



The Existential Aspect of Ageing: To the Problem of Determining Gerontological Points of Text Poetics (Based on the Ukrainian Literature of the 19th-20th Centuries)

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the study is conditioned by the requirement to clarify understanding of the subject of literary gerontology and specificity of artistic representation of gerontological meanings considering the growing popularity of this area in Ukraine, its focus on (re)interpretation of artistic texts of the past and present in anthropological modus. To reveal the central role of the existential aspect of ageing in the content structure of literary gerontology and the specifics of artistic implementation of existential aspect, in particular, its determinism by (non)literary parameters of the author's conscience. While exploring the existential aspect of aging in Ukrainian literature, it was utilized a blend of interdisciplinary techniques (such as myth criticism, psychoanalysis, and gender analysis) and traditional literary methods (like structural-typological, comparative, and semiotic analyses). Results show that literary gerontology in Ukrainian literature from the 19th-20th century transition primarily depicted aging through external narratives, with a significant emphasis on female experiences and altered maternal archetypes. The study defines the role of the existential aspect of ageing as the main determinant of gerontological orientation of the artistic text. The findings not only expand the theoretical basis of literary gerontology, reveal mechanisms of formal and textual structurization, and its contextual interaction with society, culture, and time, but also cover the social and anthropological, individual, and psychological ageing aspects that can be used to improve the social and psychological support of older people.

Keywords: Existential Aspect of Ageing; Literary Gerontology; Text Poetics; Ukrainian Modernist Literature; Artistic Conceptualization.

INTRODUCTION

Literary gerontology in Ukraine, unlike in Western countries, is still an underdeveloped scientific field. The conceptualization of ageing as an area of study in the Western discourse took place at the beginning of the 20th century and its investigation was developed in such main fields as geriatric (biological and medical), gerontological (sociology and psychology), and gerontosophical (philosophy, ethnocultural studies) (Angelova, 2018). In Ukraine, which was part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) for most of the last century, the study of the cultural image of the ageing, especially in literature, was blocked. However, the “backlog” in the development of this area is also caused by cultural and mental peculiarities formed by literary tradition, which avoids gerontological discrimination (unfortunately, this cannot be said about social reality). Movchan (2013) focuses within philosophical view of fear of ageing on ancient traditions of the Eastern Slavs to honor the older generation and states that “Ukrainian authors, unlike foreign ones, have a more positive attitude to ageing (with humor and kindness)”. This respect for ageing, the same as for women, rooted in customs, preserved in Ukrainian

culture explains the problematic nature of the development of gerontological (and feminist) studies within Ukraine. Nowadays Ukrainian humanitaristics, gerontology, in particular, is mainly oriented on the Western experience, at times it copies foreign sociological concepts rather than adapts them to the national cultural peculiarities (Lymankina, 2023). Thus, it becomes relevant to clarify the subject matter of literary gerontology, gerontological coordinates of artistic text poetics including not only general cultural, but also the national perception of ageing.

The sociological orientation of Western gerontology towards detecting and combating ageism ("Literature has been used as data for reconceptualizing ageing" (Zelig, 2011) seems to be ineffective in Ukrainian realities, especially in literary studies, since a literary practice is mostly full of examples of the appreciated ageing, and the occurrences of gerontocide, gerontophobia are either motivated by cultural, historical, domestic circumstances which are in the foreground of the work, or are shown as single precedents, exceptions to the rule. Nowadays the study of diachronic perspectives of the representation of ageing in Ukrainian literature in connection with ethno-cultural culture, customs of the Ukrainians; historical and cultural context of conceptualization of gerontological issues in literature; reasons, essence of transformation of these issues acquires the relevance. However, it is important to define general outlines of perception of ageing in Ukrainian literature (in historical, gender, worldview and stylistic coordinates). An existential and psychological approach, based on the values of philosophy, anthropology, psychology (Burkhanov, 2014; Bushansky, 2017; Gagarin, 2002; Pigrov, 2002; Sapogova, 2011; Topol, 2013;) is efficient in solving this task.

Thus, the existential aspect of ageing, its formants, the format of artistic representation in the complex of literary (genre, style) and non-literary (mentality, ethnic culture, gender, social caste) factors require scientific definition. As a consequence of this subject reorientation, literary gerontology may be loosening the sociological pragmatics of the struggle against ageism, but it more deeply touches on the phenomenon of people who realize their finitude, enter into existential confrontation with death, and reveal/lose their essence in this struggle (Czyzak, 2002).

