows moving away from thematic and content criteria of research, which were typical for the analysis of emigration literature, to primarily aesthetic and poetic features. It is also worth mentioning that the transnational / transcultural perspective should not be considered as a complete abolition of intercultural or multicultural ones, it rather opens up an additional understanding of the peculiarities of literary reception and production.

Scholars such as D. Bischoff, E. Hausbacher, P. Jay, S. Comfort-Hein, A. Seyhan, S. Taberner, and others made significant contributions to the profiling of various aspects of transnationalism.



The aim of the research is to reveal the transnational aspects of the poetics of Lana Lux's novel "Kukolka" by means of its three-level decoding (biographical-referential, thematic-content, text-aesthetic-structural text levels). The narrative features of transnational writing identified by E. Hausbacher serve as the methodological basis, i.e., variable narrative perspective, spatial text construction, duplications at all text levels, the phenomenon of multilingualism, methods of irony, parody and grotesque narration, the strategy of mimicry, the game or reconstruction and deconstruction of cultural auto- and heterostereotypes, the tendency to blur genres [4, S. 193-194].

Presentation of the main material. The novel "Kukolka" (2017) by Lana Lux can be considered a vivid example of transnational literature. Lana Lux (pseudonym, real name unknown) is a modern German-language writer, actress and illustrator of Ukrainian origin, born on November 22, 1986 in Dnipropetrovsk (now Dnipro). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, at the age of ten, she and her parents left for Germany as contingent refugees of Jewish origin. There, Lana studied nutrition, later mastered acting at Michael Tschekhow Studio Berlin [5]. Currently, Lana Lux's work includes two novels: "Kukolka" (2017) and "Jägerin und Sammlerin" (2020). Lana Lux's debut novel "Kukolka", which has already been translated into many languages, received a flurry of positive reviews from critics and literary experts. At the thematic and content level, Lana Lux's novel tells the story of a little orphan girl Samira from Dnipropetrovsk, who runs away from an orphanage at the age of seven and strives to reach Germany at any cost in order to find her only friend Marina, who was adopted by a German couple. In this regard, Germany becomes the "place of longing" [6] for the main character. However, after escaping, Samira finds herself on the street and joins a gang of organized beggars, the leader of which is Rocky. Providing shelter in a dilapidated house, he encourages his fellow residents to beg, steal and sing in the street. His gang consists of a blind accordionist Ilja, closed-off and silent Dascha, cheerful Lydia, Serhii, who is in love with Lydia, and twins Oleg and Peter.

In this gang, Samira, or as she is called, "Kukolka", spends five years believing that Rocky, to whom the gang gives their daily income every night, is saving money for her so that she can go to Germany. However, this life of the gang eventually comes to an end: the twins become addicted to drugs, the other two girls die (Dascha from a failed theft, Lydia from a failed abortion), and Samira learns from Rocky that she will never get to Germany, if only because she has no passport.



However, in the second part of the book, Samira meets Dima, who becomes her saviour, taking her from Rocky's house and accommodating her in a clean, tidy apartment. With him, she spends her 13th birthday and experiences her first great love. The "place of longing" becomes closer and closer when Dima promises to take her to Germany and gives her forged documents.

Samira's arrival in Berlin opens the third part of the book. Having found herself in the country of her dreams, the main character, however, remains locked in Dima's apartment. Then her life odyssey continues: first pickpocketing, then prostitution, which Dima pushes her into (assuring her that he has big debts and only Samira can help him pay them by sleeping with some clients), drugs, etc. In the end, Dima sells Samira for 15,000 euros to a brothel, where she must earn 30,000 euros a year, otherwise the amount will be doubled. Here she meets dozens of girls with a very similar story. At some point, she manages to escape and find refuge with a Ukrainian woman named Olga, who takes her to the doctor and the police. This is where Samira's retrospective story about her life ends. At the end of the novel, Samira meets her friend Marina, but she hardly remembers her. The novel has an open ending, because all of Samira's hopes for her friend Marina and the fact that she would live with her have failed.

