

# Where Do the Rails Lead to? Rail Transport's Mythology in Contemporary Russian and Ukrainian Fantastic Fiction (Preliminary Remarks)

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*Among the recurrent railway and the metro motifs in Russian and Ukrainian fantastic fictions alike are journeys to the world of the dead, or beside the world of the dead, with the critical decision to leave the train or stay on it. The world of the dead may be situated inside the moving train, in the abandoned railway stations, on the other side of the track, or may be the final destination. Ukrainian railway myth is strongly European oriented. The metro literary mythology is closely linked to the folklore of caves and urban legends, although some influence of the fairytale is also felt. The way to the other world everywhere passes through almost invisible doors, ventilation shafts or via non-existent stations and lines, among them some frozen and renamed. The metro maps are generally deemed useless, and should be included in research on fantastic maps in general. Although Moscow metro's image is always sinister, in the case of Kyiv it can be negative, ambivalent or positive. Decapitating tram in contemporary Russian fantastic fiction continues tradition, which was actualized by N. Gumilev and M. Bulgakov. However by now contemporary Ukrainian fantastic representations of the tram were not found.*

**Keywords:** rail transport, Galician railways, fantastic fiction, literature, metro, tram

## Introduction: The Choice of the Topic and of Material

The mythology of railroads began to emerge in Russian and Ukrainian literatures as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, about the same time as the railways themselves; later it encompassed other rail-dependent public transport, namely the tram (streetcar) and the metro (subway). It is especially prominent in the anthologies of prose and poetry about railways, where readers can read one text after another. The first Russian anthology (Leites et al. 1939) contained texts from Russian literature, but also foreign literary examples. Likewise the first anthology on railways in Ukrainian literature (Havryliv 2011) contains Austrian and Polish authors.<sup>1</sup> In recent years interest in railways in both literatures has intensified. This is evident, for example, from the publication of new anthologies of Russian railway prose and poetry (Budakov 2013; Dmitrenko 2012, 2015), from the above-mentioned Ukrainian

<sup>1</sup> This edition was prepared for the 150<sup>th</sup> jubilee of Galician Railways which connected Lviv with Vienna and Krakow.

anthology, and from the appearance of the Ukrainian literary magazine *Potyah - 76* (Train 76) (<http://www.potyah76.org.ua/help/> last accessed 5.02.2016). The title alludes to international train N 76, which once connected Ukraine with Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, and was known in Ivano-Frankivsk (Western Ukraine) as the “Warsaw train.”<sup>2</sup> Later its route was limited to Ukrainian territory alone, but for the editorial board it still symbolizes the bond of Ukraine to Europe. A major goal of *Potyah - 76* is at least the figurative restoration of the train’s original international route by literary means (Andrukhovych, no year). In another essay Andrukhovych has to acknowledge with bitter irony the enduring importance of the much less appreciated 65 Ia Moscow-Mykolaiv train, a remnant of the “imperial past,” and the only train that can take him from Dnipropetrivsk to Kherson, namely from one Ukrainian city to another (Andrukhovych 2007). The different esteem accorded to these two trains contributes to a mythology of space: Warsaw and the West constitute its positive pole, Moscow and the East its negative one. Yet the bond with Moscow, although not wanted, is real and tangible. The notion of “transit culture” is very important for Hundorova and appears in the title of her book on Ukrainian postmodernism. The picture of a tram decorates its cover, although the book’s topic is not rail transport (Hundorova 2012: 7–17; Sverbilova 2015).

The idea of addressing this topic in contemporary Russian and Ukrainian Fantastic Fiction first arose from its prevalence in both literatures, and secondly from the strong feeling of similarity or affinity in its presentation that I, as a reader, felt. In both literatures I also include texts which occupy various “stations” along the axis (or perhaps “railroad”) joining them. Hence the content is Ukrainian literature in Russian as well as Russian literature from Ukraine (Puleri 2014: 375).<sup>3</sup>

The definition of Fantastic Fiction is problematic, with a long history of polemics both in the West and in Russia and Ukraine. I recognize the difference between speculative fiction (especially fantasy, or *fentezi* as it is called in Russian and in Ukrainian) and science fiction, and the difference between both and modernist and post-modernist literature that use fantastic devices. Nevertheless, I prefer to side with researchers who unite all these groups of texts under the general term Fantastic Fiction (Menzel 2005a: 124) for two reasons. First, in the post-Soviet period the genre’s popularity mounted significantly in both literatures (Menzel 2005b: 49; Puleri 2014: 379); secondly, although rail transport mythology emerged in various texts, most of which were not fantastic, in fantastic fiction it becomes most prominent. This paper discusses theme of rail transport in texts, perceived by the implied reader as fantastic and non-mimetic (Zgorzelski 1984: 302–303), in the so-called formula (trivial, popular or mass) literature (Cawelti 1976: 5–7; Menzel 1999: 392) and in the high (elite, serious) literature alike. Such an inclusive approach is based on the relativity of the literature’s division into low and high in general (Hundorova 2012: 256–291; Ivashkiv 2007: 59–60; Lotman 1993: 381), and on the formulaic use of rail transport mythology in all of them in particular.

<sup>2</sup> The magazine’s structure is modeled on the train’s structure. The editorial team is called a locomotive, sections (prose, poetry, etc.) are “railway carriages” (1st, 2nd, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.), the archive of previous issues is a depot while the issues themselves are runs, etc.

<sup>3</sup> The Ukrainian writer Serhiy Zhadan acknowledges that some parts of the Russian translations of his novels are more authentic than in the original Ukrainian editions, because his characters speak Khar’kiv’s Russian dialect. He did not write these parts in Russian himself, in order not to cross the line from Ukrainian to Russian literature (Puleri 2014: 390–391).

To the best of my knowledge, there are scientific publications that deal with the rail transport in the texts of Russian or Ukrainian authors working in the fantastic, but hardly any research analyzes this topic in a comparative perspective. Two exceptions are a comparative analysis of Andrukhovich's *Pereverziia*<sup>4</sup> with Pelevin's *Omon Ra* (Ivashkiv 2007) and Andrukhovych's "Moskoviada" (1993<sup>5</sup>) with the image of Moscow in Glukhovskiy's "Metro 2033" (2015)<sup>6</sup>. However, in the latter paper both these writers are perceived as post-Soviet and not as Ukrainian and Russian (Griffiths 2013: 498–499).

### Rail Transport's Mythology: General Remarks

The mythology of the rail transport has developed as two main sub-topics: the train (locomotive, carriages) and the rails. The train appears mostly in comparison, or metaphorical identification, with an animal—natural (snake, horse, turtle, etc.) or supernatural (dragon, monster, apocalyptic iron horse). The creature may have eyes, tail, belly, many legs; it roars, thunders, runs, flies and is fire-spitting (Holod 2008; Griffiths 2013: 483; Komagina 2011). The carriages may be presented as organs/parts of a dragon or as boxes and cubes. Trams, where the engine and the carriages are in the close proximity, may even engage in their own battles. On the other hand the carriages can be a metaphor for social class, where different levels of comfort signify the rich and the poor. The passengers may be real people, devils, angels or various mythological figures (Bogdanova 2004: 62–63; Iablokov 2000; Sadovski 2000).

