

**THE RULERS OF EARLY KIEVAN RUS
IN T. BABITSKAYA'S STORY "PRINCESS OLGA":
LITERARY CONTEXT AND PECULIARITIES
OF THE AUTHOR'S INTERPRETATION
OF THE SOURCE BASE AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL
EXPERIENCE**

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INTRODUCTION

The era of Kievan Rus, full of dramatic and crucial events, have always fascinated the masters of belles-lettres in Ukrainian and Russian literatures from the 18th century to our time. In the second half of the 20th century in Ukrainian and Russian literatures to the initial period, for example, the period of existence of Russ referred the acknowledged masters of the fiction-historical prose as well as less well-known writers, choosing for their preferences varied plots, characters, genre forms, and the like. Val. Ivanov, S. Sklyarenko, P. Zagrebel'ny, Ant. Ladinsky, Y. Alexandrov, A. Zagorsky, V. Muravyov, S. Ponomarev, Y. Prodan, R. Ivanchenko, S. Voevodin, V. Yavorivsky and others – is not a full list of writers, who appealed to Russ antiquity at different times.

In "old" works of some of the artists the description of the fate of a fictional character was associated with adventure intrigue (historical-adventure novel of I. Kovalenko "Uleb The firm hand" (1978)). In other cases, the lives of the characters and description of epy staged historical periods strongly rely on the information of relevant sources ("Sviatoslav" (1959), "Vladimir" (1962), S. Sklyarenko, "The funeral of Gods" (1986), I. Bilyk). Stories and novels which were written by historians ("Black arrows of Vyatichi" (1977), "Sviatoslav" (1982) of V. Kargalov; "New Sky" of Y. JeJuly (1989)) are interesting because of their informational richness of the historical background. Speaking of the works of the Belarusian literature of the indicated period, one can mention E. Skobelev's novel "Miroslav, Prince of Dregoviches" (1979), written in stylized as "archaic" language, etc. The novels of S. Voevodin¹ and

¹ Воеводин С. Ратник княгини Ольги: Роман. Х.: Клуб семейного досуга, 2018. 288 с.; Воеводин С. Вещего Олега: Роман. Х.: Клуб семейного досуга, 2019. 256 с.

V. Yavorivsky² are among the newest books that came to the Ukrainian reader.

It can not be said that the theme “Rus in fiction” refers to the unexplored topics by literary critics as well as by historians. The list of special works (V. Donchyk, M. Slaboshpitsky, V. Fashchenko, V. Oskotsky, V. Chumak, M. Ilnitsky, Y. Bondarenko, O. Kolinka, T. Sushkevich, T. Litvinchuk, V. Kargalov, V. Pashuta and many others) could take more than one page. Of course, the experts-precursors have accumulated considerable bibliographic material, highlighted the poetic properties of “ancient” works. We would just like to supplement their experience with some considerations regarding the specifics of the writer’s interpretation of medieval sources and historical concepts of his and past epochs in the creation of images of the first rulers of Rus, taking into account works that, for one reason or another, have been overlooked by meticulous research attention. The following observations are just approximate sketches that can be used as the subject of special studies (in particular, devoted to identifying the author’s aesthetic and moral orientations in comparing present and past, the specifics of understanding traditions in the fictional reproduction of the Rus realm of ancient times, the process of formation of its own artistic manner, renovation of the stylistics of historical prose in the new social conditions, etc.).

1. Oleg and Olga in T. Babitskaya’s story: state-making and personal dimensions of the author’s “portraiture” of characters and its literary context

Soviet and Ukrainian film director Y. Ilyenko did not accidentally name one of his films “The Legend of Princess Olga” (1982). Olga, the Kiev ruler, still remains one of the most mysterious figures in national history. Rus’ first female diplomat to outwit the Byzantine emperor; mother of militant Svyatoslav, known by the descendants for his famous “I come against you!”; a stern princess who viciously avenged her husband’s death; a humble Christian, who, according to the chronicle, was “the forerunner of the Christian land” – all this is Olga, whose image is tightly wrapped in a flurry of legends. It is not surprising that the life and actions of the princess have attracted the attention of many writers.

