

Literature of the Era in One Face

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## Interdisciplinary Literary Studies

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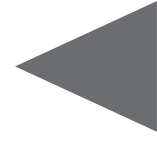
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# Representation of the Atomic Tragedy as a Unique Historical and Cultural Experience in Ukrainian and Japanese Literature of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

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## ABSTRACT

*The relevance of the study of the literary processes of Ukraine and Japan is determined by the interest in atomic issues around world, the desire to think through different strategies of behavior in the event of a disaster, and to reflect the reality from the scene of the event. The purpose of this article is to understand the cultural and historical experience of Ukrainian and Japanese literature in the context of modern literary ecocriticism. The atomic tragedy in Ukrainian and Japanese literature was represented with the help of plot, genre, and problem-thematic complexes. In these works, attention is focused on mystical and nostalgic motifs, and in the Ukrainian works, on national and symbolic images and traditions. In particular, the key parameters of the texts were considered in view of their thematic and formal content. An idea was formed about the nature of the works written within the framework of atomic problems from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The results of*

*this study were compared with the results of other scientists on the topic—in particular, nuclear disasters of man-made origin.*

**KEYWORDS:** *ecocriticism, bibliotherapeutic effect, cultural layers, symbolism, nation-building motifs*

## INTRODUCTION

The study of the processing of literary plots related to atomic disasters is important in the context of the fact that they consider the primary problems of humanity and develop possible ways to solve them. It should be noted that nuclear tragedies caused by human negligence have a negative impact on the life of society as a whole, therefore literature is designed to form whole individuals with an understanding of the importance of controlling man-made processes on Earth. A comparison of several experiences (in particular, Ukrainian and Japanese) is necessary in the context of understanding the national codes of this or that literary tradition. Since books have a bibliotherapeutic effect, it is important to talk about the memories of the tragedy. But it is necessary to not only develop a love of nature but also understand the threat to humanity that mistakes can pose and the consequences they can have for many years. It is about fostering responsibility and an understanding of importance.

It should be noted that each nation represents and interprets similar facts and events differently; at the same time, the topic of atomic energy is also perceived differently by readers. Therefore, the relevance of the topic of the work is due to the need to understand the national specificity of the understanding of one problem in the works of Ukrainian and Japanese writers—in particular, allegorical-symbolist, nation-building, or mystical. Through literary works, authors convey narratives, in particular, about the importance of transforming existing patterns of behavior in society in the direction of caring for the natural environment. The relevance of this work is also determined by the urgent need to understand the importance of the formation of literary patterns of interaction with the audience in society.

M. Vardanian (2022) notes that Ukrainian works related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, created in the genre of eco-fiction, actively promote ecocritical theory. Children's literature often reinterprets the accident from the point of view of the cultural memory of Ukrainians and helps

them cope with the traumatic experience, especially negative memories and visions. Modern Ukrainian literature is an effective means of educating students in the spirit of spirituality and patriotic feelings. O. Trukhan (2022) emphasizes in his work that noncompliance with safety techniques during the Chernobyl disaster was caused by the sociopolitical system—in particular, the imperial authoritarian regime of Soviet Moscow and the Soviet government, which did not care about human safety. I. V. Grigorenko (2020) points out that it took about a year to reinterpret the Chernobyl tragedy in literature because by this period society had already reacted appropriately to the catastrophic consequences of the atomic tragedy, considered its causes, and made certain conclusions. Researchers I. Nikolina and R. Marek (2022) draw attention to the fact that the Chernobyl disaster was caused by the mistakes of the Soviet Union—in particular, technical deficiencies in construction work and safety measures. The nuclear accident became a kind of symbol of totalitarianism due to it being a man-made disaster that arose from a disregard for human life and the preservation of ideological interests (Gudkov et al. 2017).

