

# Challenges of Identity in *True stories* by Volodymyr Dibrova: Between KGB and Cultural Heritage

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This paper analyses the image of Ukrainian intellectual depicted in Volodymyr Dibrova's short story collection *Pravdyvi istorii* (True stories). It was published in 2010, though the short stories were written from 1970 to 2007. Through the image of an intellectual we are intended to consider challenges of national identity<sup>1</sup> at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th centuries. The image of intellectual in *Pravdyvi istorii* is at the center of the paper due to the reflective nature of this type of a character, her/his sensibility to social changes, and her/his impact on other people.

Volodymyr Dibrova is a writer, literary critic, and translator who was born in Donetsk in 1951. His first published book was the short story collection *Teksty z nazvamy i bez* (Titled and

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<sup>1</sup> Speaking about national identity, we understand it within the definition proposed by Antony Smith in his work *National Identities*, where nation described as «a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members» [37, 14], while national identity is defined through such fundamental features as an historic territory, or homeland, common myths and historical memories, common legal rights and duties for all members a common economy with territorial mobility for members [37, 14]. Furthermore, we use concepts Western (its components of the standard are historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology [37, 11]) and non-Western/ethnic (its distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture, vernacular culture, usually languages and customs [37, 11–12]) national identities as Antony Smith defined them.

untitled texts), 1990. In 1991 he published his second short story collection – *Pisni Bitlz* (The Beatle's songs). Dibrova also wrote short story cycle *Peltse* (published in a book of selected works in 2002), and collections *Pravdyvi istorii* (True stories), 2010, *Chaini zamalovky* (The tea sketches), 2012, *Perekazky* (Retold stories), 2013. Except for short fiction, the author works with such genres as a novel, play, and free verse.

Dibrova's texts were translated and published in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Scotland, Canada, USA and other countries. In 1996 Northwestern University Press published one volume of his selective works *Peltse and Pentameron* (translator – Halyna Hryn). In 2007 the novel *Andriivskiy uzviz* (Andriivs'kyi Descent) was awarded as a book of the year by BBC Ukraine. Furthermore, Volodymyr Dibrova translated into Ukrainian works of Kurt Vonnegut, Jerome Salinger, Blaise Pascal, Thomas Hardy. Dibrova was awarded Mykola Lukash prize for the translation of Samuel Beckett's novel *Watt*.

Dibrova's writing is often characterized as pre-postmodern. His texts are full of absurd, grotesque, language games, nevertheless so-called «high literature», the Canon, is an aesthetic orienteer for the author [28, 113]. Also, literary critics consider Volodymyr Dibrova a representative of the Kyiv school of ironic writing which was established in 1970. Literary scholar Ruslana Kharchuk states that the ironic style of Dibrova's writing was one of the most influential factors for the further domineering of ironic style in Ukrainian literature [28, 113]. What is more, Volodymyr Dibrova is called as a leader of the cultural underground in Kyiv [2, 19], meaning that his works represent nonconformist, underground art, which denied Soviet collectivism and party mass enthusiasm [28, 113].

Another key feature of the author's writing is the typical character of the texts. In Dibrova's stories, we might often meet an intellectual, while pseudo-intellectualism is a subject of the

author's devastating criticism. Kharchuk asserts that Dibrova's short story *Den Narodzhennia* (Birthday)<sup>2</sup> is one of the best short stories in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Furthermore, she notes: «If deconstruction of a poet's figure in the works of Andrukhovych turned out to be superficial (the poet Otto von F. from the novel *Moskoviada*, despite his insignificance, destroys the empire), Volodymyr Dibrova, rejecting all sentiments, «destroys» the Ukrainian pseudo-intellectual. The closest text in Ukrainian literature, related to *Den Narodzhennia*, is Taras Shevchenko's *To my fellow-countrymen, in Ukraine and not in Ukraine, living, dead and as yet unborn my friendly epistle*, addressed to the then Ukrainian pseudo-elite, as well as I. Franko's confession that he “does not love Russ”» [28, 110; 113]. Being acquainted with Volodymyr Dibrova's oeuvre and the main characteristics of his writing, we may proceed to a detailed analysis of the image of an intellectual in the short story collection *Pravdyvi istorii*.

### **Image of Ukrainian intellectual at the end of the 20th century: be on the margins.**

Reading *Pravdyvi istorii*, we might notice straight away that an intellectual is depicted as a marginal person. Volodymyr Dibrova in his short story collection represents different kinds of intellectuals: scholars, writers, journalists, painters. All of them are talented, but their works are not recognized by the broad public (academia, art institutions, Soviet people as readers, for example). And that is not only a matter of popularity.