The railroad's mythology stems from its unnaturalness, the human suffering incurred in its construction, and its lack of flexibility, which drastically diminishes maneuvering in general and in the case of clash in particular. But these factors can be reworked: literary texts may realize the railroad's alleged flexibility, and conjure images of melting rails, a stray tram, or a train that goes wherever it wants (Sadovski 2000). The underground location of most metro lines adds the notion of intestines and intensifies association with the underworld (Drubek-Meyer 1994). The railroad is often perceived as the way to the land of the dead—hell or heaven. However, the line of steel being rationally planned and constructed with human enthusiasm can be associated with the way to a better life (Komagina 2011: 55–56; Nepomniashchikh 2012; Savitskii 2011: 39).

A train or tram running on rails is often associated with the evil/demonic *other*, the terminator, the murderer or the guillotine and mechanical scissors. But it can be a symbol of a dragon slaying and of spiritual search. It serves as a metaphor for a human life from birth (first station) to love and eventual death (terminus), or represents eternal movement toward happiness (Berezin 2001; Gidrevich 2011: 264, 270). On the other hand a train signifies society in general and Russian/Soviet society in particular. A train on fire or a train that has stopped abruptly means an acute personal or social crisis (Nepomniashchikh 2012). The figure of a switchman, which in Russian and Ukrainian is associated with a petty employee and a scapegoat, can acquire value similar to the figure of a blacksmith in traditional folklore.

<sup>4</sup> In *Pereverziia* the topic of rail transport is not fantastic. However, it greatly contributes to our understanding of European myth in contemporary Ukrainian fiction.

<sup>5</sup> Written in 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Written in 2005

### Rail Transport: Emergence and Variations of the Fantastic Literary Formula

The rise of interest of Russian and Ukrainian Fantastic writers in the rail transport was, I believe, triggered by Venedikt Erofeev's prose poem (often called a novel) "Moskva-Petushki" (2007).<sup>7</sup> From many attempts to define its genre, three are especially relevant to the current study. These are a travel novel, offered by V. Muraviov; a Menippean and Fantastic novel suggested by L. Beraha; and a Fantastic novel in its utopian version designed by P. Vail and A. Genis. The poem has all the formal signs of a travel novel: the protagonist's (Venichka Erofeev's) trip from Moscow's Kursk railway station to Petushki on a suburban electric train with a fixed timetable, fellow passengers and a conductor. Yet none of these signs "works" as expected in this genre. No landscapes are to be seen through the window, no real geographical space and no inner connection exist between the route and the fabula. It is not clear whether Venichka has mistaken the train that took him on his journey back to Moscow or has been deceived by delusional visions. One can meet such fellow travelers as God, Satan, angels and Mithridates even in an uncoupled car (Bogdanova 2004: 58–68; Pelevin 1993; Sukhikh 2002) or on a carousel. Anyway, Venichka leaves the train at a certain place still hoping it is Petushki; he sees the Kremlin, near which he is pursued by four sinister figures from whom he hides in a nondescript front hallway. There the four finally capture the protagonist and stab him into the throat with an awl. Venichka has lost consciousness, which he will never regain. Still, being unconscious doesn't stop him telling the reader about his tragic end, physical or metaphorical.

Several aspects of Erofeev's fabula appeared to be especially productive in subsequent Fantastic fiction: the visionary journey of an alcoholic figure, pursuit and attempts to escape, the ring structure of the trip, the fantastic sinister chronotope of the center of Moscow in general and of the Kremlin in particular, mistaken attribution of place, the journey to death, or through death. Of course, not the entire complex of these elements is taken up in all the texts; some could be omitted or added, but the frame is more or less similar.

### Railways

The title of Pelevin's story *Zheltaia strela* (The Yellow Arrow)<sup>8</sup> alludes to the name of the fashionable Leningrad-Moscow-Leningrad express train, *Krasnaia strela* (The Red Arrow). However the notion of a route with its first and last stops, as well as many along the way, is entirely absent from Pelevin's story. The train moves at high speed from an indefinite place for an uncertain time toward a ruined bridge. Composed of an immense number of cars of diverse standard, the train becomes an allegory of society, where the direction from rich to poor (from elite first class compartments to open and sitting cars) is along the West-East axis. Upward and downward mobility manifests itself in a passenger's moving from one car to another, say from an open car to a compartment or vice versa. The train has its restaurant-car and its own prison-car with the empty passenger-less cars right behind it. The passengers' cultural life consists of various allusions to railway-related

<sup>7</sup> Written in 1970; in the 1970s-1980s it circulated in *samizdat* and *tamizdat*. It was first published in Israel in 1973. First publication in the USSR was in 1988-1989 in an abridged journal version and in 1990 appeared in full as a book. In 1980 it was translated into English by H. William Tjalsma as *Moscow to the End of the Line*.

<sup>8</sup> First published in 1993; translated into English in 1994.

stories, poems, songs, movies and pictures, some of them real (e.g., Pasternak's *Na rannikh poezdakh* "On Early Trains"), while others are artificially coined by Pelevin (e.g., Deineka's picture *Budushchie zheleznodorozhniky* "Future Railwaymen" instead of *Budushchie lietchiki* "Future Pilots"). The external world glimpses through the windows and serves as a type of cemetery for the dead are tossed out there as the train hurtles at full speed. However, Andrei, the story's protagonist, who with Khan, another passenger, starts to question the order of things, can discern those living in the outside world and utilizes the sole moment of train's immobility to leave it. According to Gomel, Pelevin's fictional world differs from its Western counterpart (J. G. Ballard's *Report on Unidentified Space Station* and Adam Robert's *On*) in two respects: "First, structurally: its synchrony turns out to be a diachrony in disguise. And second, generically: it is as much a historically specific figural allegory as it is a postmodern fabulation" (Gomel 2013: 312). Stated otherwise, the train symbolizes not just the overall movement to death, common to all living things, but also Soviet-specific realities from the Gulag and communal apartments with neighbors of different ethnic background to Perestroika with its new wealth and poverty. I cannot agree with Barysheva, that people in Pelevin's world are doomed to exist in the railroad car observing their own life from outside (Barysheva 2006). Their life is inside the train, which separates them from the outside world with its hazards and opportunities. Thus the moving train is functionally not very different from the static Green Wall in Zamyatin's "We." Getting off the train and escaping over the Green Wall are the same act of protest.