Japanese literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has a unique genre of atomic bomb literature called *gembaku bungaku*. The literary treatment of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is especially interesting because these incidences essentially created a particular genre of atomic bomb literature that was unique to Japan (Jimenez 2018). M. O. Kravets (2022) represents the Japanese literature of the nuclear bomb, studying the pictorial means used and testifying to the gravity of literary works as compared to diary entries and documentary evidence. Special attention is paid to social problems; in particular, the scale of the tragedy, overcoming the tragic consequences for humanity, and the struggle for nuclear safety are considered. In contrast to the totalitarian symbolism of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Japanese literature, for example, views the Fukushima accident of 2011 as a symbol of the complex challenges and risks associated with nuclear power, natural disasters, and technological failures in modern society.

The purpose of this study is to understand the literary processes of Ukraine and Japan in the context of the artistic reinterpretation of atomic issues in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the peculiarities of the genre, composition, plot, and motive structure, as well as the main problem-thematic layers. The works of Ukrainian and Japanese authors related to atomic issues are considered in this work.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The theoretical basis of this study is the work related to atomic problems and security issues. In particular, scientific articles and monographs of scientists who were engaged in active studies of atomic tragedies in the world were considered. The cultural and historical causes and consequences of such cataclysms were evaluated. An idea was formed about various concepts and formulas for understanding and maintaining nuclear safety in the world. The analytical-synthetic method in this study was used to address key issues related to nuclear safety and energy worldwide. Literary patterns of character behavior and figurative, plot, and compositional schemes were also evaluated. All theoretical works are related to the understanding of atomic problems in the socio-humanitarian, cultural-historical, and social planes. Analysis of the works of modern authors showed how important it is to understand the causes and consequences of man-made disasters in the modern world.

This article considers and analyzes the works of Ukrainian and Japanese authors, specifically *What Remains After All* by M. Kawakami (2011), *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure* by H. Furukawa (2016), *Sweet Future* by B. Yoshimoto (2013), *Chornobyl: Sketches from Nature* by O. Veklenko (2019), *Chornobyl Madonna* by I. Drach (1988), and *Mary with Wormwood at the End of the Century* by V. Yavorivskyi (2016). These works were interpreted in regard to problem-thematic complexes and stylistic and genre components.

Literary analysis of the work included various aspects, including problematic and thematic (theme, problems, motives, images, plot) and artistic (genre and compositional specifics). Key features of works from Ukrainian and Japanese literature were analyzed. Each presented sample was evaluated from the position of various atomic problems. The meaning of national and biblical images in and the composition and plot of the works were understood, and an idea was formed about their motive structure, artistic value, and aesthetic qualities. The interpretive analysis was aimed at studying the main issues related to the transcoding of the image system, plots, motifs, national codes, symbols, metaphors, and allegories. With the help of this method, works from Ukrainian and Japanese literature, different in genre and thematic characteristics, were interpreted. The connection between national identity and the understanding of atomic issues by various authors was investigated.



Comparative and contrastive analyses were carried out on the basis of the study's results and research of other scientists. With the help of this analysis, parallels were also drawn between the Ukrainian and Japanese versions of the consideration of atomic issues, on the basis of which certain conclusions were drawn regarding the similarity or difference of various forms of interpretation of the same topic. A table was presented that showed the parameters for comparing the works of Ukrainian and Japanese authors. Therefore, the following methods were used in this study: interpretive, literary, comparative-comparative, and analytical-synthetic analysis, each of which is necessary for understanding various aspects and parameters of a literary work. The combination of different methods made it possible to reveal genre, style, compositional, and plot features of works from Ukrainian and Japanese literature.

## RESULTS

The accident at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, of man-made origin, occurred on April 26, 1986, and is considered an ecological and humanitarian disaster caused by two thermal explosions, which led to the destruction of the fourth power unit of the power plant. The radiation accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant occurred on March 11, 2011, as a result of the largest earthquake and tsunami in Japan, recorded as the worst nuclear disaster since the Chornobyl accident in 1986 (Serrano-Munoz 2019). The understandings of the atomic tragedy in Ukrainian and Japanese literature are identical in terms of assessing the scale of the disaster, striving to establish a connection between man and nature, and trying to analyze the causes and consequences of accidents in order to prevent similar disasters in the future (Chukurna et al. 2022). In both Ukrainian and Japanese literature, there is an assessment of the activities of government and the purpose of man as a whole. However, in Ukrainian works, this problem unfolds also in an allegorical and symbolic way and on a national scale: the lack of understanding of the connection with nature is associated with the extinction of the nation. At the same time, Japanese literature considers the topic of man-made disasters more locally as an actual lived experience, which is reflected in the genres of memoirs and notes (Table 1).