The transnationality of the novel "Kukolka" is indicated by the very title, which directs the German-speaking reader to discover something "exotic", "unknown", and the author herself belongs to the category of transnational authors. The "migration background" is also indicated by the cover design, which is a certain collage of "Eastern European" stereotypes. On the cover there is a little dark-haired girl with a mandolin, wicker baskets with flowers on the sides, a table covered with a wicker tablecloth on which there is a tea service, horns on the wall, musical instruments on the floor, etc. This design of the cover, like the title of the work itself, is intended to create a certain alienation from the book and, at the same time, interest in "others", "strangers". It is also significant that two other authors of Eastern European origin are quoted on the cover: Lena Gorelik and Olga Grjasnowa.

Various features of the poetics of the novel indicate its transnationality / transculturality. In particular, most of the events from Samira's life are presented to the reader in retrospect, which is a characteristic narrative strategy of transnational literature. It is also worth noting that although the description of the events is conducted in retrospect on behalf of little Samira, there are still elements of prolepsis in the form of certain comments, such as: "Ich hatte einfach beschlossen, rauszugehen, zum Bahnhof zu fahren und dann einen Zug nach Deutschland zu Marina zu nehmen. Damals hatte ich keinen Schimmer davon, wie lächerlich und absurd mein Vorhaben war" [5, S. 27].



Describing Samira's life odyssey to the country of her dreams, the author introduces her German-speaking reader not only to her characters, who often embody transcultural identities, but also, albeit sketchily, to Ukraine. Describing the events of the 1990s, she shows the difficulties of this period: poverty, malnutrition, begging, theft, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc. Real historical events are also shown, in particular the emigration of Soviet Jews. Dima's words that he was able to leave for Germany because "Deutschland neue Juden haben wollte" [5, S. 240] point to the "Contingent Refugees Act", according to which, since 1991, the government of Germany and the governments of the federal states accepted Soviet Jews. This also explains why Samira crosses the border under the name of Margarita Shvarts.

Lana Lux's novel also reveals certain linguistic and cultural features of Ukraine. For example, when in Lviv, Samira pays attention to the interweaving of language codes in Ukraine: "Ich war aber krass überrascht, wie die Leute dort sprachen. Die sprachen alle Ukrainisch. In Dnepropetrowsk hörte man nur ab und zu jemanden auf Ukrainisch reden. Nur die alten, die ihr Gemüse oder Speck auf dem Markt verkauften. Alle anderen sprachen russisch. Aber hier sprachen sie alle Ukrainisch. Alte wie Junge, Arme wie Reiche" [5, S. 273-274]. Cultural features are reflected in the description of certain rituals ("Ich hatte ihre Haare zu einem Zopf geflochten und ihn ihr auf ukrainische Art vorne um den Kopf gelegt" [5, S. 179]), peculiarities of International Women's Day celebration ("Alle Frauen in der Ukraine machen sich an diesem Tag besonders schick. Alle Frauen und Mädchen bekommen Geschenke und Blumen. Von ihren Männern, ihren Kindern, ihren Eltern, ihren Freundinnen" [5, S. 201]), New Year, etc. The author talks through Samira about certain peculiarities of Ukrainian schools, namely that the school year begins on the first of September and lasts 11 years.

Throughout the novel, the author plays with heterostereotypes. In particular, Germany in Samira's eyes (and not only hers) is associated with a rich and carefree life. Depicting German adoptive parents, the main character emphasizes both their appearance ("Die Deutschen waren ganz anders als die russischen Paare. Der Mann und die Frau sahen sich ähnlich. Sie hatten beide die gleichen Poloshirts an. Sie in hellem Grün, er in hellem Blau. Das Besondere war aber, dass beide einen Pullover über den Schultern trugen und die Ärmel vorne verknotet hatten. Ich dachte nur – Wow! Wer von denen adoptiert wird, hat es bestimmt noch besser als bei echten Eltern" [5, S. 18]), as well as on smells ("Er roch nach Seife und Minze und Parfum. Er roch reich" [5, S. 20]). Such stereotypes about the rich West are repeatedly emphasized in the novel. For example, before the adoptive parents take