The important development of the railways' fantastic formula is achieved by Dmitry Bykov in both his prose poem *ZhD* and in two books of short stories (Bykov 2007; 2007a, 2012).<sup>10</sup> The notion of railways (*zheleznaia doroga* in Russian) is one of several possible solutions to the abbreviation *ZhD* in the title of the poem, suggested by Bykov himself in the foreword (Bykov 2007: 5).<sup>11</sup> The table of contents is divided into two parts, Departure and Arrival. But contrary to the typical railway route only a few chapter titles contain at least fictional toponyms, for example, "The Town of Blatsk," "The Village of Degunino" (the place of abundance) and "The Village of Zhadrunovo" (the place of no return). The plot concerns Russia's endless Civil War of two groups of invaders, Varangians and Khazars—the latter known also as *ZhD* (*zhidy*, Jews), and passive natives, whose main goal is to preserve the cyclical change of victorious enemies without any real development. So the railroads are blown up by the partisans and repaired by the natives to ensure the cyclical move, which can be interpreted as eternal or timeless. The expression of timelessness as eternity is even more tangible when two characters, Gromov and Voronov, in their wanderings enter the abandoned Riukhino railway station,<sup>12</sup> without a living soul there. On the second floor of its dilapidated red building they see "a soldier tapping out a message, wearing the pointed felt helmet of the old Bolshevik Red Army cavalry" (Bykov 2007: 525;

<sup>9</sup> In the English translation by Andrew Bromfield the mention of this picture is omitted. Another discrepancy concerns the real name of American pop-star Isis Schopenhauer, which is Janet Midgely and not Asia Akopian as in Russian original (Pelevin 1996: 82, 84; 1999: 51-52).

<sup>10</sup> The stories partly have to do with Bykov's cooperation with the journal *Sakvoiage SV* (Valise First-class train car <http://reklamotiv.ru/publishing/sakvoyage>), which is published especially for passengers in expensive cars with its price included in their tickets.

<sup>11</sup> In the English translation this pun is missing: the Foreword is omitted and another suggested deciphering of the same abbreviation *ZhD*—*zhivye dushi* (Living Souls)—was chosen for the title. In the collection of stories under the same title, "railway"—*zheleznaia doroga*—is the only meaning intended (Bykov 2010).

<sup>12</sup> In the English translation the name of the village is omitted.

2010: 334). The Civil War (1918–1922) has not come to the end and its warrior, this Russian Flying Dutchmen, is still on duty. The idea of circular movement in Bykov's prose poem can be traced to the Circle Line of the Moscow metro, but also to a model railway as well. Gromov had one as a child, although he never played with it, preferring real trains (Bykov 2007: 542; 2010: 346).<sup>13</sup> Perhaps for this reason the train, taking Gromov and Voronov from Riukhino to Moscow, starts out on a third path as if forecasting the emergence of a new way, different from the everlasting binary opposition. The cyclical movement comes ends when Gromov, a Varangian with a miscellany of native progeny, and Anya who is a partial Khazar, alight from their trains at Zhadrunovo station and walk away freely to meet the unknown (Bykov 2007: 680–685; 2010: 436–439; Fialkova 2010).

According to Neelov, the motif of *put'-doroga* (way and road), which inevitably brings the hero to the destination, was inherited by science fiction from the fairytale (Neelov 1986). Broadly interpreting Neelov's statement, Grigorovskaia applies it to anti-utopia and maintains it for all types of roads, from pedestrian walks to railroads and escalators (Grigorovskaia 2011: 228). I agree that Bykov's poem incorporates many motifs of folklore in general and of fairytale in particular. However its tendency is not to incorporate a railway into a road in general, but the reverse, to perceive any road as one made of steel:

Only the railway existed. It is a lie that one can to get off the train. Well, you'll get off and then? Then there is again a road, which only seems to be a dusty steppe road. In fact it too is a railroad. There are no other roads on this territory. (Bykov 2007: 676).<sup>14</sup>

The motif of alighting from the train, or at least opening the window at certain stations, is salient in Bykov's writings. Gromov left the train at Zhadrunovo station because "the power that was pushing him out was almost irresistible,"<sup>15</sup> like the urge he used to have sometimes as a child to throw himself from the fifteenth floor of the flats" (Bykov 2007: 681; 2010: 436). In *Chud'* (Chude), Kozhukhov, warned by the mysterious Chude of the impending crash of his train, steps off during its brief stop at an empty station and weighs up the decision to interrupt the journey; in the end he gets back onto his Moscow train to share the common fate of his fellow passengers. Stepanov, the protagonist of *Provodnik* (The Conductor), boarded the train at random to escape his problems, intending to get off at some nice place. But he did not get off at Deviatovo station while it was still possible, even though his sense of the fateful impact on his life of continuing was powerful. The anonymous *provodnik* (conductor, or rather one-way-only *poluprovodnik*, semiconductor,

<sup>13</sup> A model railway is an important symbol of stagnation and infantilism in the novel *Poteriannyi dom, ili razgovory s milordom* (The Flying House, or Conversations with Milord, 1987) and in the short story *Strelochnik* (A Switchman, 1975) by Alexander Zhitinskii, a writer undoubtedly familiar to Bykov. He even dedicated to Zhitinskii his short story *Obkhodchik* (A trackman), which became a response to *Strelochnik* (Bykov 2007a: 107–123; Zhitinskii 2001: 381–382; 1975). An analogue of a model railway with similar connotations is Children's Railway with its circular movement between two stations for passengers, *Pionerskaia* and *Komsomolskaia* (Pioneer and Komsomol stations) and one station—*Tekhnicheskaja* (Technical station)—where no passengers are allowed (Kissina 2012: 61–62). Kissina is a Russian-language writer from Kyiv currently living in Germany.

<sup>14</sup> Only the first sentence of this quotation is taken from Porter's translation. The rest I translated myself as these sentences are omitted by Porter (Bykov 2010: 432).

<sup>15</sup> The underlining is mine. – L.F.

as becomes clear at the end) entered his compartment just after Deviatovo. And the comfortable journey of no return has begun. They get off the train together at a nameless town crowded with Stepanov's private memories. And this town entraps the protagonist, becoming his final destination. In the story *Mozharovo*, inspired by Ursula Le Guin's *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*, there is the horrific contrast between the travelers enjoying the journey from Moscow to the Russian provinces on the comfortable train with sealed windows and the starving people on the platform. The plot centers on the crucial division of passengers into those who acquiesce in the suffering of the *other* and those who open/smash the windows, with mortal consequences for themselves (Bykov 2007a: 142-175, 190-208).

Like Pelevin's train, Bykov's railway exhibits co-existence of past and present, as well as various societal layers. However, past and present, poverty and abundance, are represented not in different cars but at different stations to, or through, which the train travels. Bykov's railway influences its passengers almost with an iron fist by independently choosing its own way, accelerating or decelerating, inspiring the yearning for exit or eliminating this option. A way back from an undesired station is not always available: Vasiliï Ivanovich walks back from Zhadrunovo station "straight ahead along the rails," while for Zhenka, who went a little further toward Zhadrunovo, "the station had simply vanished" (Bykov 2007: 503, 685; 2010: 322, 439). However the passengers board the trains at their own free will, not always foreseeing the consequences.