TABLE 1 Common and Distinctive Features Between the Reflection of Ukrainian and Japanese Historical and Cultural Experience

Parameter of the Work	Ukrainian	Japanese
The presence of ecocriticism	+	+
Understanding the tragedy on a national scale	+	—
Formation of connection between man and nature	+	+
Understanding the causes and consequences of the tragedy	+	+
Use of autobiographical elements	+	+
Comprehension of the problem through reference to biblical images and allusions	+	—
Deep psychology	+	+
Mystical images and characters	—	+
Nostalgic motifs	—	+
Bibliotherapeutic effect	—	+
Appeal to national images and symbols	+	+

### *Ukraine Historical and Cultural Experience*

*Chornobyl Madonna* is a perfect example of I. Drach's poetic work (1988). In terms of genre, this work can be defined as a mosaic poem with a unique composition, which is maintained thanks to the image of the Madonna in various allegorical and symbolic transformations: the soldier's mother, the peasant Madonna, the Khreshchatyk Madonna, the Chornobyl Madonna. The author transforms the biblical story, presenting it in an antithetical light; in particular, Mary is interpreted as the mother of the antichrist. At the same time, Madonna is the personification of the natural environment, and the planet is presented as her sick child (Grigorenko 2020). Understanding the subject of the Chornobyl disaster is marked by autobiographical notes since the poet's son, being a graduate of the medical institute, got into the hottest spots in order to evacuate the population, where he received a dose of radiation. So, two layers of imagery intersect in the poem:

1. The Chornobyl accident as a father's personal grief
2. The Chornobyl accident as a tragedy of national scale

The poet gives a generalized image of the children of the twentieth century who lost their human face due to ignoring moral principles, which

resulted in loss of the spiritual principle. It was indifference and irresponsibility that led to the lost generation. The biblical parable of Herod and Pilate is subject to the author's interpretation: I. Drach (1988) emphasizes that moral and ethical categories are not abstract, but quite material. The writer shows that people should stop on their way to scientific discovery if it could potentially harm nature, drawing a parallel between the lack of oxygen and water and the lack of beauty and humanity.

I. Drach (1988) employs an allegorical and symbolic style, transforming the biblical Madonna into a complex emblem of nature and the planet to lend cosmic significance. The shifting diction interplays poetic imagery with direct descriptions of disaster specifics, creating tension between metaphorical and literal levels. The work emphasizes the importance of feeling the connection between man and nature. According to I. V. Grigorenko (2020), everyone should consider everything to the smallest detail and draw conclusions in order to prevent similar nuclear disasters in the future. In the last chapter, the author leaves open whether humanity will be able to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl tragedy and find ways to return to spirituality.

The novel *Mary with Wormwood at the End of the Century* was written by V. Yavorivskiy (2016). The work reveals the life of the Mirovych family, who lived twenty kilometers from the epicenter of the atomic tragedy. The author does not try to hide the terrible facts that confirm the neglect of the safety of Ukrainians for the sake of imperial enrichment of Moscow (Demchenko 2013). Yavorivskiy (2016) tries to understand the causes and consequences of the tragedy at the nuclear power plant through the prism of family values. The author emphasizes that since the past lessons of history have not yet been learned, the fate of future generations will not be happy. From the beginning of the work, the motive of inevitable extinction of the Mirovych family can be felt in the landscape sketches: the depressing road to the village cemetery. The last lines of the work are less optimistic and presented in a symbolic and prophetic perspective. According to the author's plan, the image of the youngest disabled son is a symbol of the extinction of the entire Ukrainian ethnic group. There is also the image of a mother-bearer (associatively linked to the image of Mary, the mother of Christ), who knew that the atomic boomerang would hit the relatives of her eldest son, Oleksandr, who, having become an academic, was developing a project for a cheap nuclear reactor. In fact, he is simply an irresponsible careerist, not a workaholic or an adventurer. In particular, he did not care about the fate of his native Horodyshche

when he received the government's decision to build a nuclear power plant (Sandul et al. 2018). The project was implemented for half a billion rubles, and Oleksandr Ivanovich was awarded the Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union (Demchenko 2013).