Theoretic Florence Goyet<sup>3</sup> states that parochial structure is one of the basic features of the short story genre. An antithesis, explains the scholar, lies the foundation for constructing the plot

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<sup>2</sup> The short story *Den Narodzhennia* (Birthday) was published in the journal *Kurier Kryvbasu* nos. 7–8 in 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Florence Goyet is a Professor of General and Comparative Literature in University of Grenoble and the author of the work *The Classic Short Story, 1870-1925: Theory of a Genre* (Cambridge: Open Publisher, 2014).

and image of a character [18, 26]. In the short story collection *Pravdyvi istorii* an intellectual and the Soviet society are such antithesis. Distinctions and oppositions between them create a variety of conflicts that find their embodiment in the plots. Self-identification is one of the most striking differences between an intellectual and other characters in the short story collection? While co-called Soviet man/woman represents class identity<sup>4</sup>, an intellectual seeks self-identification through belonging to a nation and its culture.

In the short story collection *Pravdyvi istorii*, we may note a lot of similarities between the identification of certain types of characters (ordinary Soviet people) and class identity as Antony Smith describes it. «In Marx's sociology class is the supreme, indeed the only relevant, collective identity and the sole motor of history», - writes Smith, also highlighting that «the myth of the international brotherhood of the proletariat is widely accepted» [37, 14]. In *Pravdyvi istorii*, a representative of the proletariat is a person who works, has/trying to create a family (perceiving it as an economical and civil ally), obeys party rules, has a specific language (clericalism, cliches, party slogans, and rhetoric). Besides, predominantly an economic interest motivates such heroes who prefer to stick to common rules and norms.

For example, in «Druha pravdyva istoriia, pro zhinku, yaka diznaliasia, shcho v nei ye rodych za kordonom» (The Second True Story: About a Woman Who Discovered that She Has a Relative Abroad), that was written in 1995–1997, the main character is an ordinary woman. While trying to be like everyone else, she strives for better living conditions for herself and her family. Suddenly she discovers that she has a relative who lives abroad. Woman's friend, being aware of new political courses and perspectives, says to the main hero: «Can you imagine, now

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<sup>4</sup> Using the term class identity, we understand it as it is described in the work *National Identities* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1993) by Anthony Smith, p. 13–15.

we do not need to be afraid of anyone / Uivliaiesh, teper nam nikoho ne treba boiatysia» [13, 77]. Even though communication with foreign relative is not forbidden now, the woman struggles even with starting it. She perceives the relative as an instrument for obtaining material goods and is still afraid of being persecuted. Being concerned about her life, she took advice from her mother: «There is no need to run away from them, - suggested her mother - on the contrary, get closer and stick. So that they do not distinguish us from themselves at all. Then, if they want to scrape us, they will only it make worse for themselves / Ne tikaty vid nykh treba, - pidkazala yii maty, - a, navpaky, nablyzhtysia y prysmokatysia. Tak, shchob vony nas vid sebe zovsim ne vidriznialy. Todi, yakshcho vony i skhochut nas zishkreby, to tilky sobi hirshe zrobliat» [13, 82].

From the first glance, proletarian characters seem to be united, enthusiastic but the author disproves it. We may see that belonging to the party, to certain types of workers, to certain socio-economic groups can not substitute/be self-identification. The author also shows that despite proclaiming such values as hard work, unity, social fairness, proletarians deal with sabotage, unfairness, corruption, and hostility as everyone is at war with each other. That is close to Smith's claim that class can not be a proper basis for an identity: «The difficulty with treating social class as a basis for an enduring collective identity is its limited emotional appeal and lack of cultural depth. Whether we define 'class', with Marx, as a relationship to the means of production or, with Weber, as an aggregate of those with identical life-chances in the market, there are clear limits to any attempt to use class as a basis for a sense of identity and community. Classes, like gender divisions, are often territorially dispersed. They are also largely categories of economic interest, and are hence likely to subdivide according to differences in income and skill levels. Besides, economic factors are subject to rapid fluctuations over time; hence the chances

of retaining different economic groups within a class-based community are likely to be slim. Economic self-interest is not usually the stuff of stable collective identities» [37, 15].