The base for Tatiana Babitskaya’s story “Princess Olga” (1990) is a chronicle of events of the first half of the 10th century, which are related to

² Яворівський В. У мене вечеряв Ісус. Княгиня Ольга – велика грішниця, яка стала святою. К.: Брайт Букс, 2019. 344 с.

the names of the Kiev statesmen Oleg, Igor, Princess Olga. According to the name of the work, its main figure is Olga, who began to rule after the death of her husband Igor in 945. Through the princess' prism of life T. Babitskaya reflects the leading tendencies and processes of the distant epoch, the difficult conditions for the formation of ancient Rus statehood.

Once A.-L. Schlözer lamented: "...there is no information about the origin of this immortal wife (Olga. – A.V), of her birthplace, age, education, and other insignificant circumstances that one would like to know"³. These words have not lost their relevance today. The problem of origin, in particular its social and ethnic aspects, has not been finally resolved. "The Tale of Bygone Years" states that Olga was brought to Kyiv "отъ Плескова"⁴. If the chronicle "Pleskov" is Pskov, then the future princess could be from Krivich genus⁵. Ioakimivsky Chronicle, known to us in V. Tatyshchev's retelling, considers Olga to be a relative of the Prince of Novgorod, also known as mayor of Gostomysl⁶. The anonymous author of Olga's Life (the end of the 17th – beginning of the 18th century) writes about the Varangian origin of Olga, emphasizing the nobility of Olga's family⁷. Olga's homeland was considered an anonymous land by the village of Vybut near Pskov. There is a version about the origin of Olga "from the Varangian people, from ordinary people"⁸. "The uncertainty about the origin of Igor's wife and the similarity of the name "Плѣсковъ" with the name of the Bulgarian capital Pliska, – wrote M. Brychevsky, – gave rise to the assumption that Olga was a Bulgarian princess"⁹. Among the researchers, one of the most common is the opinion that Olga came from a noble family who lived in Pskov land¹⁰.

Such divergent thoughts about the origin of the princess could not but affect the fictional concept of her image in historical prose. For example, in S. Sklyarenko's novel "Sviatoslav" Olga mentions her orphan youth in the

³ Шлецер А.-Л. Нестор. СПб., 1816. Ч. 2. С. 594.

⁴ Повість врем'яних літ: Літопис (За Іпатським списком). К.: Радян. письменник, 1990. С. 40.

⁵ Брайчевський М. Ю. Утвердження християнства на Русі. К.: Наук. думка, 1988. С. 89.

⁶ Котляр Н. Ф., Смолий В. А. История в жизнеописаниях. К.: Наук. думка, 1990. С. 43 – 44.

⁷ Житіє Ольги. *Дерево пам'яті: Книга українського історичного оповідання*. К., 1990. Вип. 1. С. 155.

⁸ Погодин М. П. Нечто о роде великой княгини Ольги. *Труды и летописи Общества истории и древностей Российских*. 1828. Ч. IV. Кн. 1. С. 133.

⁹ Брайчевський М. Ю. Утвердження християнства на Русі. С. 89.

¹⁰ Пушкарёва Н. Л. Женщины Древней Руси. М.: Мысль, 1989. С. 13.; Котляр Н. Ф., Смолий В. А. История в жизнеописаниях. С. 44.

Vybutsk region of Pleskov land¹¹. The main character of V. Panova's story "The legend of Olga" (1966) is the daughter of the chief of paddlers on the Velyka River near the Vybutsk region of Pskov¹². If Olga is shown in the V. Kargalov's novel "Sviatoslav" as the daughter of a simple Pskov foreman¹³, then Olga's father in S. Ponomaryov's novel "Thunderstorm above Rus" is a Pskov governor who died while protecting the city from the Germans¹⁴. And here, in I. Bilyk's novel "The funeral of Gods" Helga-Olga is a daughter of Varangian Oleg, who was married to a Bulgarian prince, and later, for the second time – to Igor¹⁵. This series can be continued.

T. Babitskaya models her own concept of the image of Olga, synthesizing data from historical sources, contemporary special researches and drawing on the experience of her predecessors, prose writers. Generally speaking, without deviating from the leading tendency in the hagiographic and historiographic literature, the writer using Olga's mouth states that "вона – дочка псковського воєводи і внучка князя кривичів"¹⁶. For T. Babitskaya the origin of Olga is not relevant to the concept of the work, as, for example, in I. Bilyk's mentioned novel, whose characters are divided on national grounds into parties at war with each other. If, according to M. Ilnitsky, the leading idea of the "The funeral of Gods" is "to show how the Varangians usurped power in Rus from Rurik to Igor, and how Volodymyr's Rus was liberated from their domination"¹⁷, T. Babitskaya seeks to reflect the contradictions and cruelty of a distant epoch when the ancient laws were broken and family members stood against each other (Hotovid storyline).