While Western gerontological studies have evolved and spanned various fields (Achenbaum, 2020; Achenbaum, 2023; Neves, Wilson, Sanders, Kokanović, & Burns, 2023) Ukrainian literary gerontology remains underdeveloped. There's a discrepancy between Western and Ukrainian perspectives on the topic. Ukrainian gerontological studies, instead of adapting to local cultural specifics, often lean on or even copy Western frameworks. This means that there may not be a comprehensive understanding or representation of the Ukrainian perception of ageing in literature. Ukrainian literature predominantly portrays ageing positively, differing from Western literature which often challenges ageism. This uniqueness in portrayal and its underrepresentation in studies constitutes a significant part of the research gap. There's a need to evaluate the portrayal of ageing across the historical timeline of Ukrainian literature, understanding its connections with the national culture, traditions, and customs (Yusifov, 2022). The study is chosen to delve deeper into the uncharted territories of literary gerontology in Ukraine. Given the nation's unique cultural and historical background, understanding how ageing is represented in its literature can offer insights into its societal values, traditions, and collective consciousness. The study also provides an opportunity to contribute to the global gerontological discourse by adding a Ukrainian perspective, which has been largely missing or underrepresented.

The cross-disciplinary approach is the main one in the study of the stated problems since gerontogenesis is a subject of study in sociology, psychology, philosophy, ethnocultural studies. Gerontological ideas in Ukrainian modernist literature are investigated through the prism of the existential aspect of ageing, philosophical and existential anthropology categories. The study of the existential aspect of ageing in Ukrainian literature uses both interdisciplinary methods (myth criticism, psychoanalysis, gender analysis) and literary methods (structural-topological, comparative, semiotic).

Purpose: to reveal the central role of the existential aspect of ageing in the content structure of literary gerontology and the specifics of its artistic implementation (existential aspect), in particular, its determinism by (non)literary parameters of the author's conscience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Specificity of Gerontological Theme in Ukrainian Literature

The Study of Artistic Representations of The Existential Aspect of Ageing as One of The Tasks of The Literary Gerontology.

Poetics is not merely an abstract study of literature; it delves deep into the very principles and forms of literary expression, intricately weaving the theory and practice of crafting literature (Burke, 2023). At its core,

poetics examines the structure of literary works, discerning the arrangement of events and the development of characters, while also exploring the myriad of literary devices employed by writers. Different genres of literature, be it tragedy, comedy, or the epic, each bring their own distinct conventions and characteristics to the fore, and poetics seeks to understand these nuances. Parallel to this, there's a profound and intricate study of ageing called gerontology. This domain explores the biological, social, and psychological aspects of ageing. While geriatric studies provide insights into the health and care of older adults, focusing on the medical intricacies of ageing, gerontosophical studies reflect on the philosophical and ethnocultural dimensions of growing old.

In the Ukrainian literary context, there's a fascinating intersection between poetics and gerontology. Here, the ageing process is not merely portrayed as a biological or social phenomenon; it's depicted through existential and psychological lenses. The literature becomes a canvas, where the ageing process is artistically represented and understood, capturing the essence of a specific cultural and literary tradition. The existential confrontation with death, the realization of one's finitude, and the revelation or loss of essence in this struggle are profoundly echoed in Ukrainian literature. In essence, while poetics provides the tools and frameworks to understand literary works, the study of ageing, especially in Ukrainian literature, offers an opportunity to use these tools to explore deeper existential themes. Through this, literature becomes more than just stories; it becomes a mirror reflecting profound truths about life, ageing, and the human condition.

A particular task of literary gerontology is to study the artistic representation of existential aspect of ageing – a complex anthropological phenomenon that defines the modules of people's experience of a situation of awareness (prospect) of entering the final (near-death) phase of ageing. Furthermore, the study is not limited to just understanding structural elements. It delves into various techniques, such as metaphors, similes, allegories, and irony, which writers utilize as tools to imbue their works with deeper meaning. Yet, the realm of poetics is not confined to merely the technical aspects of literature. It encompasses a vast aesthetic philosophy, grappling with profound theories about the nature of beauty, art, and taste. It questions and celebrates the creation and appreciation of beauty in literature. This study often transcends the text itself, reaching into the cultural and historical context, examining how literary conventions have evolved and how perceptions of commendable literature vary over time and across different cultures.