Yavorivskyi (2016) shows the work of liquidating the remnants of the accident at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant without decoration: taking readings with a dosimeter without protective chemical suits, evacuation of children, overcrowded hospitals, terrible pictures of insanity from receiving large radiation doses, and irradiated workers of the nuclear power plant. Yavorivskyi manages to depict the finest details in an apocalyptic style: abandoned estates, deserted streets, empty attractions. With the help of such images, the irreversibility of fate and the all-consuming power of death are expressed. The writer emphasizes the causes and fatal consequences of a national-scale tragedy. The author's desire to show that the economic collapse of the USSR began due to the devaluation and deformation of human relations—in particular, in the family circle—is interesting (Demchenko 2013). Yavorivskyi (2016) shows that orientation toward spiritual renewal and improvement of the world is possible only through the education of moral and pious people.

The style of the text is a harmonious fusion of literary and journalistic elements, featuring figurative language alongside detailed descriptions of Chornobyl's aftermath, which serves to create a bleak atmosphere. Symbolism plays a crucial role, as evidenced by the disabled son symbolizing Ukraine's plight. Artistic techniques such as foreshadowing, contrasting characterizations, humanizing details, and the juxtaposition of macro and micro perspectives work in unison to convey the emotional impact of Chornobyl on both the individual and national scales, elevating the text beyond a mere narrative to an evocative portrayal of tragedy.

The book *Chornobyl: Sketches from Nature* (2019) by O. Veklenko is autobiographical since the author himself was a participant in liquidating the remnants of the Chornobyl accident from May to June 1986. The title of the work already contains the genre definition, "studies from nature," since all depicted situations and stories are the author's sketches, written in vivid vernacular and supplemented with photographs from the scene. Illustrative materials (photos, drawings) form a separate line that complements the main topic. Laconic stories resemble memories, memoirs, but the author had no claims to a comprehensive depiction of the events at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant. This is just what was reflected in the mind of the writer, who was struggling with "an element out of control"

(as it was then customary to say). The object of the image is everyday life in the camp near the station, primitive means of protection, events that took place around the epicenter of the tragedy, the silencing of true testimonies. The author presents a subjective view of what he saw and heard, so his language is sincere, sometimes ironic. The main goal of the work is to faithfully reproduce the mosaic of human relationships that have found themselves in extreme conditions in order to show the courage and dignity of those who have gone through difficult trials.

The style of the text combines literary elements, such as vivid vernacular and irony, with documentary components like photographs, creating a unique blend of artistry and authenticity. The narrative also focuses on everyday details, immersing readers in the granular aspects of life after the catastrophe. Dialogue and witness testimonies further add a sense of human drama to the narrative. In summary, this autobiographical work, characterized by its literary-documentary style, effectively conveys the author's personal experiences through the use of artistic techniques, inviting readers to intimately engage with the human realities of post-Chornobyl life. The genre and style work in tandem to offer a subjective yet fact-based portrayal of the events.

Thus, Ukrainian literature accentuates the national scale of the Chornobyl disaster using allegorical and symbolic motifs, biblical references, deep psychology, and a focus on the bibliotherapeutic effect to convey the profound impact on the nation's identity and the need to reconnect with nature.

### *Japanese Historical and Cultural Experience*

*Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure* by H. Furukawa (2016) is one of the most powerful works related to reflection on the nuclear tragedy in Fukushima in March 2011. It dynamically depicts the tension and chaos that reigned in Japan after the earthquake and tsunami. The main purpose of the work is to depict the scale of destruction that can be caused by natural and man-made disasters (Arribert-Narce 2021). Furukawa tried to find his style in a new way to convey the chaos, horror, and pain of his native region. The literary work *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure* was created in the genre of notes, which made it possible to combine autobiographical elements and expand time-space boundaries in order to show world disasters.