Two of Vladimir Rafeenko's novels tell about cities doomed for destruction: *Moskovskii divertissement* (Moscow Divertissement) and *Demon Dekarta* (Descartes' Demon). In the first case it is Moscow, renamed Troy, while in the second it is Donetsk, hidden under the letter Z. Trains go from Troy to the Russian provinces and farther to Vladivostok, with "wooden wheels beating on the wooden rails" (Rafeenko 2011), as Russia beyond the Circle Line is made of wood. And the provincial demon of the city of Z. is perceived by the protagonist "as lengthy as the railway <...> in the European pinstripe suit standing in the middle of steppe Z. with arms akimbo. Try to run from him! You won't succeed. He'll grab you in his arms and hurl you into hell" (Rafeenko 2014).<sup>16</sup> The novel with its anti-utopian vision was written in 2012, before the occurrence of the second Maidan in Kyiv and the military confrontation in Donetsk, Rafeenko's native city. The image of a devil in European attire (often as a German in a tailcoat) is typical of Russian and Ukrainian folklore, and also of Gogol's writings, which are perceived as belonging to either literature. The demonic character of the railway is also a well established metaphor. However the comparison of the Devil himself to the railway, and the sleepers transformed into the pinstripe pattern on the cloth is, I believe, new. The evidently anti-European stance is based on a traditional perception common to both peoples, and contradicts the current orientation of Ukrainian literature.

One of the most railway-inclined Ukrainian writers is Serhiy Zhadan (Shaf 2012). Although his novel *Himn demokratychnoi molodi* (Anthem of Democratic Youth) can hardly be called fantastic, in the chapter "Forty carriages of Uzbek drugs" the protagonist's perception of the world is characterized by complete obscurity. His two uncles leave him semi-consciousness at the *Vuzlova* (Junction) railway station, with a ticket

<sup>16</sup> Translations from Rafeenko are mine. – L.F. Vladimir Rafeenko is a Russian-language writer from Donetsk (Ukraine) who publishes in Russia.

for the train to Mariupol. As with Erofeev's plot, the reality of the ensuing journey can be questioned. The dragon-like ghostly train as if coming from the pictures on Chinese porcelain dishes arrives at 3 a.m., an hour with heavy demonic connotations in both Russian and Ukrainian folklore. It stops for two or three minutes, which is not enough for Ivan, who is drunk, to get to the train and find his couchette (open) car. His efforts are replete with olfactory hallucinations, signifying different categories of cars and passengers. The reserved place appears to be occupied while the train itself is the wrong one. Although later Ivan finds himself in Mariupol, it is not clear whether he got there by train according to the original plan or was taken there by his uncles' accountant, the middle-aged Eva, who in her version redeemed him from the Gypsies (Zhadan 2007). The time then spent together in an uncoupled car turns into a new Paradise, followed by the inevitable expulsion (Shaf 2012: 92-93). Zhadan makes another important reference to railways in his novel *Voroshilovhrad*. Herman, the protagonist, has encountered a strange dead-end railway branch. Its construction started in the middle of nowhere in case of a possible war. The line was simultaneously laid in both directions from the middle and was left incomplete, so it doesn't connect anything. On his first encounter Herman is told by the smugglers that it serves as some kind of a border between *our place* and the *other's* place. The second time Herman encounters this railway branch is during an escape from thugs. He hides in the ghostly train running back and forth on the dead-end line, used exclusively by the local mafia capo and his bodyguards. The only element which defines the capo's connections is a Russian-language economic newspaper, which Herman sees on the table. Herman's refusal to obey the capo's order to slaughter the sheep results in his being thrown off the train somewhere, far from any settlement (Zhadan 2015a: 178-181, 205-211). Sverbilova considers the dead-end railway branch the border with hell, and the capo the new Satan (Sverbilova no year). To my mind this conclusion should be reconsidered. The name of the largely invisible capo is Marlen Vladlenovich. He is defined by one of the characters as a little shepherd and a communist. His first name and his patronymic form a well known abbreviation (Marlen is from Marx and Lenin; Vladlenovich is from Vladimir Lenin). The only episode where he is shown in person is in his exclusive train. However, in this very context his name is not mentioned at all, and readers can simply assume that Herman's anonymous interlocutor is indeed Marlen Vladlenovich. In my view, the unfinished railway accords with other literary representations of unfinished Soviet projects, for example, Platonov's *Kotlovan* (The Foundation Pit), *Chevengur* and Zhitinskii's *Poteriannyi dom* (The Flying House) (Platonov 2008; Zhitinskii 2001: 168-170). The dead-end branch is the border between the land of the living and the land of the dead, while the capo's train is a railway incarnation of the Flying Dutchmen doomed to move round and round without arriving anywhere. I believe the use of the notions "train" and "death" as synonyms in another episode of the same novel confirms this conclusion.<sup>17</sup>

The motif of a railway catch-22 is contained with good-natured irony in Andrukhovych's essay about his friend and colleague Yurko Izdryk, who allegedly consistently slept past his railway station Kalush, so he could not get home; only the shouts of his entire family gathered on the platform succeeded in breaking the bewitched circle (Andrukhovych no

<sup>17</sup> The protagonist suffers drug-induced hallucinations with ghosts marching: "I had an impression that death had passed by. Or a freight train ran along" (Zhadan 2015a: 44). Translation is mine. - L.F.

year a). However, Izdryk himself also contributed to the development of railway mythology. The narrator of his story *Poizd utikachiv* (The Train of Fugitives) is under heavy alcohol and drug intoxication. The events take place at an indefinite time between 1895 and the present and in an unspecified space somewhere on the East-West axis between India and France (in the restaurant car the passengers are supposed to pay an elderly Hindu in rupees, while the protagonist leaves the train approximately 60 kilometers before Montmartre). The reasons for the flight are unclear, as is the eerie emptiness of all the cars except the one where most of the plot takes place. The car in question forms a long space without any walls, but has a table stretching along its entire length. Its rhythmic jiggling accompanies the protagonist's having sex with the female conductor, the car itself carrying clear sexual connotations as if it too is engaged in the act. The protagonist's crawling over the table to the car's exit is likened to the movement of the fetus through the cervix and can be metaphorically defined as a kind of birth. He leaps from the moving train somewhere in a field in the half-hour walk from pavilion #3, whose function remains unclear. It could be a former concentration camp disguised as a river landing stage without a river, or a monastery with no monks any more, as mentioned in the text earlier. There is no way to check the credibility of this guess. However, the narrator's abandoning the train is much more important than its further journey without him (Izdryk 2011<sup>18</sup>).