The formants of the existential aspect of ageing are the existential aspects of (non)freedom, loneliness and isolation, absurdity, fear, death. The latter have been widely appreciated in philosophy as the basis for human existence in the world beyond the age notions, but the role of these existential aspects, however, gains importance right in old age as those which define the essence of being and state the personality. Of course, the overlay destabilizing effect of these existential agents deepens the “tragedy” of ageing. The artistic interpretation of the situation of ageing as existential, the expression of the hero's conscience, who has discovered the existential sense of (their own) ageing, is of interest primarily to literary gerontology. The existential aspect of ageing, like the other, is not a universal category, as it is formatted by ethnic and mental, cultural and historical, gender, and, in literature by poetic factors. The existential aspect of ageing is construed by the narrative plan of G. Wells' “The Story of the Late Mr. Elvisham” from the collection “The Country of the Blind and Other Stories of G. Wells”. This work is rare not only in Ukrainian literature but also in foreign literature, as an artistic equivalent of an existential paradigm of ageing, “condensed” in time through the fantastic transposition to several days in the life of the hero. The specificity of conceptualization of ageing topic in the work is determined by the creation of existential and psychological, philosophical, and fantastic planes, which hierarchize the image of ageing as a living situation, as a psycho-mental state, and as a “mystical” transformation.

In the breathtaking by its speed (in one night) transformation of young human into old, even more – in the situation of young man's consciousness imprisonment in an old body, G. Wells problematizes ageing as the most terrible living tragedy, equal to death. The plot, inspired by the mythological motif of the migration of souls, takes shape on the conflict between youth (Edward Eden) and old (Mr. Elvisham), which is magnified by the contrast between health and sickness, poverty and wealth, naivete and cunning, and estimation. As the story grows, the old philosopher Elvisham, who has the Mephistopheles-esque features of either an evil magician or a bad guy, bribes young Eden with a monetary pledge, bewitches or feeds with a wonderful powder and possesses his young body, leaves only his old one along with his name and the remains of his old life (though only without the chequebook). The old look of Elvisham is presented through the prism of the young recipient's view (a phenomenon of the so-called “youthful structure of look”, described by Woodward (2006) as a stigmatizing mechanism of youthful Western culture), which captures horrible details of physical degradation – a yellow face, a persuasive skinny hand that trembled a little, his cheeks had sunk in little, toothless gum, which becomes hyperbolized when the speaker notices them on his own body, which he sharply disconnects from as “the Other” (Chebotareva, 2002) describes similar feelings as a result of the first signs of ageing. In the finale of the story Elvisham is the overcomer, as he successfully takes possession of the body of Eden, at the same time the mentioned fact in the post-history that Eden, that is to say Elvisham in his body, hit by a car to death, nullifies the philosopher's

triumph, affirming the idea that all are equal before death, both young and old.

The value of this novel for literary gerontology is not so much in the plot but in its focus on bodily and mental metamorphosis, which claims to be a psychologically authentic expression of the existential aspect of ageing. Eden focuses on physical exhaustion, impairment, loss of vision, memory aberrations, insomnia, which are the consequence of unrecognized ageing in the outside world. This state of mind is a metaphor for the early stages of ageing, which is physically perceptible but not yet perceived mentally. When he spoke, Eden got scared of his ageing voice, and the look of his hands, body, and face got him desperate. Having finally learned the situation of the exchange of bodies, Eden is not happy about any of Elvisham's "advantages", such as wisdom or fame, but he is desperately pained by the loss of his future. His reaction is entirely natural, and old age has no advantages, despite the gerontological philosophy, which tries to find its own positive aspects in this age. The Eden does not identify himself with the image in the mirror and resist the obtained identity, but his declarations that he is not Elvisham, that he does not know where he is, and that he has no recollection of "his" past, are perceived by others as the signs of senile dementia. Isolated from the world in his room, helpless, powerless to change anything, he, with hope, uses a randomly found powder called "Resignation" and, understandably, dies because there is no other way out of old age.

The situation modelled in G. Wells' fantasy novel is a metaphorical equivalent of the existential tragedy of ageing, which is always undesirable and unacceptable "transformation", "dissociation" with oneself, is an unstoppable war between human and the world, leading to the loss of freedom and death. A psychic state distillation of a man imprisoned in an old Eden's body is the experience of isolation – from the world, from a mutual understanding of people, from the future. The consequence of isolation is "othering", which transforms the old into an "outsider", into the subject of care or contempt. The tragedy of Eden lies precisely in the fact that he is left alone with his illness because all of his words and actions are considered deviant and aren't taken into account. He is surrounded by people (for a reason they are named in the story only according to their professions – a maid, a doctor, bank clerks), but communication does not take place even for the presence of formal communication with them (Tytarenko, 2018). In the novel of G. Wells, all the main formants of the existential aspect of ageing are psychologically authentically described. Ukrainian literature does not have an analogous text neither in "serious" genres, nor in science-fiction ones.