The intellectual as a type of character in *Pravdyvi istorii* often might not have a regular job. Marriage is not an economic and civil ally for him, and he does not support/obey party rules, social norms of the Soviet people. This type of character has specific language (artistic, vivid, deep, reflective) and does not strive for economic goods. For example, Roman, a character from the short story «Piata pravdyva istoriia, pro dvokh druziv i dvokh podruzhek» (The Fifth True Story: About Two Friends and Two Girlfriends), is a lonely intellectual who, despite being a diligent, charismatic and insightful, has poor career in academia. Roman does not have money to publish his book and constantly gets rejections from publishers, newspaper editors: «fools from the newspaper rejected his article because he "writes in the wrong format." Yes, Roman told himself, I am not a fit for them. But who are their idols? Duffers and morons. The first flood will wash away everyone / nevihlasy z hazety zabrakuvaly yoho stattiu na tii pidstavi, shcho vin «pyshe ne v tomu formati». Tak, skazav Roman sobi, ya dlia nykh – pryshyi kobyli khvist. Ale khto zh yikhni kumyry? Nikchemy i trieshnyky. Persha zh povin vsikh zmyie» [13, 166].

While the majority of the characters in *Pravdyvi istorii* see themselves as Soviet people, an intellectual as a type of character thinks about his works (as well as himself) in the European context. Characterizing Roman's achievement in literature, the narrator states: «This Roman's discovery finally solves the problem of fate in national, and perhaps in world literature / Romanove vidkryttia ostatochno vyrishuie problemu doli u vitchyzniani, a y mozhlyvo, u svitovii literaturi» [13, 157]).

Since an intellectual uses another national language, relies on other cultural traditions, and is not pragmatic by his nature, the dialog between him and the broader public (typical Soviet person) is impossible. Therefore works of an intellectual can not be recognized. Nevertheless, the tension between the desire of an intellectual to share his knowledge and the inability of the public to perceive his messages is a basis for many stories' plot. The fact of communicating by two different codes is often represented with the help of absurdism. And the literary form to represent such conflicts is also remarkable. From the one side, short story, as theoretics states<sup>5</sup>, is a highly suitable genre for exaggeration, grotesque, cliché, stereotypes, which are preferable artistic means for the author. But from the other side, that is one more opposition to the dominant culture and its recipients.

**Image of Ukrainian intellectual at the end of the 20th century: short fiction and colonialism.** It may be stated that a novel was one of the mainstream genres of Soviet literature. «Nowhere has Soviet Socialist Realism been more conventionalized than in the subject of this inquiry, the novel» [10, 3], claims Katherine Clark, who in her book *The Soviet Novel: History as a Ritual* (1986) explores authors that «deliberately followed the conventions of Social Realism, doctrine of mandatory partijnost'» [10, ix]. While the novel was the essence of Soviet Socialist Realism, short story seems to be a far less preferable form of artistic thought for that period.

Short story is a highly suitable form for expressing an individual voice. According to Martin Scofield, Frank O'Connor in his work *The Lonely Voice* (1962), was one of the first to speak of this genre as one of the best forms to reveal the individual voice, which is highly important for democracy. Even today, writes Martin Scofield, when we know about different segments of

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<sup>5</sup> Such features of the short story as a genre were pointed out and described by Florence Goyet in her book *Classic Short Stories 1870-1925: Theory of a Genre* (Cambridge: Open Publisher, 2014).

American society, a short story still plays a leading role in understanding ethnic/social groups [38, 8–9]. In *The Lonely Voice* (1962) Frank O'Connor asserts that a short story is a highly preferred form for colonial cultures. Writers from unstable/unsettled societies, artists who oppose society (its current values and beliefs) favor this genre. The empires, on the contrary, hardly ever fully develop such a genre as a short story [32, 9, 12]. Thus, O'Connor notes the flourishing of the genre in Ireland, in the southern United States, in colonial societies such as New Zealand and western India [32, 12]. That may be one point to consider short story as an unpreferable genre for soviet mass culture. Speaking about Ukrainian short story of the soviet period, literary critics of the end of the XX century often described it as a secondary genre that depicts only the life of villagers. Such claims can not be precise, taking into consideration the history of Ukrainian short fictional forms.