Our acquaintance with the heroine of "Princess Olga" occurs at the beginning of the story, when the daughter of the Pskov governor Hotobud appears before the eyes of Kiev prince Oleg. The girl expresses such thoughts that the experienced statesman Oleg has only to wonder at her wisdom. Here's an example: «– Що ж таке відданість, дівчинко? – тихо запитав Олег.

¹¹ Скляренко С. Святослав. К.: Радян. письменник, 1968. С. 249.

¹² Панова В. Ф. Сказание об Ольге. *Панова В. Ф. Собр. соч.: В 5 т.* Л.: Худож. лит., 1989. Т. 5. С. 6.

¹³ Каргалов В. В. Святослав: Роман. *Молодая гвардия*. 1982. № 6. С. 95.

¹⁴ Пономарёв С. А. Гроза над Русью. Тольятти: Русс, 1991. С. 94.

¹⁵ Білик І. І. Похорон богів. К.: Радян. письменник, 1986. 574 с.

¹⁶ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. К.: Молодь, 1990. С. 11.

¹⁷ Ільницький М. М. Людина в історії: Сучасний український історичний роман. К.: Дніпро, 1989. С. 190.

– Це коли завжди поруч – у щасті, у горі й занепаді»¹⁸.

Being a teen Olga says: «Мабуть, це добре, коли тебе бояться. Я б хотіла, щоб мене боялися. Вороги, звичайно, але й друзі трошки. Втім, у могутньої людини немає друзів. Тільки віддані люди. В мене буде багато таких. А свого чоловіка я зроблю князем»¹⁹. T. Babitskaya may be exaggerating a bit, forcing her heroine to say things that would suit a mature person. However, in our view, these authorial efforts can be explained by the influence of the pictorial tradition. Emphasizing the wisdom of the girl, the writer seems to give the reader a peculiar setting for further perception of Olga's growth as a statesman.

Olga was brought to Kiev by Prince Oleg, who, in order to secure himself a reliable rear during his march to the Caspian Sea, took the daughter of the Pskov voivode hostage. It was on behalf of the prince, as T. Babitskaya says, that Olga got her name. Even M. Karamzin, wondering where it came from, wrote: "She took her name (Olga. – A.V), it seems, on behalf of Oleg, as a sign of their friendship with this worthy princess, or as a sign of Igor's love to him"²⁰. In such a way he evoked the ironic reply of M. Pogodin, who believed that in the rough 10th century there could not have been such exquisite courtesy that would have added honor to the 19th century²¹. Pogodin, who was inclined to recognize Olga as a Norman, wrote that her name, also Norman, came from Oleg's name²². Modern scholars, seeing the names of Olga and Oleg as a common root, derive the last name (Scandinavian-Slavic) from Helgi – "sacred"²³. Perceiving the derivation of Olga's name, T. Babitskaya explains its formation in such way: the people of Kyiv, believing that Oleg (Olg) would take young Pskovian woman as a wife, began to call her: "дівця Олега князя, отже – Ольга"²⁴.

Prince Oleg, named by the chronicle "Prophetic" , – is an episodic character in the story, but his appeal to some extent may serve to characterize the artistic concept of Olga's image. Oleg's board has been called a "dark period"²⁵ by historians. Foreign sources do not even know

¹⁸ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 7.

¹⁹ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 8.

²⁰ Карамзин Н. М. История государства Российского. М.: Наука, 1989. Т. 1. С. 102.

²¹ Погодин М. П. Нечто о роде великой княгини Ольги. С. 136.

²² Погодин М. П. Нечто о роде великой княгини Ольги. С. 136.

²³ Лебедев Г. С. Эпоха викингов в Северной Европе. Л.: Изд-во ЛГУ, 1985. С. 214. – 215.

²⁴ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 12.

²⁵ Брайчевський М. Ю. Утвердження християнства на Русі. С. 81.

his name or his activities²⁶. Therefore, it is clear that T. Babitskaya was faced with the difficult task of “reviving” this mysterious figure of the early history of Rus by means of artistic words.