At the beginning of the 20th century epistemological contours of ageing in Western culture became apparent, and the existence of older people was problematized (Elyutina, 1999). The extension of the themes of ageing activated in modernist literature, sensitive to the mysteries of human life, to the microcosm of personality, with the influence of "philosophy of life", existential philosophy, which actively developed during this period (Berehova, 2022). In Ukraine, the 19th century the populist (*narodnytska*) literary tradition imposed the patriarchal and rustic model of the world, where the institute of ageing was respected, and the image of the old person was archetypically enriched, even sacralized on the modernist literature that emerged on the verge of centuries. The rejection by the first wave of modernism of the patriarchal and rustic model (Pavlychko, 1999) led to a review of the basics of the artistic conceptualization of ageing, which for the first time came into the focus of the author's attention as an individual existential situation (Vernygora, 2016). Although the alternative to the patriarchal gerontological "scenario" and the general actualization of the problem of elderly involution and destabilization of being was better achieved by feminocentric modernist literature. However, neither the first (verge of centuries), nor the second (1920s) trends in Ukrainian modernism were able to fully reflect the existential aspect of ageing, but only particular aspects of it within the framework of other artistic tasks. The obstacles were a bunch of reasons of a multi-faceted and historical and cultural nature.

In the patriarchal and rustic model of populist (*narodnytska*) literature the image of the old man is archetypically positivized as illustration of distinguished wisdom, great spirituality, and goodness (the image of the wise old man who is ready to give his remaining strength to serve the community, ready to guide them, is presented in the programme texts of T. Shevchenko ("Perebendya"), P. Kulish (the man of God in the novel "Chorna Rada"), I. Franko ("Zakhar Berkut", "Moisey"), and the image of the old woman is often influenced by the maternal archetype and is enlarged by the son's colonial guilt to the archetype of Ukraine, thus it was sanctified by love and affection, which did not exclude the expression of aggression to the old (as sublimation of childish aggression to the mother's or father's figures), in some texts. The preservation of literary tradition (initially as a means of resistance to imperial assimilation) led to the retrograde artistic conceptualization of old age in Ukrainian literature unlike in foreign literature at the end of 19th century. In that time, feminocentric literature emerged on the literary scene (Hanna Barvinok (alias of O. Bilozerska-Kulish), N. Kobrynska, O. Pchilka, M. Roshkevycz, and others), which provided an alternative to the patriarchal tradition, but not in that it sharpened the problem of ageing as an existential crisis.

However, the difference in the artistic conceptualization of ageing is evident in, for example, the

representation of I. Franko's novel "Zakhar Berkut" and "the "images from life" by N. Kobrynska "Pani Shuminska" ("Mrs. Shuminska") ["Dukh chasu" ("The Spirit of the Time")], "Pan Sudiya" ("Mr. Judge"), all written in the first half of the 1880s. I. Franko's patriarchal narrative conceptualizes ageing as the upper stage in the life of the protagonist of the novel, Zakhar Berkut, the patriarch of the Carpathian village of Tuchlya, who enjoys his absolute authority among the population, love, and affection of son and his fiancée. The respected age of the hero is marked in the composition of the story, but there is no emphasis that he is old: He actively defends the rights of the community, not by force but by wisdom prevents the terrible enemy – the Tatar invasion. His death in the finale, spending his last minutes with his beloved family and in the halo of glory is a kind of illustration of the acmeological ideal of ageing (Pigrov, 2002). The story is set in the 12th century, and it is also natural that in a closed traditional society the knowledge and authority of elders ensured them absolute power and privilege. In I. Franko's poem "Moisey", written 12 years later, the image of the biblical prophet (admittedly, of old age in view of the 40-year wandering in the desert) also features the archetype of the Wise Father, however his authority is doubted by the conflict with the younger generation (Aviron and Dathan), tested by exile, but victoriously claimed in the final by his death at the very threshold of the Promised Land. In both texts by I. Franko, the archetypal image of the Wise Elder is placed beyond the gerontological issue, but is presented at the zenith of his spiritual framework and is a conqueror of serious external "Zakhar Berkut" and internal "Moisey" threats.