It begins with a story about his own mental state immediately after the earthquake while staying at a hotel in Kyoto. Describing his feelings and experiences, Furukawa uses the Japanese expression *kamikakushi*, which literally translates as “kidnapped by the gods” (Arribert-Narce 2021), emphasizing that his state at that time resembled a deep lethargy, as there was a sense of derealization and alienation. The feeling of guilt for having survived in such difficult conditions does not leave him (Lofgren 2016). The author’s prose is fragmented, as the details of the disaster are presented in reverse order starting on April 11, 2011. Attention is focused on numerous coincidences between fiction and reality. The first part of the work deals with events during the earthquake, and the second part describes the consequences of the terrible tragedy. In particular, the author himself visited the affected lands in northeastern Japan (Arribert-Narce 2021).

Furukawa (2016) indicates that the trip left him with an overwhelming sense of desolation beyond words. The first part resembles a fictionalized first-person narrative, which in literary terms coexists on the border of auto-fixation and magical realism, marked by a dreamy tone, polyphony, and a fusion of time-space codes, but often interrupted by stories about the writer’s journey to Tohoku. It should be noted that *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure* is a politically engaged text because it criticizes the Japanese nation-state that was created at the end of World War II. The author emphasizes that the authorities built many reactors in the country, which posed a potential danger to the population (Arribert-Narce 2021). Furukawa (2016) confirms his opinions with a number of violations that were found during the inspection at the Tokyo Electric Company. According to the author, his home region of Tohoku has always been despised by the Japanese authorities.

The style seamlessly blends factual details of the earthquake with subjective fictionalized experiences through magical realism, creating an impressionistic and dreamlike tone with lyrical flourishes. The perspective shifts from the personal to the critical and political, offering a multifaceted view of the event. Various artistic techniques, such as the reversed timeline, repetition of “horses, horses,” intertextuality with Japanese mythology, and the stark contrast between idyllic Kyoto and devastated Tohoku, work together to convey the personal and political dimensions of the chaotic trauma of the Fukushima disaster, all within the fragmentary and notelike structure that eschews traditional narrative.

Symbolization of the political-historical dimension takes place with the help of an allegorical image of horses, which were actively bred in the affected territory of Japan and often exterminated. In the novel, they become the personification of victims of human greed, hypocrisy, and stupidity. The author touches on the topic of animal abandonment after the nuclear disaster, suggesting that humanity failed to take responsibility for nature conservation, so the land turned into a semidesert (Arribert-Narce 2021; Feng 2022). The idea of writing literary works with a bibliotherapeutic effect is an important feature of the reinterpretation of a national tragedy. Such works deal with the importance of recovering and maintaining mental health after a disaster. The literary diary of M. Kawakami (2011), titled *What Remains After All*, consists of several sections, each of which is devoted to different aspects of the life of a person who was at the epicenter of a nuclear disaster: “After the earthquake,” “What I feel and other things,” “Memory of the body.” Focusing on acute feelings, the author describes simple everyday things, observes her own psychological changes, and reflects on the tragedy, crossing the path from depression to the beginning of recovery (Scheiding 2020).

The writer also refers to classic stories, pointing to the ban on spring celebrations in 2011 and noting that every victim has the right to recovery using the chosen method. The metaphorical reinterpretation of the image of the cherry, which acts as a symbol of national resurrection, is interesting. The author expresses the opinion that the cherry blossom itself can give Japanese people faith in a bright future after the terrible historical and cultural experience of a nuclear tragedy (Kravets 2022). Works with a bibliotherapeutic effect also include the novel *Sweet Future* by B. Yoshimoto (2013) (Vetter 2020). Its peculiarity is that the author does not provide direct reminiscences about the atomic tragedy on the coast of Tohoku; the subtexts are revealed only in the afterword. The plot of the novel is based on the motif of loss and nostalgia for a loved one who died in a plane crash. The author reflects on the topic of the atomic tragedy, comparing the pain of the loss of the main character in the novel and the feelings of people who suffered in Fukushima. Combining two time layers and the main character’s memories of abandoned homes, lost relatives are skillfully woven into the literary work (Hang et al. 2022; Kravets 2022).