In Tymofii Havryliv's story *Kintseva stantsia* (Terminus) the train speeding with no stops toward the final collision is somewhat reminiscent of Pelevin's *Zheltaia strela* (The Yellow Arrow) discussed above (Havryliv 2011: 316-324).<sup>19</sup> As in Pelevin's plot the train moves through an unfamiliar space with no platforms or cities on either side and without signs of oncoming means of transport, although an additional railroad emerges and disappears from time to time. Similar also is a strange indifference of the conductors and of most passengers alike, who easily adjust to the situation. Yet there are several important differences from Pelevin's story. First, the train follows the initial route and the schedule, and the protagonist, who has used it twice or thrice, is well familiar with them. The route was changed at night and went unnoticed till morning. Secondly, the notion of the collision is not present from the start, and the protagonist's anxiety grows proportionally with the duration of the delay. Thirdly, although there are no people or towns along the railway line, their existence is undoubted and the roofs of village houses are seen in the distance. Fourthly, the actual moment of the passengers' descent from the train remains obscure. The only people running from the crumpled train to the distant village houses are the protagonist and a young woman with her little daughter, whom he is helping. They left the car just before the collision, but whether they jumped from the train traveling at full speed or somehow survived the crash is unclear. Increasing distance from the bewitched railway coincides with an end to the solitude. A small family-like group is on its way to the natural rural world of the living.

As we see, the motif of flight, by train or from a train, continues to be one of the most prominent in contemporary Russian and Ukrainian Fantastic fiction. On the one hand, it may result in a kind of success, as in the case of Otto von F. In a post-suicide condition with a bullet in his skull he leaves hellish Moscow by the Moscow-Kyiv train N 41, perceiving this act not as a flight, but merely a return home (Andrukhovych, no year

<sup>18</sup> First published in 2004.

<sup>19</sup> First published in 2003 in *Potyah-76*.

b; 2008: 189).<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, it may take the “successful” fugitives from one type of dystopia to a cruel death in another dystopian realm. This is the case with the unemployed physicist Naidienov and his wife Nastia; running from Muslim-ruled capitalist Mascaw (formerly Moscow) to Krasnorechensk (Red River City), ruled by humunists (a new version of a communist-like dictatorship), they never reach their destination. The narrator assumes that the several bank cards they have with them could have resulted in the humunists marking them as rich and throwing them into two different concentration camps with fatal consequences (Volos 2003).

However, in the fictional post-apocalyptic world the railway stations and trains are dead, and the rails, which still proliferate from Moscow in all directions, are useless for an attempt to flee (Glukhovskii 2015: 176; Glukhovskii 2015b: 224; Glukhovskii 2016:214).

## Metro

In the early 1990s Platonov's *Schastlivaia Moskva* (Happy Moscow) was still unknown (Drubek-Meyer 1994), so one may say that the Fantastic exploration of underground human-made urban labyrinths started independently with *Omon Ra* (1992) by Russian writer Viktor Pelevin and with *Moskoviada* (1993, *The Moskoviad*) by his Ukrainian colleague Yuri Andrukhovych. The two writers were contemporary students at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute but were not acquainted (Chalenko 2010). The protagonists of their novels, Omon and Otto von F. coincidentally found themselves in secret tunnels of clandestine metro-2, which seems to hide the sins of the Soviet Empire. In the first case it is the place where space flights are simulated for the so-called direct TV News programs with deadly consequences for innocent pseudo-cosmonauts. In the second, apart from hosting a hellish council of clandestine rulers with the masks of dead dictators on their faces, metro-2 conceals underground KGB laboratories that are developing a biological weapon, whether real or virtual: gigantic rats to subdue the rebels. The rats, reminiscent of those in Orwell's *1984*, are also widely known from Moscow's urban legends, to which Andrukhovych explicitly refers: “The fact is, for about a year now rumors have been spreading around Moscow, fueled by the tabloids and perhaps by all of the press, that in the depth of the metro there have appeared giant, shepherd-dog sized rats” (Andrukhovych 2008: 123, underline is mine – L.F.). Rats are also present in metro-2 in *Omon Ra*: “Occasionally rats ran across ahead —some of them were as big as small dogs—but they paid no attention to me, thank God” (Pelevin 1996a: 143; 2005: 177). Rumors about gigantic rats in the metro, and their confirmation, are also explicit in the novel *Posmotri v glaza chudovishch* (Look into the Monsters' Eyes) written in 1997. However in this book they are connected with the Biblical story of Crucifixion (Lazarchuk and Uspenskii 2005: 243-247). It appears that the legends found their ways into fantastic fiction long before their publication in various folk collections, also reflected in horror films (Grechko 2012; Isakava 2013: 45–47).

In Pelevin's novel rats are limited to metro-2 and are not mentioned in regular lines; but Andrukhovych writes about their infesting the metro in general—even in daytime,

<sup>20</sup> First published in 1993. This after-death activity recalls the last comments of Erofeev's protagonist allegedly made in a state of total unconsciousness.

which intensifies the menace. This fact corresponds well with his negative perception of the metro in general, beginning “with turnstiles shocking in their metallic automatism, with endless eschatological escalators,” and the underground trains themselves, which according to him are fit for the transportation of “sinners to hell” (Andrukhovych 2008: 119, 123). In both novels metro-2 with its old rails has no running trains. However, in *Omon Ra* a moonwalker and a hand trolley replace them, while in *Moskoviada* one of the rumors is about the exclusive luxurious Pullman car once ridden by Stalin himself (cf. the capo’s exclusive train in Zhadan’s *Voroshilovhrad*) (Andrukhovych 2008: 120; Pelevin 1996a: 141, 143). In both novels the sinister metro-2 is depicted within the Circle Line of the underground city not far from the Kremlin, which was marked in Erofeev’s *Moskva-Petushki* as an evil chronotope. Omon gets out of it through a ventilation shaft, and on the advice of a cleaning woman finds his way to *Biblioteka Lenina* (Lenin Library) station. The drunken Otto von F. enters the dungeon under the Children’s World department store, somewhere between *Dzerzhinskaya* and *Prospekt Marksa* (Marx Avenue) and emerges from it post-mortem at *Kiyevskaya* station. By the time of *Moskoviada*’s writing the names of both stations had been changed: *Prospekt Marksa* to *Okhotny ryad* and *Dzerzhinskaya* to *Lubyanka*. Use of the old names makes them somehow non-existent (cf. the “non-existent town of Voroshilovhrad” in Zhadan’s novel; in contemporary Ukraine the city is renamed to Luhansk). According to Hundorova, “Otto von F. not only quotes Erofeev’s Venichka, but also repeats his alcoholic odyssey in the center of Moscow” (Hundorova 2005: 84. Translation is mine – L. F.). Generally I agree with Hundorova, with one absolutely necessary reservation: Otto von F.’s journey inclines to Venichka’s, but does not replicate it.