METHODOLOGY

Anthropology and Literary Gerontology

Concerning of the Existential Aspect of Ageing in Philosophical

In two substantively related novels by N. Kobrynska, a retrospective of the life of an old woman "Mrs. Shuminska" and an old man "Mr. Judge" is presented in a modernist way in an intra-focal perspective. Although in both works the author is not so much interested in the existential aspect of ageing, as in the hero's life values and priorities that differently determined the living "projection" of a woman and a man in that patriarchal society (Melnik, 2016). The content web of both works, in essence, is a gerontological narrative on the re-evaluation of one's own life in its final phase. Mrs. Shuminska, who has devoted her entire life to her family, but is now left with one grandchild, is experiencing the loneliness and despondency typical for older women. Her emotional state is not stable and she laments the loss of her children and feels (thanatological) anxiety because her time is quickly behind her and, in the new age, she is not needed. Mr. Judge's narrative has fewer gerontological markers: he has successfully, though not always honestly, built up his career, and in his old age he is tormented not so much by a life vacuum as by not so clear conscience. The feminocentric alternative of N. Kobrynska, in particular, in the artistic conceptualization of ageing lies in the deepening of anthropological existential issues by actualizing the psychology of the old man/woman hero in his/her dealing with life, accentuating the drama of the living situation of the elderly in various gender variants.

A representative of the expressionism in the Ukrainian modernist literature of the turn of the century, V. Stefanyk came close to the problem of experiencing ageing, although he overlapped it with the problem of death, especially during the First World War, which increased the degree of tragedy. V. Stefanyk's novels "Syny" "Sons" and "Maria" present the situation of father and mother, respectively, whose children perished in the war, in the semantic field of existential aspect of despair, loneliness, and absurdity. The psychological palette of the expression of these existential aspects in the (verbal) behavior of the protagonists reflects their situation of old age and hopelessness, a harsh living crisis, or even a dead end, with death as the only way out. In a similar situation of the loss of her sons, the old woman "Maria" retreats to a reflective reconsideration of her life, remembers her children when they were small, and does her best to preserve the memory of them; her mental state is painfully-ardent; the old man "Sons" is trying to do the job by himself (ploughed the field with horses) sending his rage and grief to Heaven.

The "tragedy" of the older generation, "unwanted" by their children and condemned to death is not a onetime theme in Ukrainian modernist literature: M. Roshkevych's story "Teshcha" ("Mother-in-Law"), V. Stefanyk's short story "Sama-Samiska" ("Alone by myself"), M. Kotsyubynskiy's story "Shcho zapysano v knyhu zhyttia" ("What is written into the book of life"). All three texts show the suffering of an old woman (a symptom of destabilization of traditional maternal archetype in the modernist worldview, which will become of disastrous extent in the literature of the 1920s), but in different life circumstances. In "Mother-in-Law" by M. Roshkevych written in the 1880s, following populist literary patterns, but with a marked inclination towards expressionism, an old widow suffers from her son-in-law's cruelty, her son-in-law limits her in her property and general human rights, leading her to the point of despair. V. Stefanyk's short story "Alone by myself" is focused on the last hours and seconds of an old woman, who is dying lonely in her house, while her family is in the fields, because the time to grow harvest

is limited. The vision, the progressive disappearance of conscience, as well as the loss of the sense of reality in the last moments of old woman's life, direct the narrative into the mystical area, but the moment of death is seen as natural, though pitiful ending to the life of the old woman. M. Kotsyubinsky's story focuses on the isolation of an old woman, who is very lonely in a large family. Due to the lack of living space in the small house, the old woman is forced out of the oven and onto the floor, where she will actually take up less space, but even there she "obstructs", progressively transforming into the "redundant", the "element of home environment", which it is time to throw away. So does this woman's son, when he takes his old mother to die in a winter forest at her own request. As in the story of G. Wells, the core of the tragic in this work is the lack of communication and understanding. The communicative circle of the old woman rapidly narrows, consisting only of the grandchildren who listen to her stories but are soon bored, and a grey chicken. Lack of communication of the old woman on the threshold of her death in the texts of V. Stefanyk and M. Kotsyubynskiy, her powerlessness in the story of M. Roshkevych, unlike in the story of G. Wells, is presented through a heterodiegetic narrative: voices of these old women are not actually heard in the narrative, their awareness of their elderly helplessness and isolation is drawn by the narrator, rather than being delivered directly. However, the effect of psychological trustworthiness is deepened by the wide range of details and the intense expressionistic writing.