*Natsukasis* (nostalgia) reveals the main essence of the author’s novels, as this term focuses on the desire to repeat life in order to solve the problem of loneliness and emptiness in reality through wonderful memories of the past (Veronica 2018). Both real objects (a house) and fantasies (dreams, feelings,

hallucinations) can become objects of nostalgia. The author advises readers to look for their own “me” in the past in order not to lose their identity. Nostalgic experiences are an attempt to overcome a traumatic experience through contemplation. This body of literature highlights the therapeutic relationship between trauma and memory (Yoshimoto 2013; Veronica 2018; DiNitto 2019). The main character, Sayako, realizes that after the death of her beloved, she had stopped perceiving a part of her own personality, considered energy to be the value of life, and immersed herself in thoughts about the afterlife. She describes her condition as a loss of strength, the absence of a soul, and says that it is better to die than bear the burden of survival. The girl begins to see ghosts in different guises: a young woman by the window, a man with a bicycle. Living in the world of half-shadows, not distinguishing between the living and the dead, she deals with her boyfriend’s unfinished business, for example, restoring his sculptural heritage (Treat 1988; Guven 2022).

The afterword to the book is a kind of gratitude to the readers who sent letters to Sayako and describe how exactly the girl helped them. After the accident at Fukushima, the heroine thought about volunteering but later realized her true purpose: to write a book that would speak to the victims and help them restore psychological balance through nostalgia and living experiences in the present. The author shows the strength of human nature in its ability to endure pain and unbearable suffering, but still fill the void with the soul and begin to feel the everyday strength and brightness of life (Treat 1988; Yoshimoto 2013). Therefore, an understanding of the theme of the atomic disaster in the Ukrainian literary tradition is often associated with a global rethinking of national values and getting rid of imperial dependence. The works of Japanese authors are more focused on their own experiences and reflection of the experiences of those in the epicenter of the disaster.

The chosen literary works from Ukraine and Japan focused on the Chernobyl and Fukushima disasters, respectively, demonstrate the potential of bibliotherapy to the fullest extent. By combining perspicuous plotlines, allegoric symbolism, and emotive character arcs, these works of literature function as potent a medium for readers to navigate their own emotions, comprehend the intricacies of these devastating occurrences, and confront crucial dilemmas of ethics, eco-consciousness, and communal accountability. These impactful tales encourage readers to delve into the intricate links between mankind and the natural world, cultivating understanding, introspection, and, ultimately, a route to recovery and perseverance amid challenging circumstances.



## DISCUSSION

Despite the significant technical progress of mankind, it has never learned to interact with nature and cope with man-made cataclysms. Works from Ukrainian and Japanese literature represent exactly how new inventions can harm, firstly, the people themselves. M. W. Bauer et al. (2018) have studied the impact of the Fukushima accident on public interest in the topic of atomic energy. Based on results of their research, it can be said that both Ukrainian and Japanese literature strive to attract the attention of the widest possible audience to atomic issues through the use of different time-space strata, symbolic and allegorical plans, mystical images, and national plots.

The description of emotional states is an important element in recreating the atmosphere of the accident, which is why most works of Ukrainian and Japanese literature are labeled autopsychologism. Surviving the atomic disaster is related, according to C. Longmuir and V. I. O. Agyapong (2021), to higher levels of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety experienced by workers living in proximity to the reactor. Literary works emphasize every detail related to the consequences of such accidents, from deserted streets to broken destinies. Laconic psychological sketches provide a clear understanding of the impact of a disaster on those who find themselves in its epicenter—from physical devastation to spiritual emptiness, from awareness of helplessness to involvement in the process of eliminating the consequences of disasters and revitalizing public activities.