Both authors refer to the Moscow metro map. At the end of the novel *Omon*, scrutinizing it, tries to decide where to go. Nevertheless, readers get an implicit message: the map, lacking metro-2, is defective and cannot provide rescue (Pelevin 1996a: 154). To my mind, this implicit meaning should be added to the meanings defined by Ivashkiv, namely “underground life in isolation, the absence of light at the end of the tunnel, the multiple subway lines and the tunnel-visioned passengers” (Ivashkiv 2007: 57). And Andrukhovych explicitly highlights this defective character: “This secret branch of the metro is not marked on any of the maps accessible to a common man. Everyone pretends that it simply doesn’t exist” (Andrukhovych 2008: 120). The combination of existent and non-existent lines allows Andrukhovych to invent stations along the official line as well, for example, *Ploshcha Bydlova* (Herd Square) and *Zal<...>inskaya* (Dickhead) stations (Andrukhovych no year b; 2008: 121).

Fantastic dimension is essential for the Kyiv’s and Kharkiv’s metro as well. The baseless expectation of a fixed route in the metro is followed by the fantastic turn of events related in *Lvivs’ka Brama* (Lviv’s Gateway), a novelette in two parts published in 2010 by Andrukhovych’s friend and colleague Oleksandr Irvanets.<sup>21</sup> In the first part the drunken protagonist enters *Luk’yanivska* station intending to get off at *Sviatoshyn*. He is particularly attentive to the announcements as he is anxious not to miss the necessary change of line. However, already standing on the platform he realizes that the train has gone farther, to *Teatral’na*, leaving him at *Lvivs’ka Brama* announced as technical stop.

<sup>21</sup> In 1985 both writers together with Viktor Neborak organized the Ukrainian literary group Bu-Ba-Bu—Burlesque, Balahan and Bufonada (Burlesque, Carrousel, Buffoonery) in which they were active until the mid-1990s (Semkiv 2015: 116-117). *Lvivs’ka Brama-2* became a subtitle in the novelette *Zoloto Pavla\*\*\*\*\*ka* (Paul’s Gold\*\*\*\*\*). Part 1 was written in 2002 and Part 2 in 2009.

Two things about Kyiv's metro deserve attention here. First, the next station expected on the Syretsko-Pecherska line after *Luk'yanivska* is *Zoloti Vorota* (Golden Gates), where the change to *Teatral'na* would take place. Second, *Lvivs'ka Brama* is one of three so-called "ghost stations," which were partially built but then frozen. Being located under Lviv's ka Square, this station lies between *Luk'yanivska* and *Zoloti Vorota*. Its underground tunnel is almost complete and the main problem is the construction of escalators and the outer part of the subway (<http://www.teren.kiev.ua/article585.html>). On some maps *Lvivs'ka Brama* is marked with a dashed line (<http://subway.umka.org/map-kyiv.html>), which means even today that it is at once existent and non-existent. Similarly, there is no metro in Lviv, although plans exist and one underground shaft was built, but frozen.

Told by the female metro workers that the last train has gone and that the only way out is to go to the outer lobby, Irvanets' protagonist finds himself in a situation reminiscent of that of Otto von F., locked in the Children's World department store after closure. Yet different from Andrukhovich's Otto von F., whose way out ran deep in the dungeon of metro-2, *Lvivs'ka Brama*'s protagonist has to climb up the paralyzed escalator. When he finally enters the lobby a cleaning woman with a strong Galician accent, apparently used to climbers emerging at night, advises him to wait till the morning at a certain Mr. Yuzio's, as there is no public transport at this late hour. Hoping to get home he exits into the rainy night, only to find himself in the city of Lviv. Irvanets creates his fantastic space through metaphor: *Lvivs'ka Brama* becomes the real gateway to Lviv. The idea of an underground way through caves to faraway places is very popular in Ukrainian folklore. People who enter the caves in Kyiv Pechersk Lavra or in the Carpathians may emerge in Jerusalem (Fialkova 1999: 303-304). In Irvanets' novelette the metro replaces the caves and ascending at Jerusalem is replaced by ascending at Lviv, also with positive connotations (Irvanets 2010: 65-70). The small and almost invisible door leads from the outer lobby to the small yard and then to the strange dwelling of Mr. Yuzio. It resembles a dump bursting with hair, nails, saliva or sperm of Ukrainian, Russian and American politicians, which can be used in magic.

Accepting the protagonist's offer to thank him for his hospitality, Mr. Yuzio gives him a bundle containing the Ukrainian Idea, and asks him to turf out this garbage in Kyiv, not just on the way. The road back to Kyiv remains indefinite, which is in line with Ukrainian folklore where the underground way to Jerusalem is one way only. Regaining his consciousness at Kyiv's *Hydropark* metro station with the bundle beside him, the protagonist fulfills the request. However he does not simply toss it into the bin, but into the waters of the Dnieper. In the torn bundle he sees someone's battered skull and a greasy copy of Shevchenko's book *Kobzar'*. Although the strange spelling of this word (with the soft sign at the end) remains incomprehensible to the protagonist, readers may be familiar with it from the book's first edition which was published in so-called *iaryzhka* (Ukrainian written in Russian orthography) in 1840. In my view the final dropping of the bundle into the Dnieper, followed by the approach of militia men, can be understood as transference of the Ukrainian Idea from western Ukraine to the natural surroundings of the country's capital. The way from Kyiv to Lviv is reminiscent of Ukrainian legends. However, Mr. Yuzio's admonition not to turf the "garbage" out anywhere but in Kiev (Irvanets 2010: 82-83, 85), as well as the garbage proving to be a treasure, connects with a fairytale donor from ATU 313B *The Forbidden Box*, and the "garbage" itself conforms with various shabby gifts that turn out to be magic, like Aladdin's lamp.

In *Zoloto Pavla (Lvivs'ka Brama-2)* the tunnel to the other world starts under the café *Enei* situated in the building of the Writer's Union of Ukraine.<sup>22</sup> History itself is embodied there in various objects, for example, the grain looted by the Russian communists from Ukrainian villages in 1927 (Irvanets 2010: 120). In this tunnel an old woman, whose name although deriving from the traditional Ukrainian name Paraska is symbolically changed to *Parcka* (Parcae) meaning personification of destiny, tries to cook food named *Ednist'* (Political Unity) from resisting worms-like ropes which remind the readers about political conflicts. Trying to escape pursuit, the protagonist climbs through a small rectangular hole and finds himself in a Kyiv metro station (presumably *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square), as the next station is *Poshtova Ploshcha* (Postal Square) (Irvanets 2010: 123).