The proletarian "young" ideology denies the ontological significance of old age through the dogmas of the "bright communist future" and the "immortal" Lenin. The pathos of Soviet culture, especially in its building years of the 1920s, was strengthened by its orientation toward youth as an aggressive antithesis to the "old" bourgeois world, as the guarantor of radical revolutionary changes (as exemplified in the poem by V. Sosyura "Yunie" ("Is getting young")) by contrasting antagonistic images of Ukraine- the young, proletarian one and old, bourgeois one: the last is personified in the image of an old woman, the protagonist shoots the pre-revolutionary Ukraine with a nagan, and then kills her with his feet.) Hence, the image of ageing in pre-war Soviet literature has mostly negative "ideological" characteristics, as a synonym for outdated, retrograde, hostile. The absurdity of the "ideological" attitude of the proletarian society to ageing, which has been transferred to old people, was demonstrated by V. Pidmohylny in his work "Istoria pani Yivgy" ("The Story of Mrs. Yivga"), using the image of the protagonist, an elderly woman, who was of noble birth but her naivety led her to accept the revolution and be useful to the new society, which in turn rejected her and threw her out of living space, and later destroyed. The image of the working-class boy, whom Yivga tried to teach, but who threw cold water on her and drove her to her death, marks a symbol of the unreasonable cruelty of the new "rulers of the world".

V. Pidmohylny turns back to the analogy of the image of the old woman and the outdated, condemned pre-revolutionary world in his story "Z zhyttya budynku" ("From the building's life"): A totally alien, irrelevant to proletarian society, an old woman, a representative of old culture, isolated in her room, brought to the brink of destitution, is going mad in her zeal to save the remains of her former welfare,- she is gulping down the Tsar's golden coins, one by one, so that they do not fall into the hands of the new regime, and, of course, she dies. Modernist V. Pidmohylny avoids ideological assessments and accents, so the image of the old woman is perceived on the spectrum from gloating neglect to a painful sympathy – the old world is being destroyed in her image, even though the enemy of the revolution, but with its rich culture (the symbol of the golden coins). The new proletarian world, represented in the image of the administration of the building, which is merciless to the old woman, is trying out for humanity, for mercy and finally fails this test. Therefore, in both texts, V. Pidmohylny was mainly concerned with the change in the moral and ethical paradigm of proletarian culture rather than the "ontology" of ageing, but the existential aspects of gerontological issues were still included in their semantic focus.

The existential ageing is uniquely represented in the story "Starets" ("The Beggar") by V. Pidmohylny. The protagonist – Tymish, not old for his age, but crippled in manufacturing, is being marginalized in the proletarian world, where physical work is valued in the name of the victory of socialism. Now the poor beggar (in the Ukrainian language the etymologically related words "starist" ("ageing") and "starets" ("beggar") indicating the same social devaluation of the individual), is left on the life "curb", his capacity, even to pay the prostitute, is limited, he is lonely, embittered, helpless, and doomed. Tymish was "old" not physically, but rather socially. In contrast to the reviewed works by V. Pidmohylny, in "The Beggar" narrative is focused on the main character's conscience, which actualises the existential dimension of the problem and sharpened the reflexive level of Tymosh's experience of his redundancy, "invisibility", powerlessness in contrast to his previous, to the trauma, potential, close to the experience of physical ageing. The main generator of the existential conflict is the young soul in the weakened, powerless body. Such a conflict also occurs in the anamnesis of early adulthood, leading to inner opposition, denial, "escape" from ageing. A fantastic reversal of this conflict exists also in the well-known G. Wells' story. V. Pidmohylny is one of the few modernist writers of the 1920s who actualizes the problem of ageing in an absurd fight of the existential and ideological, in a counterposition to the attitude of that time's proletarian literature to devaluation, to the denial of ageing as one that can have a place in the "young" revolutionary world.

In gerontology, ageing is studied as a multidimensional process encompassing physical, psychological, and

social changes that individuals undergo as they progress through life. The scope of gerontology extends beyond mere biological ageing to consider the individual's interactions with their environment, their roles in society, their psychological well-being, and the cultural perceptions of ageing.