Short fictional forms in Ukrainian literature have an ancient history and prominent pieces of high aesthetic quality. As Dmytro Chyzhevsky notes, literature of the XI–XIII centuries was one of the decisive cultural phenomena, and the short story of the XI century belonged to the best works of old Kyiv literature [9, 210, 90]. Such multivolume academic publications as *Istoriia ukrainskoi literatury 19 stolittia* (History of Ukrainian literature of the XIX century) edited by M. Yatsenko, *Istoriia ukrainskoi literatury XX stolittia* (History of Ukrainian literature of the XX century) edited by V. Donchyk, note that short fiction was actively developing at the beginning of the XIX century [22, 355–356]. And the end of XIX in Ukrainian literature is characterized by domineering of short fictional genres that were developed and diversified<sup>6</sup> [22, 14]. As stated in

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<sup>6</sup> As it is stated in *Istoriia ukrainskoi literatury 19 stolittia* (History of Ukrainian literature of the XIX century) «the most common form of short fictional prose genres becomes a short story, namely social and domestic. Historical stories, fairy tales (introduced into literature by Marko Vovchok), and the genre of fictional sketch are also actively developing / I naiposhyrenishoiu formoiu maloi prozy zнову staie opovidannia, a same sotsialno-pobutove. Aktyvno rozvyvaiutsia y istorychne opovidannia, kazkove (ioho vvodyt v literaturu Marko Vovchok), zhanr khudozhnoho narysu» [22, 194–195].

*Istoriia ukrainskoi literatury XX stolittia* (History of Ukrainian literature of the XX century), at the beginning of the XX century, Ukrainian prose «was marked by a high level of development (thematic richness, genre completeness, stylistic diversity), the peak of its development was the works of Kotsyubynsky, Kobylyanska, Stefanyk, Cheremshyna, Martovych. Given that the political perturbations and dramatic events of the revolution and war hindered the observation and development of large-scale plans, poetry, as well as stories, essays, sketches as mobile genres become the main form of artistic response to demands and impulses of life / vidznachalasia vysokym rivnem rozvytku (tematychno bahatstvo, zhanrova povnota, stylove rozmaittia), vershynoiu yii rozvytku byly tvory Kotsiubynskoho, Kobylianskoi, Stefanyka, Cheremshyny, Martovycha. Zvazhaiuchy na te, shcho politychni zburennia i dramatychni podii revoliutsii ta viiny pereshkodzhaly observatsii ta vynoshuvanniu masshtabnykh zadumiv, to same poeziia, a takozh opovidannia, narys, etiud yak mobilni zhanry staiut osnovnoiu formoiu khudozhnoho reahuvannia na zapyty y impulsy zhyttia» [23, 440]. Active functioning of Ukrainian short fictional forms in the beginning of the XX century led to development of genre's theory and numerous theoretical discussions. As states Vasyl Fashchenko, the most intensive of them were held in 1960–1980 [16, 13]. During discussions, certain theoreticians (V. Fashchenko, H. Maifet, Yu. Martych) perceived Ukrainian short fiction of the Soviet period as the development of aesthetic means of the genre, renewal of poetics. Other theoreticians and critics (I. Kachurovsky, I. Denysiuk) presented Ukrainian short fiction as a secondary genre that depicts the life of the villagers<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Igor Kachurovsky in his work *Short Story as a Genre* (Novelia yak zhanr, 1958) mentions an article by Ivan Koshelivets entitled Notes on the Ukrainian novel (Notatky pro ukrainskyi roman) where Koshelivets argues that the Ukrainian novel, in fact, does not exist. So Kachurovsky continues this thought and states that the same can be said about the short story: «french novel, Italian opera, Ukrainian song – this is the concept. But such a concept as "Ukrainian short story", unfortunately, we do not know» [27, 28].

Clearly, mentioned perception of ukrainian short story (and short fictional forms) was formed due to censorship, prohibition of certain works and authors, and imperial cultural policies. Nevertheless, in *Pravdyvi istorii* Ukrainian writer Roman works in that genre. The narrator characterizes Roman's works as an urban, intellectual, aesthetic writing that is topical in world context. Thus we may state that the author juxtaposes not only self-identification of the intellectual and proletariat, but also the forms of expressing those identities. While the proletariat prefers long, more conformistic forms, the intellectual chooses more laconic and individual forms. The intellectual perceives a short story as a form that reflects features of current time, which highlights retrograde nature of the Soviet mainstream.