Entrances to the world of the dead can apparently be found in various Kyiv metro stations. For Katerina Dobrozhanskaia, one of three female protagonists of Lusina's book series *Kievskie ved'my* (Kiev's Witches), *Kontraktovaia Ploshchad'*<sup>23</sup> (Contracts' Square) station serves this purpose. The train is not due to stop and take on passengers. Only one door in the last car opens especially to let her in. On the once-only journey from *Kontraktovaia* to *Tarasa Shevchenko* station there occur a conversation with an underworld god or demon, a clear vision of her fellow passengers' death, and a meeting with her dead mother as she decorates the Christmas tree in their own apartment. The long-lost box with the Christmas decorations remains in Katerina's hands on her exiting the train at *Tarasa Shevchenko* station. It seems like the god's/demon's present, or perhaps a sign of the contract with him. In Lusina's version, the special nature of this run is influenced by the pagan character of the streets above, one of which is named for the Slavic pagan god *Veles*. From that only possible stop for Katerina's exit (cf. *Deviatovo's* station in Bykov 2007a: 191, 207), the train continues *en route* to the entrance to hell, gaping under *Saint Cyril's Church* (Lusina 2014: 89–92).

Lusina's train of the dead is reminiscent of its counterpart in *Serhiy Zhadan's Anarchy in the Ukr.*, which was published much earlier. The authors were not just personally acquainted, but had enjoyed literary collaboration (Shestak 2013). However it is difficult to decide whether this similarity is the result of direct influence or of a common cultural background. One of the chapters of Zhadan's novel is entitled *Stantsia metro smert'* "Metro Station Death." This time the station in question is situated in *Kharkiv's* underground world. The metro is described as a dungeon built as a possible bomb shelter, a place with many secret tunnels, some of which hide terrible monsters and the shades of the dead. The narrator clearly senses that descending to the bottom of this dungeon and boarding a train, one might get lost among the lines and never arrive at the station. The dead continue their life in the parallel world, and one day will welcome him as one of them. Still, they may return to the world of the living. This idea is reminiscent of the conviction of people from around *Zhadrunovo* that those who many years before (presumably in the 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries) went to fight the Poles, the French and the Germans and never returned, are bound to come back in the end (Zhadan 2015: 143–148; Bykov 2010: 418–420). However the idea of the metro as the shelter is alien to Zhadan, who foresees its inevitable flooding—held back only by Superman in a lavish blockbuster film. This Superman can find

<sup>22</sup> The Writer's Union building is situated on Bankova street. This café actually existed in the past (Koval 2014).

<sup>23</sup> I transliterated its Russian and not Ukrainian name as the book is in Russian.

his way in the flooded tunnels, always checking the metro map (Zhadan 2015: 144–146). This vision as well as the presumptive movie looks like an outline for Dmitrii Glukhovskii's trilogy, in whose second and third parts the metro itself becomes a metaphor for Noah's Ark and the biblical sea (Glukhovskii 2015a: 375–382, 2015b: 33, 71, 83, 327–329; Glukhovskii 2014: 306–307).

That said, Dmitrii Glukhovskii's trilogy can hardly have been influenced by Zhadan's novel. Its first part, *Metro 2033*, was published in 2005, while the Russian translation of *Anarchy in the Ukr.* appeared in 2008. The second part of trilogy, *Metro 2034*, was published in 2009. Interestingly, the Russian translation of *Anarchy in the Ukr.* and *Metro 2033* both won kudos in the same review of annual literary accomplishments; and we may note that on that occasion Zhadan was predicted to be a Nobel Prize winner sometime in the future (Toporov 2009). However Glukhovskii's familiarity with his Ukrainian colleague's work cannot be assumed. More likely, the same ideas had become fairly popular and were picked up independently by various writers. Thus the intimation of metro tunnels used as shelters in a post-nuclear Kyiv-like *Hrad* (City) was made in Irvanets' *Ochamymria*, first published back in 2003 (Irvanets 2010: 140–141).<sup>24</sup>

Glukhovskii's trilogy presents post-nuclear-war miniature Russia, which has survived in the Moscow subway. The political and ideological groups (e.g., communists, fascists, anarchists, religious sectarians, etc.) and the level of life on different lines and stations are widely diverse. For example, *Koltsevaya* (Circle) Line is dubbed *Ganza* (*Hansa*, Hanseatic League). This place is most desirable and constantly guarded against potential immigrants. Completely different is life in the jungles of *Mendeleevskaya's* station, where people live almost amphibian lives, and in the depths of metro-2 with its cannibalistic worshipers of the Great Worm, constructed by the manipulative rulers with the image of a train in mind. The difference between two *Paveletskaya* stations and *Prospect Mira* (Peace Avenue) station on the Circle Line and of *Mendeleevskaya* station seems like the difference between heaven and hell (Glukhovskii 2015: 92–93, 183–184, 298–302, 354; 2015b: 31, 64–65, 71–75; Glukhovskii 2016: 110, 224–225, 368–371, 435). Trains stand inert in various stages of ruin and are partially used as offices, hotels and dwellings. In this situation the vision of a moving train is a hallucination or a sign of monster-like human ferocity (Glukhovskii 2015a: 366–367, 381; Glukhovskii 2014: 298–299, 310–311). Transportation by rail, which can occasionally be seen in the tunnels, takes the form of hand-propelled and motorized trolleys (Glukhovskii 2015: 55, 169; Glukhovskii 2016: 63, 205–206 cf. hand trolley from Pelevin's *Omon Ra*). But a raft is needed for the flooded lines.

The motif of the metro map is evident right from the start. It is printed on the inside of every book's cover. Like the maps in the novels discussed above it is wholly incompatible with the actual structure of the metro. Apart from the absence of metro-2 on the map, it lacks updated information on available transfers between lines, which constantly change in the course of ongoing civil war. Unlike the map, the magical Guidebook (with a capital letter) enclosed in a small rectangular piece of cardboard, which Artiem happens to find, is of no use to him as it requires knowledge of special signs (Glukhovskii 2015: 94–100; Glukhovskii 2016: 113–119).

<sup>24</sup> *Ochamymria* is the name of a monster lizard, coined by Irvanets.

In line with Erofeev's tradition, the most sinister place in the subway is the metro-2 station beneath the Kremlin (Glukhovskii 2015: 322–340; Glukhovskii 2016: 398–420). The underground world contains its Polis and its Babylon (Glukhovskii 2015: 123, 210–228; Glukhovskii 2016: 148, 258–281). Troy is mentioned briefly, but is constantly brought to mind implicitly by the nickname Homer, acquired by one of the characters (Glukhovskii 2015a: 31, 354; Glukhovskii 2014: 19, 288). Gigantic rats have become habitual predators and it is their absence which is especially fearsome (Glukhovskii 2015: 115; Glukhovskii 2016: 139). The dead can be heard in the tunnels; their necropolis is at *Park Pobedy* (Victory Park) station, and the rusty rails at *Kiyevskaya* station lead directly to the kingdom of death (Glukhovskii 2015: 92, 276–283; Glukhovskii 2016: 110, 341–350). Here it is appropriate to recall the coincidence: Otto von F. of Andrukhovich's *Moskoviada* floated post-mortem from metro-2 out of this very *Kiyevskaya* station. However, differently from him, Artem and his wife Ania leave doomed Moscow by car, not by train. They go to Vladivostok, the city that according to Rafeenko's Iliad-novel *Moskovskii divertissement* is connected to Troy (Moscow) by wooden rails.