The writer does not provide a description of Oleg’s appearance (the story is stingy on portrait characteristics). According to Oleg, we learn that he is sixty-three years old²⁷. Once Oleg, “голоту нещасного”, was kindly hosted by Ladogian Prince Ruric, “разом боролися за Новгород, за Київ ...”²⁸. In those times, Oleg was a ruler and warrior glorified in the surrounding lands. But first of all, the writer is not interested in the foreign policy successes of the prince (which are discussed briefly), but his domestic politics, the essential principle of which is the well-known words “divide and rule”²⁹. Oleg shares the secrets of his power with Olga, because he liked her. The conversations with Oleg were not in vain for her. In the story we see that Olga later in her activities repeatedly followed the advice of the old prince.

Knowing her own self-worth, Olga offers herself to be a wife to Oleg. Olga is convinced that “разом вони могли б правити світом”³⁰. However, Oleg was in no hurry with the decision, knowing well that “вона ніколи не буде чиеюсь, вона залишиться тільки собою. І той, хто візьме її за дружину, все життя біля неї прокрутиться”³¹. Still, Oleg underestimated Olga and realized this when he returned from a trip to the Caspian Sea. This mistake cost him his life.

Almost nothing is known about events related to the last years of the reign of Oleg. In this regard, B. Rybakov wrote that immediately after Oleg’s march to Byzantium, “when a combined army of Slavic tribes and Varangians took indemnity from the Greeks, the “Grand Duke of Rus”, as written in the 911 treaty, disappeared not only from the capital of Rus, but also in general from the Russian horizon”³². Only in 912, citing the text of the said treaty, “The Tale of Bygone Years” presents the famous legend of Oleg’s death from a horse³³. There is little information about foreign sources.

²⁶ Брайчевський М. Ю. Утвердження християнства на Русі. С. 80.

²⁷ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 9.

²⁸ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 6.

²⁹ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 12 – 13.

³⁰ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 18.

³¹ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 12.

³² Рыбаков Б. А. Киевская Русь и русские княжества XII – XIII вв. М.: Наука, 1982. С. 311 – 312.

³³ Повість врем’яних літ. С. 56 – 59.

T. Babitskaya offers her answer to a question that has long troubled researchers: what was the subsequent fate of Prince Oleg after his famous trip to Byzantium, dating from the chronicle of 907³⁴. We learn from the story that Oleg, executing the allied duties enshrined in the treaty with the “царем царерадським”, went to the Caspian Sea to fight the enemies of the empire. “Воював князь, – the author writes, – правда, з удачею, велику здобич узав, але на зворотному шляху в Хазарії напали на нього арсії, мусульманські найманці хазарів, – мстилися за розгром своїх одновірців на Хвалинському (Каспійському. – А. В.) морі. Зовсім мало воїнів залишилося в Олега, здобичі взагалі ніякої”³⁵. The source of the passage is the testimony of an Arab author of the 10th century al-Masudi, who reports the losses (more than 30,000 people) suffered by the Russians on their way back³⁶. This unfortunate period for the Russians began in 912, that is, the following year after the signing of the Russ-Byzantine treaty³⁷. Al-Masudi’s message is consistent with the information of the Khazar document of the 10th century that a certain Helgu-Oleg had mastered Tmutarakan shortly before the Caspian march³⁸. Namely al-Masudi writes about the Tmutarakan Rus people³⁹. The Novgorod chronicle reports that shortly before his death Oleg went “over the sea”, without specifying which sea it was⁴⁰ (in the scientific literature there is an opinion that it was the Black Sea⁴¹). So, sending Oleg to fight in the east, T. Babitskaya presents her explanation of the mysterious disappearance of the prince from Kyiv, that has some documentary evidence.

While Oleg was fulfilling his obligations to Constantinople, a coup took place in Kyiv, where he left Igor. Olga became his main figure, according to T. Babitskaya. Marrying Igor, she already knew firmly that she would make her husband a prince. By bribery, flattery, not neglecting the spread of false rumors, Olga conspired Kyiv people against Oleg. When the prince returned from the campaign, Kyiv was already a hostile city to him. With no strength for the siege, Oleg had to go to Ladoga, which, according to B. Rybakov, was the base of the Normans in northern

³⁴ Повість врем’яних літ. С. 42 – 43.

³⁵ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 14.

³⁶ Сахаров А. Н. «Мы от рода русского...». Л.: Лениздат, 1986. С. 168 – 169.