The Chernobyl accident, unlike the Fukushima accident, is treated more realistically in most works—the cause-and-effect relationship between the accident and its consequences is maintained. H. Klaubert (2022) points out that literary narratives about nuclear disasters are based on images and scenarios that gravitate toward uncertainty and contribute to the formation of an emotional interaction aimed at ambiguity. An examination of Japanese literature reveals that the works sublimate many feelings and experiences, which at the same time are realized in the example of individualization and autobiography. In Ukrainian literature, narratives about the atomic tragedy acquire figurative, symbolic, and nation-building features (Voyvoda, 2022). However, each work is unique, so they should be considered separately.

The lived experience of atomic disasters is realized in literary works through active psychologism—that is, the articulation of experiences, suffering, and emotions. S. Lindsay (2014) points out that the first Chernobyl trauma involved those who were at the epicenter of the fallout from the nuclear disaster, such as firefighters and military personnel. The second

section shows the transition from the first (sudden) to the second (gradual) trauma. Results of the research emphasize that in both Ukrainian and Japanese literature, the movement toward understanding the national scale of the tragedy is important, but in Ukrainian works, a symbolic and allegorical component is also added.

Atomic issues in literature, as a rule, include the transcoding of human grief into images, plots, and metaphors. R. DiNitto (2021) points out that Japanese atomic literature is built on an exploration of victimhood, while the issues of traumatic destruction and the existential threat to humanity remain underdiscussed. In the Japanese literary tradition, many works are marked by a bibliotherapeutic effect, which is characterized by a concentration on the maximum ecological living of suffering. However, the problem of understanding the destructive role of man and his negative impact on nature is also often translated into literary works (Chehabeddine et al. 2022).

Raising environmental issues is an important condition for understanding nuclear disasters. H. K. Patenaude and E. F. Bloomfield (2022) identify the four main questions that provide an opportunity to change the ecocritical patterns in the right direction:

1. Risk and safety
2. Government and politics
3. Public education
4. Cost

The results of the study show that the issue of human security depends on the competent use of natural resources and the awareness of everyone as being responsible for environmental problems. In Japanese literature, as well as in Ukrainian, the role of politics in the field of environmental protection and the education of the new generation in connection with nature is emphasized (Prakhovnik et al. 2022; Tsybukh 2023).

An article by J. Serrano-Munoz (2020) is based on the study of the problems of atomic disasters from the position of surviving the traumatic event and giving meaning to the suffering, which is reflected mostly in three aspects: the attitude of the heroes to the event, the articulation of elements reminiscent of the trauma, and the creation of victims. The author investigates how traumas are represented in literature and how they shape the cultural memory of a traumatic event. The work of B. Yoshimoto (2013), for example, reveals personal tragedy due to the loss of a loved one and overcoming depression through nostalgic motives. In the Ukrainian understanding of the atomic disaster, bibliotherapy does not have such a powerful

force since collective national values, rather than individual ones, carry more weight in it.

Literature is designed to react to reality sharply and quickly; therefore, the representation of atomic issues within different genres is a safety necessity. By standards, as noted by T. Ohba et al. (2021), the main aspects of response to a nuclear accident will be as follows: (1) radiation protection; (2) health care management; and (3) communication with the population affected by the accident. The study of the historical and cultural experience of Ukraine and Japan shows that the literary narratives embedded in the works relate to the prevention of similar precedents in the world. In particular, the problem of radiation protection is raised in the works of both Ukrainian and Japanese authors. In addition, the lack of competent organization on the part of local and state authorities to evacuate the population, which contributed to the huge scale of the accident, is noted.

The modern literary concept should be based on the principle of adequate assessment of the scale of natural disasters; at the same time, in literature, this is often replaced by the mystification of images and space-time. The artistic value of the work, which is a reaction to tragic events, should reflect the true scale of the tragedies and reevaluate the meanings in order to not repeat these mistakes in the future. K. Gerstenberger (2014) emphasizes that narrative approaches to considering the disaster must shift—from a focus on the helplessness of the subject and his individual reactions, to the question of understanding responsibility and the scale of the consequences. In particular, in Ukrainian literature, the consequences of the atomic tragedy are understood from a national point of view, and in Japanese literature, from an ecological point of view.