RESULTS

Social gerontology, a subset of gerontology, specifically focuses on the social aspects of ageing (Hooten, Pacheco, Smith, & Evans, 2022). It delves into how ageing individuals interact with their social environment, the roles they take on, the relationships they maintain, and how society perceives and treats older adults. Several theories have been proposed in social gerontology to elucidate these aspects. Disengagement theory postulates that as people age, they naturally withdraw from social interactions and societal roles (Zhang & Lin, 2022). This mutual withdrawal or disengagement is considered a normative and mutual process between the ageing individual and society. Contrary to the disengagement theory, the activity theory argues that continued activity and social interaction are beneficial for the elderly (Everitt, Davies, Wadsworth, & Yantha, 2023). It suggests that older adults will find more satisfaction in life if they remain active and maintain social interactions. Modernization theory suggests that the status of the elderly declines with modernization (Everitt, Davies, Wadsworth, & Yantha, 2023). As societies become more modern, older individuals might lose their traditional roles, leading to decreased respect and status for the elderly. In essence, these theories in social gerontology help in understanding the intricate dynamics between ageing individuals and the society they inhabit, providing insights into how societal structures, roles, and relationships evolve as individuals age.

The philosophical notion of existential aspects ("the existentials"), which are defined as "the modes of the existence of individuals and ways of revealing the qualities of the Self", as "phenomena of human existence", "the ways of human existence, the powers that constitute the human Self, as a sensory substratum of human existence", is traditionally associated with the key categories of existentialism and existential philosophy – fear, loneliness, death (Gagarin, 2002), anxiety, freedom, rebellion (Burkhanov, 2014). Some of the named existential aspects – loneliness as isolation, fear, thanatological anxiety, freedom are synthesized in the existential aspect of ageing. The legitimacy of its separation is confirmed by its features characteristic also peculiar to other existential aspects – "primary unrecognition, antinomy, immanent potentiality, and the permanent provocation of testing the wholeness" (an individual) etc. (Gagarin, 2002). In addition, the existential aspect of ageing actualizes the main "existential values" – freedom, isolation, nonsense, death, which Yalom (2004) has identified as the inevitable for people of their existential fear of death. This anxiety concerning the own finiteness, essentially is characteristic of the person (Tillich, 1995), as due to Bushansky (2017), indirectly refers to the problem of experiencing the passage of personal time, which becomes more acute with the ageing process. In the debate about the forms of psychological protection from the anxiety of death, Bushansky (2017) opposes infantile, escapist strategies of ageing to "space and time in which death is objectified".

Pigrov (2002) does not use the concept of "existential aspect of ageing", but interprets ageing under an existential perspective as a period of living "in the decline of the physical cycle", which is marked by fear. Many scientists describe old age from an existentialist position of self-identification of person's own essence – as a long-lasting situation of being on the final stage of this self-identification (Dneprova, 2002), as a stage of personal changes at which "the possibility of looking at the individual state of being opens up" (Sapogova, 2011). Among existential and psychological characteristics of "being old" Sapogova (2011) highlights the following: a feeling of being left fully alone, an intensification of the contemplation, "point" experiences of existential loneliness, an implicit feeling of uselessness, exhaustion of life, alienation from life, changes in the scale of the experience of one's own life, the experience of the "above-time present", conservatism in an established order, driven by the desire to preserve "one's own" reality, nostalgia, the initiative of preserving it. This detailed anamnesis of the psychology of ageing is important in the examination of the existential nature of old age and useful in literary and gerontological studies. Therefore, the philosophical category of existential aspects ("the existentials") can be used to describe specific psycho-existential situation of ageing, which enriches the terminological apparatus of literary gerontology.

Literary gerontology, which is currently gaining relevance mainly within the anthropology studios, with the trend spread in Western humanism is considered as an "add-on", "illustration" to sociological studies of ageing, as a "cultural tool" (Gaidash 2019b), whereas gerontological works are seen only as a "valuable resource" "for cross-disciplinary studios between gerontology and literary studies" (Gaidash 2019a), as "a material for gerontology", that "does not only reflects the society but is an organic part of it, which forms the society" (Falcus, 2015). This understanding of the subject and aim of literary gerontology raises doubts about the lack of epistemological self-sufficiency of literature (to please the Western pragmatism), which might focus on the (aesthetic, world-modelling) intrinsic value of the artistic text. The socialization of literature, it is understandable, dilutes its artistic richness.

Furthermore, the priority orientation of the Ukrainian literary gerontology towards detecting ageism and supporting its position, that is “the intensification of literary studies of age, in its rich and ever-changing forms, is necessary to object and overcome the limitation of intellectual, cultural, and societal borders [of age groups]” (Swinnen, Port, & Lipscomb, 2017) is needed to be reviewed. Without overstating the anti-ageing tasks of gerontology, literary in particular, it should be noted that in the diachronic perspective of Ukrainian literature the ageist attitudes are not relevant. Therefore, the anthropological-existential phenomenon of ageing should be studied not only from a sociological, but also from a poetic point of view (ideological and thematic, problematic and confrontational plane), particularly in the artistic representation of the existential situation of ageing as an extreme existing situation.