³⁷ Сахаров А. Н. «Мы от рода русского...». С. 167.

³⁸ Котляр Н. Ф. Древняя Русь и Киев в летописных преданиях и легендах. К.: Наук. думка, 1986. С. 76.

³⁹ Котляр Н. Ф., Смолий В. А. История в жизнеописаниях. С. 31.

⁴⁰ Новгородская Первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов. М.-Л.: Изд-во АН СССР, 1950. С. 109.

⁴¹ Котляр Н. Ф., Смолий В. А. История в жизнеописаниях. С. 31.

Rus⁴². Here again, we see a “reconstruction” of events that could have been behind the stingy lines of the document: bearing in mind the message of the Novgorod Chronicle that Oleg had left for Ladoga⁴³ before his death, the author shows the reasons that led the prince to such a step.

It seems that the chronicle of the death of the Prophetic Oleg is still being asked in the plot of the story. At one time, the nineteenth-century Russian writer Z. O. Volkonskaya did not resist the temptation to use it. She introduced in her “The Legend of Olga” (1820’s (?)) an episode of the death of Oleg from the bite of a snake that crawled out of the skull of princely horse Athel⁴⁴. And obviously, this is not surprising, because this translation is quite a winning from a creative point of view. Moreover, we don’t know much about those times. How is this plot used in the story “Princess Olga”? Without dismissing some of the motives behind the chronicle narrative that extend to the Scandinavian saga of Orvar Odd, T. Babitskaya offers her vision of the situation that underpinned the famous story. Oleg in the story dies not from the bite of the snake, but the killer sent by Olga. The old prince was too dangerous rival in the power struggle. Realizing that Oleg can lead Varangians from the sea, Olga orders to kill him. And to avert suspicion, she spreads rumors that Oleg was bitten by the snake. That’s how the legend was created.

Here is an illustrative passage in which Olga talks to the late Oleg who appeared in her morbid imagination: «— Часто стала кликати мене, княгиня, старієш. А свого часу ти не сумнівалася, як вчинити зі мною.

Ольга здригнулася.

— Мертві знають усе, — пояснив він.

Вона кволо оборонялася:

— Всі відають про те, що тебе вкусила змія.

Князь зареготав:

— Але цю змію звали твоїм іменем.

Ольга розгнівалася:

— Нічого дорікати мені. І ти вчинив би так само»⁴⁵. As we can see, Olga was a worthy student of the prince, who, according to the chronicle, was involved in the murder of Askold and Dir. The last shelter of Oleg was

⁴² Рыбаков Б. А. Киевская Русь и русские княжества XII – XIII вв. С. 310.

⁴³ Новгородская Первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов. С. 109.

⁴⁴ Волконская З. А. Сказание об Ольге. *Волконская З. А. Сочинения*. Париж – Карлсруэ, 1865. С. 98 – 99.

⁴⁵ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 102 – 103.

Ladoga, where he got a mound⁴⁶ (“могила” – according to the Novgorod chronicle⁴⁷).

2. The story base of “Princess Olga”: socio-political and “home” aspects of the author’s conception of the 10th century in its encounters with other writers and researchers of the era

After Oleg’s death, the son of Rurik Igor became known as the ruler of Kyiv. The prince’s desk got to him thanks to the efforts of Olga, who, knowing that she would never become a princess, made Igor the prince to rule Rus on his behalf. Even in the life of Oleg, she applauded his pupil Igor with a constant reminder that he was only the handyman of the mighty prince, “біля стремена Олегового ходить”⁴⁸. To Igor’s matchmakers Olga replied: “Я піду за Ігоря ... Тільки за князя Ігоря, за великого князя Київського”⁴⁹. These Olga’s words and the subsequent reaction to them by Igor and his circle, almost literally coincide with the corresponding place of the saga of Harald Harfagr, the hero to whom the beautiful Gude gave a pumpkin, motivating her act by the fact that he is not the conun of Norway⁵⁰. Such a parallel in the story is obviously not accidental. First, it reflects the scientific point of view regarding the closeness of some of the details of Olga’s chronicle to Scandinavian sources⁵¹. Secondly, it allows the author to add into the characterization of Olga a colorful and yet real detail for the 10th century, without violating the traditional idea of the princess of Kyiv as a proud, imperious and energetic woman.