The topic of atomic energy is partly perceived positively by the scientific community, but in the literature, it is interpreted sharply negatively based on the experience of past centuries. I. Piovezan (2021) notes that in the early stages of atomic culture, the information presented to the public focused precisely on the aesthetic concept of the atomic bomb, which made it attractive from the point of view of the public. The considered literary works emphasize that the topic of atomic energy should not be admired; it is necessary to focus on safety measures, not on the romanticization of technical progress.

Over time, the perception of readers regarding narratives about atomic issues in literature has undergone a significant transformation. Immediately after World War II, there was a feeling of amazement and hope about atomic energy, with a vision of a brighter future (Itoh 2017). However, the Cold

War brought about anxiety and concerns over nuclear conflict, underlining the disastrous outcomes of atomic power. As environmental awareness increased, literature began concentrating on the health and environmental hazards of nuclear energy. This altered readers' understandings, prompting them to see atomic issues as potential dangers. In the wake of the Cold War, literature explored the ethical questions and psychological impacts of the nuclear age, resulting in readers developing more nuanced and contemplative perspectives (Edwards et al. 2019). Today, atomic narratives are entwined with current global concerns, highlighting the interplay of atomic issues with climate change and geopolitics (Romanenko and Kovalevskii 2022). Fundamentally, readers have transitioned from optimism to anxiety, environmental awareness, introspection, and a refined comprehension of atomic issues through literature (Curanovic 2022).

This article presents significant contributions to the study of Ukrainian and Japanese literary traditions concerning nuclear disasters. Conducting an in-depth comparative analysis of these two distinct cultures allows for a more nuanced understanding of the subject, surpassing the limitations of existing works that solely focus on one tradition. The authors' interpretive analysis delves deeper into symbolic motifs and genre features, rather than generalizing plots, leading to novel perspectives. The authors have identified unique approaches by different nations in dealing with nuclear trauma in literature, with Ukraine's use of national motifs and Japan's incorporation of mystical elements being noteworthy. The integration of various theoretical frameworks, including ecocriticism and bibliotherapy, provides a fresh perspective on these texts. Furthermore, exploring lesser-studied contemporary literature contributes modern viewpoints to scholarly discourse that are distinct from the extensively analyzed classics.

## **CONCLUSION**

The representation of the historical and cultural experience of the Ukrainian and Japanese peoples showed that they interpret the atomic issue differently. It should be noted that each of the considered authors strives for the most accurate reproduction of events, showing the real scale of the disasters and highlighting real facts and processes. Japanese literature uses bibliotherapeutic effects to show how people can rid themselves of suffering by rethinking it and living the most ecological way possible. Ukrainian literature is characterized by the use of nation-building motifs combined with

symbolic and allegorical images, an appeal to religious, in particular, biblical literature. Many motifs are common to both literary traditions, such as the sublimation of the suffering and experiences of those who were at the epicenter of the atomic accident; the formation of a new generation, which would be interested in the historical events of its country and learn from the mistakes made by its ancestors; and an understanding the scale of the atomic tragedy. Japanese literature is more existential and interesting in terms of the use of mystical images and plots, while Ukrainian literature uses many biblical images and plots.

This work examined the main works of Ukrainian and Japanese authors that produce national meanings and understanding of suffering as a personal experience. Key theses related to the genre, themes, and value specifics of the works written in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries on the example of an atomic accident were formed. An artistic evaluation of the works was also formed from allegorical, symbolic, metaphorical, and mystical points of view of the images used in the works. Priority directions in the future may be as follows: consideration of the main categories of literary works that unfold pictures of cataclysms; research of the specifics of figurative, genre, and thematic structures; and comparison of different cultural layers in synchrony and diachrony. It should be understood that the issue of ecocriticism and the study of materials related to ecological assessment will be an interesting area of further research.

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