Literary gerontology abroad has been studying the dynamics of ageing, depicted in the literatures of other countries, for three decades, in its physiological, psychological and social aspects, the place of ageing in the author's and social picture of the world, ethics of intergenerational relationships, and gender (specifically female) specificity of ageing (Woodward, 2006; King, 2012). Literary and historical gerontology is gradually developing in Western Europe, especially Poland (examining the image of old age in various spheres of its manifestation in contemporary Polish literature, the conferences “Existential experience of ageing in literature” and “Ageing and other existential problems of an ancient and modern man” are being conducted (Czyzak, 2002). However, in Ukraine literary gerontology, still a “young” field, is represented now only by a significant study by Gaidash (2019a) devoted to the diachronic aspects of the representation of the discourse of ageing in the USA dramaturgy. Diachrony of artistic modelling of gerontogenesis, as well as mental, gender peculiarities of poetical embodiment of existential aspect of ageing in Ukrainian literature, has not yet been investigated. Thus, the study of stylistic, historical, and cultural uniqueness of artistic implementation of existential issues of ageing in Ukrainian modernist literature is groundbreaking.

DISCUSSION

The first and second waves of Ukrainian modernism, according to the concept by Pavlichko (1999) existed at the end of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century and brought renewal to the retrograde populist (*narodnytsku*) literature in the aspects of urbanism, feminism, psychologism, which opened up the possibilities for reflection of ageing in an existential key. The appearance of this theme (far from being self-contained, still integrated into broader themes of death, war, domestic helplessness, meaningless life) has not yet attracted the attention of scholars of the modernist project of Ukrainian literature of the verge of centuries, as, indeed, the proletarian literature of the 1920s, though it could be recalled. The works of major writers of that period (I. Franko, V. Stefanyk, M. Kotsyubynskiy, V. Pidmohyl'ny) covered in particular their texts belonging to the gerontological issue, have been studied in detail in Ukrainian literary studies, but without mentioning the existential aspect of ageing. The starting point in the article's examination of gender, psychological features of reproduction of personal history by the elderly protagonists of N. Kobrynska novels “Mrs. Shuminska” and “Mr. Judge” was the study of Melnyk (2016) “Old age and aging in the practice of writing Natalia Kobrynska”, which, however, does not focus on existential aspects of ageing in these texts, but on the “autobiographical pact” as a kind of a design of own unrealized fate on the image of a significantly older woman for her age.

However, the gerontological theme in the Ukrainian literature today has not been investigated, the methodological strategies of studying it taking into account including its national cultural specificity have not been formulated yet. This review of existential-philosophical, gerontological literature has allowed us to accumulate the concept of the existential aspect of ageing as a literary prism which focuses on the existential-psychological situation of the characters. Such methodological approach proved effective in the covering of national (cultural-historical, mental, gender) specificity of conceptualization of old age in Ukrainian modernist texts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in patriarchal, feminocentric, and attitudinal and stylistic models as well as in the format of existential-psychological revision of gerontophobic proletarian culture.

CONCLUSION

The article delves into literary gerontology, emphasizing the artistic portrayal of existential ageing. It aims to move beyond gerontophobia and stereotypes, focusing on the nuanced existential-psychological facets of ageing influenced by cultural, gender, and poetic elements. This perspective is contrasted with the narrative in G. Wells' “The story of the Late Mr. Elvisham”. In Ukrainian literature from the late 19th to early 20th centuries, existential ageing is often interwoven with themes like war and death, presenting ageing from an external viewpoint. Furthermore, female characters frequently bear more significant gerontological nuances, hinting at the distorted

maternal archetype.

The late 19th-century shift in literature revealed a feminocentric view on ageing, though often sidelined. Proletarian writings, inherently homophobic, further marginalized gerontological themes. Such tendencies prompted writers like V. Pidmohylnyi to voice opposition in their works. This piece serves as an essential reference for scholars in literature, sociology, and gerontology, offering insights into the portrayal of ageing in Ukrainian literature. As an introductory exploration, future research could expand on ageing's representation across different eras, integrate gender perspectives, and investigate various cultural and stylistic interpretations in Ukrainian literary works.

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