Marina from the orphanage, they send her letters every week for six months and packages every month with incredible things and various sweets. Western sweets and the Barbie doll (which Marina also receives as a gift) repeatedly become stereotypes in the works of transnational authors, symbolizing the idea among many people from the Soviet Union about Western consumer society. Providing a detailed description of the doll and comparing it with cheap copies emphasizes not only the wealth, but also the quality of Western goods: "Ich holte meine zwei Barbies raus. Ging in die Küche und setzte sie auf den Tisch. Die eine war so elegant, mit langen blonden Haaren. Ich setzte sie ganz an die Kante und knickte die Knie, damit ihre Unterschenkel runterhingen. Die andere konnte ihre Beine nicht knicken. Sie waren steif und aus Plastik, das an den Füßen sehr dünn, sogar leicht transparent war. Ihre Haarstoppeln ragten zu allen Seiten. Die Augen waren etwas schief aufgemalt. Sie war eben nur eine billige Kopie. Sie würde nicht so werden wie die echte Barbie aus Deutschland. Ich fand es ungerecht" [5, S. 216].

In addition to Barbie and sweets, Marina's letter to Samira also speaks of the rich West, where she lists the items given to her: a strong and colorful Scout backpack, a case with many compartments, various school supplies, among which were erasers that smelled of apples and raspberries [5, S. 23]. All this gradually forms in little Samira the idea of Germany as a fabulous rich country where Marina lives with her adoptive parents and where there is also a bed for Samira [5, S. 296]. Marina is sort of Samira's double, personifying the life she could have lived if she had been adopted by a German couple at the time. Thus, for little Samira, Germany becomes a projection of salvation, hope for a family, security and stability.

The so-called hybrid "third space" in the sense of H. Bhabha [7] is created in Berlin. Being home to many ethnic groups and different cultures, Berlin is not only a multicultural, but also a transnational and transcultural city in the novel, because the people depicted by the author do not simply coexist with each other, but embody hybrid identities, their lives and the lives of the native inhabitants are closely intertwined. This is what initially surprises Samira: "Vor dem Haus waren ein Sandkasten und ein paar Bänke. Da saßen Jugendliche drauf und sprachen Russisch. Einfach so, mitten in Deutschland" [5, S. 282], or "Dann fahren wir zum Alex. Dort verkauften Tschetschenen russische Mützen und Orden, und Dima vertickte die Handys an sie. Dann fahren wir zum Zoo. Da gab es auch ein paar Russen, mit denen Dima über irgendwelche Geschäfte sprechen musste" [5, S. 291]. Lionja, whom Samira met on the bus, points to the city's multiculturalism. In particular, he notes that there are parts of the city "voller Türken und Araber" [5, S. 271], as well as those where only "arrogante Russen und reiche Deutsche" [5, S. 271] live.



An important transnational aspect is also the author's indication of some cultural differences. For example, it is a certain cultural shock for Samira that Dima gave her 14 roses for her birthday, because in Ukraine it is considered a bad sign to give an even number of flowers [5, S. 307]. It may also be surprising for a German-speaking reader that Samira "spülte die Verpackungen von Käse und Wurst, wusch die C-Hi-P-S-Tüte aus und legte alles zum Abtropfen hin" [5, S. 287], thus showing the possibility of their reusability.

Literary multilingualism, which the author resorts to throughout the novel, is another characteristic narrative strategy of transnational literature. Manifest, latent and excluded forms of multilingualism [8] are expressed here, which indicates "not only the material dimension of language, but the simultaneity of different spaces and (life) times as well" [9, S. 213] According to N. Blum-Barth, manifest form includes the change of languages (citations, mnemolexemes, speech of characters, parallelism of languages, juxtaposition of languages) and mixing of languages (cacography, phonetic transcriptions, imaginary languages); the latent form contains unmarked citation, tracing, incorporation, language latency, enrichment, interlanguage wordplay, echo; inquit formulas and references to the language belong to the excluded form [8].

As for the manifest form of literary multilingualism, the change of languages is shown here in the use of various foreign language inserts, such as "Mademoiselle", "luxus pur", "Rushhour", "High Heels", etc. Also, the author often resorts to language parallelism, translating the quoted foreign language into the matrix language of the text, while in order to explain certain words and expressions, she sometimes uses calque, e.g., "Sein Motto war: "Lovkost ruk i nikogo moschenichestwa". Was so viel bedeutet wie "Geschickte Hände zu haben, ist kein Betrug"" [5, S. 62].