### Tram

The Fantastic tradition of the tram's image in contemporary Fantastic prose goes back to Nikolai Gumilev's poem *Zabludivshiisia tramvai* (The Lost Tram) and Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita* (The Master and Margarita) (Bulgakov 1988: 22, 58–59; Gumilev 1972: 105–106, 1988: 331–332).<sup>25</sup> Both contain the motifs of demonic power and decapitation inherited from the Russian poetry of previous period (Timenchik 1987: 139–140). Gumilev's "flying tram," which has acquired the features of a train, an airplane and a ship, resembles the Flying Dutchmen, while readers associate the tram driver with Dante's Vergil or with Fate itself. Movement, including to the past, is fatal and the plea to get off the tram remains unanswered (Bel'skaia 1998; Golikova no year; Kulikova 2009). In Bulgakov's novel *Woland* (Satan in disguise) predicted Berlioz's decapitation by a female Komsomol member. His prediction is based on the strange seemingly chance link between the oil spilled by a certain Annushka and execution. Berlioz slipped on it, fell onto the rails and was decapitated by the tram led by a female Komsomol member. As a result Annushka's oil became a metaphor for unknown fatal circumstances.

In the fantastic biography of Nikolai Gumilev, who supposedly was not executed in 1921, Lazarchuk and Uspenskii invent two meetings of Gumilev, in 1921 and in 1928, with a man attested as Master. At the first encounter Gumilev only sees him sidelong, but at the second they hold a remarkable conversation about a decapitation by tram that has just occurred. Now the entire story, which we know from *The Master and Margarita*, assumes a different light. A GPU agent who planned to kill Gumilev slips on what he perceived to be real ice on that hot August day and falls onto the rails. Readers are expected to assume that Bulgakov just retells Gumilev's story, making only cosmetic changes (Lazarchuk and Uspenskii 2005: 106–112).

<sup>25</sup> Gumilev's poem was written and published in 1921. Bulgakov's novel, written in 1928–1940 was first published in abridged form in 1966–67 and in 1973 in full. Both works became very popular in late Soviet and post-Soviet times. Strangely, Bulgakov never wrote about the metro, although it could have provide his demonic characters with a hellish space (Tan 1987: 26).

Lusina also takes up both Gumilev and Bulgakov, even directly quoting them, but she approaches the motif of decapitation by a tram more elaborately. Following Miron Petrovskii's study, where Bulgakov's decapitating tram is associated with its predecessor from Kuprin's Kiev's story *Zvezda Solomona* (Solomon's Star), her *kievitsy* (magical females somewhere between witches and angels) perceive that first decapitating tram as a metaphor of revolution and as a kind of Annushka's oil. The oil-tram metaphor is extended to Bagrov's assassination of Stolypin. As a result they decide to cancel the revolution by destroying the tram, namely by preventing Bagrov from firing the shot in the Kiev Opera House (Lusina 2009: 184–215, 284). In addition to alternative history (Nazarenko 2012), Lusina creates alternative biographies of many writers and artists, including Bulgakov.

Constructing Bulgakov's fantastic biography, Vladimir Kolganov bases it on a medley of pieces from the writer's fiction, diaries, and pop (base) literary studies. In his re-creation of the tram episode it was Bulgakov himself who could perish on the tram rails, pushed by a love rival (Kolganov 2014: 70–73).

In sum, in all the above instances the decapitating tram is presented in novels whose plot is based on alternative history and alternative biographies. Unfortunately, to date I have not found examples of the fantastic tradition of a tram in contemporary Ukrainian Fantastic fiction.

## Conclusions

The mythology of rail transport is very popular in contemporary Russian and Ukrainian Fantastic fiction. While some motifs inhere in particular types of transport, such as the decapitating tram or the mysterious metro-2, others can be found in both railway and metro.

Among the recurrent railway and metro motifs are journeys to the world of the dead, or beside the world of the dead, with the critical decision to leave the train or stay on it. The world of the dead may be situated outside the moving train, in the abandoned railway stations, on the other side of the track, or may be the final destination. However, sometimes the dead, who continue to live in the other world, can return to the living. The main difference between the Ukrainian fantastic railway myth and its Russian counterpart is a strongly positive European orientation and repulsion from Russia. The image of the railway as a European demon in a pinstripe suit is its complete antithesis.

The metro is connected to the fantastic world in the works of Russian and Ukrainian writers alike. However in the case of Moscow its image is always sinister, inspired by the urban legends on metro-2 with its gigantic rats, KGB laboratories, the rulers' secret trains, and the like. In Kiev and Kharkiv it is sometimes situated within the official lines and is represented by special trains; in other cases it can be reached through tunnels and escalators outside the metro, in adjacent underground dungeons or faraway on the surface, being negative, ambivalent or positive. This latter case is manifested by the magical storage in Lviv reached through the metro but situated outside it. In metro-2 and in the post-apocalyptic world the trains are replaced by a moonwalker, hand-driven or motorized trolleys, and even a raft.

The metro mythology is closely linked to the folklore of caves. The way to the other world everywhere passes through almost invisible doors, ventilation shafts or via

non-existent stations and lines, among them some frozen and renamed. Metro maps are generally deemed useless, and should be included in research on maps in general. The idea of a fixed route is worthless as it can be instantly and unexpectedly changed or misunderstood. In my opinion this combination of the expectation of a fixed route with its wholesale transformation reflects writers' reflections on unexpected societal changes.

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**Куда ведут рельсы?  
Мифология рельсового транспорта в современной русской и украинской  
фантастике (предварительные заметки)**

Лариса Фиалкова

Среди наиболее популярных мотивов в изображении железнодорожного транспорта и метро в русской и украинской фантастической литературе выделяются путешествия в мир мертвых или мимо мира мертвых, а решение продолжить путешествие или сойти с поезда имеет критическое значение. Мир мертвых может располагаться внутри движущегося поезда, вне его, в том числе на заброшенной железнодорожной станции, с другой стороны пути или являться конечным пунктом назначения. Для украинского железнодорожного мифа характерна выраженная европейская ориентация. Литературная мифология метро тесно связана с фольклором пещер и с городскими легендами, хотя имеется и некоторое влияние жанра волшебной сказки. Путь в иной мир всюду пролегает через практически незаметные двери, вентиляционные люки или несуществующие станции и линии, включая переименованные или недостроенные и замороженные. Схемы метро оказываются бесполезными; они должны быть включены в исследование фантастических карт в целом. В отличие от московского метро, всегда получающего зловещие коннотации, описания киевского метро могут быть отрицательными, амбивалентными и положительными. Обезглавливающий трамвай в современной русской фантастической литературе продолжает традиции, актуализированные в произведениях Н. Гумилева и М. Булгакова. Примеры функционирования трамвая в современной украинской фантастической литературе пока не обнаружены.