For example, students from the story «Lavra», writer Roman from the story «Piata pravdyva istoriia, pro dvokh druziv i dvokh podruzhek («The Fifth True Story: About Two Friends and Two Girlfriends») prefer short fiction. Urban thematics and high aesthetic qualities distinguish it. The narrator gives the following characteristics for Roman's writing: «Neither is it a novel, nor poem or philosophical treatise. It is a combination of all three genres but in the form of short aphoristic plots. Poetry in prose with elements of the drama. As intensive as the drops of the essence. Or flashes of electric welding machines / Tse – ne roman, ne epichna poema, i ne filosofskyi traktat. Tse – vsi try zhanry razom uziati, ale v formi korotkykh aforystychnykh

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Kachurovsky also writes that Ukrainian short story and world short story cannot be compared because these phenomena are disproportionate. The short story remained the weakest point in the Ukrainian literature of the period of the Vidrodzhenia, and there is no need to talk about the short story in the modern literature of Soviet Ukraine at all. Kachurovsky continues his arguments by the following statements: «This is not surprising: a short story in which the highest artistic truth of existence creates an unexpected solution is impossible in a completely false literary beach of social realism. In our emigration literature, a short story did not occupy its proper population.» [27, 28–29]. I. Denysiuk in the work *Development of Ukrainian short prose of the XIX - early XX centuries* (Rozvytok ukrainskoi maloi prozy XIX - pochatku XX st., 1981) notes that the Ukrainian short story is not developed. Also, he writes that in Ukrainian literature the folk short story did not often turn into a literary short story. The researcher also notes that there were early novelistic tendencies that were most pronounced in Russian literature. He also adds that in Ukrainian literature the story has developed more due to rural themes [11, 45].

siuzhetiv. Prozova poeziia z elementamy dramy. Za nasychenistiu tse yak krapli esentsii. Abo spalakhy elektrozvariuvalnykh aparatyv» [13, 15].

Another characteristic of Roman's short fiction highlights that the form is on the agenda: «micro-plots. Like the trajectory of spiritual searching. Or the dotted sketch of the epoch's portrait. Because our clipped time demands a new clipped genre. And who will make it? Roman / mikro-siuzhety. Yak traiektoriia dukhovnykh poshukiv. Chy yak nakydanyi punktyrom portret epokhy. Bo nash pochykryzhenyi chas vymahaie novoho zhanru. I khto yoho stvoryt? Roman» [13, 166]. In *Pravdyvi istorii* Roman's short fiction is described as world-ranking («This Roman's discovery finally solves the problem of fate in domestic, but perhaps in world literature / Romanove vidkryttia ostatochno vyrishuie problemu doli u vitchyzniani, a y mozhlyvo, u svitovii literaturi» [13, 157]) and up-to-time genre. Let us look closer at the features of that period to understand better which peculiarities of the historic period short fiction helps to depict.

Characters from the short story collections (texts were written from 1980–2007) constantly mentioning social changes: «The transition period was still going on outside, and the news was flashing on the TV – if not about the flood, then about the fire, or about the fraud, or about some fight / Na dvori vse shche tiahlas perekhidna epokha, a v televizori blymaly novyny – yak ne pro povin, tak pro pozhezhu, yak ne pro shakhraistvo, tak pro yakus kolotnechu» [13, 124]. Another character also notes new social perturbations: «The wind of change, which was then blowing from all sides, brought both disappointment and hope / Viter zmin, yakyi todi viiav z usikh bokiv, nis yak rozcharuvannia, tak i nadiiu» [13, 163].

For many characters of *Pravdyvi istorii* mentioned changes were highly traumatic: «therefore, the perception of double standards and the triumph of the new rules, she perceived as a personal drama and the victory of the boor / Tomu zanepad podviinykh standartiv i triumf novykh pravyl

vona spryniala yak osobystu dramu i peremohu khama» [13, 219]. The reason for the traumatic character of the changes is their radical nature: «Previously, the choice was whether you were a guard or a prisoner. But conditions have changed / Ranishe ves vybir zvydyvsia do toho, shcho ty vartovyi abo viazen. Ale zh umovy zminylysia» [13, 58].

Admittedly, writer as a type of character in *Pravdyvi istorii* prefers short fictional forms. We may explain the preference noting that working in this genre the intellectual: 1) expresses his individual voice and opposes to the mainstream Soviet culture, 2) perceps Ukrainian literature as full-fledged, rejecting its colonial status, 3) has a suitable artistic means to explicit turbulent, unstable, undefined, traumatic nature of certain period. As we noted, social changes and new policies was traumatic for many characters of *Pravdyvi istorii*. Despite living in independent Ukraine and having more abilities to explore and express their identity, characters struggle with that. Many characters still brightly remember persecutions and other KGB practices, while the memory about their cultural heritage is vanished.