The mixing of languages is manifested in the novel through the use of phonetic transcription of Russian words (as stated in the novel, Samira spoke Russian and hardly understood Ukrainian). In particular, such words as "Priwet", "Sdrawstwujte", "Schapka", "Blini", "Plombir", "Uniwermag", "Kascha", "Krischa", "Pelmeni", etc. are written in italics and remain untranslated. Although the meaning of most of these words is clear from the context, their presence and lack of translation still causes readers to be critical of what they have read.

In Lana Lux's text there also can be distinguished mnemolexemes, i.e., "words that indicate the actual (biographical) character of the story and contain experience of suffering and / or trauma of the protagonists or a personal and intimate attitude towards other heroes" [8, S. 16]. A kind of



mnemolexeme in the text of Lana Lux is the word "Perestroika", which the author does not translate, but simply transliterates: "Was haben diese Verbrecher nur gemacht. Diese Perestroika. Verflucht soll sie sein. Wie viel Kummer kann das Land noch ertragen ... Arme Kinder ... Arme Menschen ... Alles geht den Bach runter ... Alles ist verloren ..." [5, S. 190]. With these words, Lana Lux expresses the attitude of many people in the early 90s to the events that took place in the country. The song "Malenkaja Strana" can be considered as another mnemolexeme. It becomes the poetic core metaphor of the book and summarizes everything that Samira wanted from life.

The latency of the native language is demonstrated in the increased frequency of using diminutive word forms, e.g., "Dimochka", "Olichka", "Ritochka", etc. This shows, in particular, how the latent language affects the acoustic formation of the main language in the artistic text. As a result of this process the latter is enriched. Latent multilingualism is also expressed in the fact that when giving the transcription of a Russian word, the author preserves its gender and transfers it to the matrix language. At the same time, in accordance with the rules of the German language, she capitalizes nouns: "Wir arbeiten jetzt für die *Krischa*, das war schon ziemlich cool" [5, S. 121] or "Wir waren ungefähr am *Univermag* ausgestiegen und losgerannt" [5, S. 220] etc.

Also, the text contains various inquit formulas and references to mother tongue, which the author uses to show that her characters don't actually communicate in German. By involving excluded forms, the author creates the illusion of multilingualism, even if it is not implemented in the language of the text [8, S. 22]. Metalinguism is also expressed in the novel, that is, language about language or multilingualism, in particular, when it comes to stereotypes about the German language. For example, Lionja admits that he is having hard time because of German with its articles *der, die, das* [5, S. 272]; Olga (Lionja's daughter), in turn, draws parallels with the Russian language, noting that "[i]m Deutschen gibt es so furchtbar lustige Worte. Im Russischen ist Mama etwas Exklusives, aber hier gibt es diverse Mamas. Tages-Mama, Stief-Mama, Schwieger-Mama, Gast-Mama und sogar Leih-Mama" [5, S. 366].

Using various forms of multilingualism, the writer identifies her characters as cosmopolitans, showing that they are rooted in different languages and cultures. The involvement of a foreign language, which creates a certain alienation effect in the main German text, helps to cause "de-automatization and a new vision" [10, c. 310]. This happens first of all when there is no translation or explanation of foreign words. Putting the readers in a situation of confusion, the author aims to cause their critical perception of the text. Also, these foreign language inserts show that a certain



experience described in the text was gained by one or another character in a foreign language context.

In general, Lana Lux's novel shows a tendency to blur genres. It can be determined both as a biographical novel, and as a dystopian novel, and as a socio-psychological novel.

Conclusion. Although Lana Lux writes in German, her country of origin is present on different levels in her novel. The three-level decoding of Lana Lux's novel "Kukolka" shows that it is located in the cultural interspace and belongs to transnational literature. The use of dynamic spatial models, (trans)migrant characters, duplications, various forms of multilingualism, stereotypes, etc. not only overcomes the dichotomy between "own" and "other", but also shows the interpenetration of different nations, languages, cultures and literatures, which, in the end, expands the space of reader's reception and literary knowledge.

The perspectives of the research include the analysis of transnational elements in Lana Lux's next novel "Jägerin und Sammlerin", as well as the application of the given theoretical material to other works by modern transnational authors.

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