#### **Image of the Ukrainian intellectual at the end of the 20th century: partial memory.**

While Anthony Smith speaks about the category of social class as a type of collective socio-economic identity, he mentions an ancient tragedy about Oedipus: «There arc many motifs, and more than one level, in Sophocles' play. But the question of identity, collective as well as individual, broods over the action. 'I will know who I am!': the discovery of self is the play's motor and the action's inner meaning. But each 'self that Oedipus uncovers is also a social self, a category and a role, even when it proves to be erroneous for Oedipus» [33, 13]. Noting how fragile is an identification thorough belonging to the social class, Smith notices that «Oedipus' fear that he prove to be 'slave-born' mirrors the ancient Greek fears of slavery and poverty - fears that have often provided the motors of political action, even when slavery was replaced by

serfdom» [33, 13]. Similar to Oedipus, representatives of the proletariat in *Pravdyvi istorii* have a fear of belonging to a certain social group/having certain identifications. Some characters declare this fear, others reveal it through suppression of memories.

In the story «Piata pravdyva istoriia, pro dvokh друзiv i dvokh podruzhek» (The Fifth True Story: About Two Friends and Two Girlfriends) we may notice that grandparents of the main character have the fear of their origin: «Later he figured out that on his father's side all his ancestors were kurkili, for which they were destroyed...The only one who could be mentioned without looking back was his great-grandfather, who managed to die before the revolution / Piznishe diznavsia vin, shcho po batkovii linii vsi yoho predky byly kurkuliamy, za shcho yikh i znyschchyly. Yedynyi pro koho mozhna bulo, ne ozyraiuchys, zghaduvaty, buv yoho pradiid, yakyi vstyh pomerty do revoliutsii» [13, 202–203].

Fear is also a constant feature of characters who witnessed WWII or got through post-war times: «My grandfather constantly afraid of being taken away because he worked in the occupied territories when he was young. He dreamed of going to the disaster and see how it will smash everyone / did postiino boiavsia shcho yoho zaberut, bo vin u molodosti pratsiuvav na okupovunii terytorii. Mriiav khozhyty do katastrofy i podyvytyisia yak vona vsim rozdast» [13, 217].

Also, characters are afraid to speak about the past as it may reveal not only their origin, but their choices, traumas as well. It is typical of a significant number of characters: «Parents did not like to recollect the past. «May we not mention» - they often said about certain historical events / Batky ne liubyly zghaduvaty mynule. «Bodai ne zghaduvaty» - chasto kazaly vony pro deiaki storychni podii» [13, 202]. The main hero of the story «The Sixth True Story: About the Newlyweds» (Shosta pravdyva istoriia, pro molodiat) complains that parents are not speaking

about the past, being terrified. His son also prefers not to talk about it, thinking that his generation just can ignore the past: «That, - said Dima, is much better than what you were doing at our age. You knew about the crimes of the regime but kept silent. That is why you are in the dirt / Tse, – skazav Dima, – nabahato krashche, nizh te, shcho vy robyly v nashomu vitsi. Vy znaly pro zlochyny vlady, ale movchaly. Tomu vy vsi zamarani» [13, 236]. The phenomenon of partial memory noticed not only Volodymyr Dibrova. Writer, literary scholar, and researcher of Dibrova's work Serhii Ivaniuk states: «The consciousness of our generation, for the most part, has remained as if dotted by sun bunnies – random bright spots, which, unfortunately, do not illuminate the overall picture / Svidomist nashoho pokolinnia zdebilshoho tak i zalyshylasia niby potsiatkovanoiu soniachnymy zaichkamy – vypadkovymy svitlymy pliamamy, yaki, na zhal, zahalnoi kartyny ne vysvitliuiut» [24, 543].

Stories from the collection *Pravdyvi istorii* demonstrate a deeply rooted fear of speaking about national identity. This fear led to a lack of memories and numerous challenges in having national identity. Since the author thinks about the ways to deal with the challenges, he emphasizes the need for cultural changes, while escape and migration are shown as not effective solutions.

As Anthony Smith states: «We can term this non-Western model an 'ethnic' conception of the nation. Its distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture. A nation, in other words, was first and foremost a community of common descent» [33, 11–12]. While the older generation, depicted in *Pravdyvi istorii*, was terrified to speak about their origin and ancestors, the younger generation does not know the roots, thereafter, does not know to which culture they belong. Heroes of the short story «Lavra» are students who have an ambition to become writers. Suddenly they figured out an unknown burial which is a symbol of the

present and unknown history: «And what have we seen in your life? Tell me honestly. You and I are literally sitting on mountains of plots. Real. Unimagined. But how do you get them out of these skeletons? There is always something to write about. It's snotty compared to what these shooters... could tell us / Ta i shcho my z toboiu bachyly u zhytti? Skazhy chesno. My z toboiu bukvalno sydymo na horakh siuzhetiv. Spravzhnikh. Nevvyhadanykh. Ale yak ty yikh vytyahнеш iz tsykh kistiakiv? Zavzhdy znaidetsia pro shcho pysaty. Tse shmarkli porivniano z tym, shcho mohly b rozkazaty nam tsi, rozstriliani...» [13, 8].

Not only characters in *Pravdyvi istorii* are afraid to speak about their roots, but also they do not have their language and culture, an important elements of identity. Anthony Smith states «Genealogy and presumed descent ties, popular mobilization, vernacular languages, customs and traditions: these are the elements of an alternative, ethnic conception of the nation, one that mirrored the very different route of nation-formation travelled by many communities in Eastern Europe and Asia and one that constituted a dynamic political challenge» [33, 12–13]. A lot of characters *Pravdyvi istorii* speak about the death of the language: «And the language perished. Which language are you using at home to talk with your kids? Ha? Keep silent? That is right. And so am I, because there is no language! / I mova zahynula. Vdoma ty z zhinkoiu, z ditmy yakoiu rozmovliaesh? Ha? Movchysh? Oto zh... I ya tak samo. Bo nema yii, movy!» [13, 45].

Suffering from socio-economical and cultural issues, few characters in *Pravdyvi istorii* consider migration as a chance of escaping from Soviet life («Therefore, the only hope is abroad. Because there is no truth here / Tomu yedyna nadiia zakordon. Bo tut nemaie pravdy» [13, 89]). Since characters have an ethnic model of national identity, they can't migrate, integrate, or accept the identity of the new country. «Whereas the Western concept laid down that an individual had to belong to some nation but could choose to which he or she belonged, the non-Western or

ethnic concept allowed no such latitude. Whether you stayed in your community or emigrated to another, you remained ineluctably, organically, a member of the community of your birth and were for ever stamped by it», says Anthony Smith [33, 11].

The main character of the story «The Fourth True Story: About a Woman Waiting For a Bus / Chetverta pravdyva istoriia, pro zhinku, yaka chekala avtobus» is a woman who dreams to move abroad and have happy life without problems she is having at homelend. Nevertheless, getting abroad she was disappointed: «Oh, – she finally exhaled. That's what you can hold on to. For your own. Everything else can come and go at any time. How stupid I was! I wandered to the edge of the earth, looking around the world for what I already have from birth. Swamp is better than this ocean. It is not for our man / zhinka bachyt prostory i pochynaie mlity ta zadykhatys. Todi distaie zemliu z batkivshchyny «Fukh! - nareshti, vydykhnula vona. Ot za shcho mozha trymatysia. Za svoie. Vse inshe bud-koly mozhut pryity i zabraty. Yaka zh ya bula durna! Zabrela na krai zemli, shukaiuchy po svitakh te, shcho ya vzhe maiu vid narodzhennia. Krashche boloto, ale svoie, nizh takyi okean. Vin – ne dlia nashoi liudyny [13, 135]. The woman from the mentioned story is struggling to understand Western culture and a category of a choice that is inherent to it. Each character that tried to start life in a new country failed: «Because from what she saw here, the woman understood that freedom is like a bird. No matter how fluffy the feathers are, there must be iron bones, elastic muscles, and healthy veins. Supervisors with whips do not seem to be visible here, but this does not mean that they do not exist at all. If they want everything to prosper for them, everyone must be their own overseer and whip themselves from time to time. What kind of life is this? All the time you are seen, and nowhere to deviate from the rules. Why then are they so relaxed? Are they fooling around? But how and whom will you ask about it? / Bo z toho, shcho pobachyla tut, zhinka zrozumila, shcho svoboda – tse yak ptashka.

Yakym by pukhnastym ne bulo piria, pid nym musiat buty zalizni kistky, pruzhni miazky ta nezashlakovani zhyly. Nahliadachiv iz batohamy tut, nachebto, ne vydno, ale tse ne oznachaie, shcho yikh vazhali nema. Yakshcho vony khochut, shchob vse u nykh protsvitalo, kozhen povynen sam sobi buty nahliadachem, shche y vriady-hody batozhyty sebe. Shcho tse za zhyttia? Ves chas na vydnoti, i nide ne mozna vidstupyty vid pravyl. Chomu zh todi vony taki rozslableni? Chy tse vony pryduriuiutsia? Ale yak ty i v koho pro tse rozpytaiesh?» [13, 134]. Analyzing characters in *Pravdyvi istorii* we may note that their identities are close to non-Western or ethnic type of identity as Antony Smith described it. Due to the importance of roots and origin, customs and traditions for this type of identity, we may understand why the author emphasizes the special importance of the theme of partial memory and amnesia.

**Conclusions.** The character of the story «Piata pravdyva istoriia, pro dvokh druziv i dvokh podruzhek» (The Fifth True Story: About Two Friends and Two Girlfriends) Bohdan characterise typical Soviet person in a following way: «Another extra person can not fit into the turn. There are millions of them here. Belch of the previous era / Cherhova zaiva liudyna ne mozhe vpysatysia v povorot. Takykh tut miliony. Vidryzhka poperednoi epokhy» [13, 154]. This fits many characters of *Pravdyvi istorii*: «the life of each of them is like a separate story or fairy tale. The plot is always more or less universal. But within it, the hero can move as he pleases. And this Roman's discovery finally solves the problem of fate in national, and perhaps in world literature / Zhyttia kozhnoho z nykh – tse yak okreme opovidannia chy kazka. Siuzhet zavzhdy bilsh-mensh universalnyi. Ale v yoho mezhakh heroi mozhe rukhatysia yak zavhodno. Y tse Romanove vidkryttia ostatochno vyrishuie problemu doli u vitchyzniani, a y mozhlyvo, u svitovii literaturi [13, 157]. The comment belongs to the narrator of the story «Piata pravdyva istoriia, pro dvokh druziv i dvokh podruzhek» (The Fifth True Story: About Two Friends and

Two Girlfriends). He means characters of Roman's fiction. But what does the narrator mean by saying that Romas solves the problem of fate in national, and perhaps in world literature? Ancient Greek tragedy may help us. As written by A. Smith about Oedipus and the issue of identity: «Only after the shattering revelation of 'who he is' does he begin to glimpse the meaning of his destiny» [37, 12]. The character of the story «The Sixth True Story: About the Newlyweds» (Shosta pravdyva istoriia, pro molodiat), tells his son that he was not able to speak about the past, so in order to have a fulfilled life, the young generation has to do it. But their representatives are not interested, which leads to serious challenges. The father says to his son: «we are not able to describe all that we knew and what burned us. This is a tough paradox. That's why we relied on you so much. Because you are our first generation, which has not suffered any repressions or even hardships. It would seem that write, comprehend... Besides, - he said to his stepfather, - and the trouble is that you do not have teachers. And you are not capable of anything. But until you solve everything that we, your parents and grandparents, have screwed up, you will not be able to move anywhere. You will never get rid of it. And it will drag you to the bottom again / my y ne zdatni opysaty vse te, shcho znaly, i shcho nam peche. V tsomu – zhorstkyi paradoks. Ot chomu my na vas tak pokladalysia. Bo vy u nas – pershe pokolinnia, yake ne zaznalo ni represii, ni, navit, skruty. Zdavalosia b, pyshit, osmysliuite...U tomu zh, - skavav vitchym, – i bida, shcho u vas nemaie vchyteliv. A sami vy ni na shcho ne zdatni. Ale doky vy ne rozviahete vse, shcho my, vashi batky y didy, nakrutyly, vy nide ne zmozhete rukhatys. Vy vid toho nikoly ne zvilnytes. Y vono znovu zatiahne vas na dno» [12, 236].

Narrator's comment about Roman's discovery that finally solves the problem of fate in national, and perhaps in world literature (people and nations can not meet their destinies if they do not know who they are) might not sound pathetic. Especially if we are thinking about it in the

context of self-identification challenges in Europe after WWII. So Dibrova shows these challenges of many postcolonial countries in a more intensive (grotesque and absurd manner), since as states V. Chernetsky, «Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, The notion of post-coloniality was embraced also by intellectuals in a number of newly independent post-Soviet Nations and, perhaps, nowhere more eagerly than in Ukraine» [8, 215]. Partial memory, fear of belonging, death of the language, and decline of the culture are described by the author as the biggest issues that lie on the shoulders of next generations.

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