Igor as a statesman (this aspect is on the first place in T. Babitskaya’s story) is significantly inferior to Olga. In fact, Rus was ruled not by him, but by his wife. But clever Olga skillfully hides her true role. “Позаяк вона хотіла, – Т. Babitskaya writes, – щоб Русь була великою державою, а Ігор – великим державцем, ніхто не повинен бачити, що він під п’ятою в жінки”⁵². Unaffected Igor is the complete opposite of the restrained and silent Oleg. T. Babitskaya’s hero has no power over himself or his own people. Doing so he is different from Oleg, who was able to

⁴⁶ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 156.

⁴⁷ Новгородская Первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов. С. 109.

⁴⁸ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 15.

⁴⁹ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 15.

⁵⁰ Снорри Стурлусон. Круг земной. М.: Наука, 1980. С. 43 – 44.

⁵¹ Рыдзевская Е. А. Древняя Русь и Скандинавия. IX – XIV вв. М.: Наука, 1976. С. 194 – 202.

⁵² Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 59.

hold his army in hand. Unstable to foreign influence, Igor readily persuades the Byzantine diplomat Theophanes, who, by rescuing the empire from the invasion of the northern barbarians (the campaign of Rus in 944⁵³), skillfully avoids danger; quickly adheres to Olga's proposal to appoint a landlord to the land of Drevlyansk, without even thinking about the possible consequences of this step; he condones his younger squadrons, who by their voraciousness have driven the prince to the grave. He is devoid of Olga's foresight and sometimes acts contrary to her reasonable advice to satisfy his ambitions.

Igor's surroundings dislike their prince. And first of all – Olga, who feels for him – as to a person and as to a prince – disgust. Also in the story Igor is opposed to the warriors. Experienced senior combatants are outraged that Igor not only often neglects their right thoughts, but also tries to humiliate someone who has a different perspective of the princely. Igor's younger squads are dissatisfied with their prince because they received less prey in the Tsarigrad campaign than the one brought by the Varangian Sveneld from the Caspian Sea. Even the mercenary Sveneld, whose work is to wield a sword for Kyiv gold – is surprised at Igor's state myopia. And Kyiv's enemies Drevlyany consider the prince a “worthless successor” of Oleg. It is remarkable that in the story we almost do not see Igor, who would reflect on some state problem. Olga thinks of him. The prince is more willing to hunt and feast, his favorite theme is horses. “Про кінець він може говорити цілий день”⁵⁴, – characterizes her hero T. Babitskaya. Still, the writer does not deny the prince in positive features: Igor meets his death with dignity⁵⁵.

The artistic concept of the image of Igor in the story “Princess Olga” is consistent with the point of view of some historians and writers. For example, S. Solovyov, and then S. Platonov, M. Pokrovsky, and others were inclined to characterize the prince of Kyiv as a worthless, self-loving and a miser human. A similar one-sidedness fell into the eye of M. Hrushevsky, who wrote about this: “In the Story (the chronicle – A.V.) Igor, tucked between two heroic princes – Oleg and Sviatoslav, is depicted, in contrast, indistinctly and unfriendly: he does not have that warlike temper, he has no military happiness, he is selfish – a great flaw in the eyes of his wife. Due to this fact, in the recent historiography, the characterization of Igor as a poor and unsympathetic prince has long been established. The characteristic, however, belongs entirely to the field of

⁵³ Повість врем'яних літ. С. 66 – 67.

⁵⁴ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 73.

⁵⁵ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 96.

fiction; we cannot rely on the characterization of folk legends, and the place that Igor occupies in the evolutionary process of the Rus state speaks strongly against it. It had to be energetic and capable in nature, when he did not allow so complicated and shaky state structure to collapse. First, we can take here a brief description of the older version of the Tale: “и возрастшу же ему Игорю, и бысть храборъ и мудръ”⁵⁶.

M. Hrushevsky's words have not lost their relevance even many years after they were written. In the historical prose of the last decades, Prince Igor is portrayed not so much as a statesman, but as a warrior of his army, for whom war and entertainment are above all. Here is what, for example, V. Kargalov writes in a novel “Sviatoslav”: «Напрасно ждали своего охочего до развлечений князя тиуны та огнищанины, напрасно подстерегали его у ворот бояре и воеводы со своими заботами – у князя Игоря не находилось времени на скучные будничные дела. Он искренне верил, что лишь пиры, охота и война достойны его внимания.

Само собой получилось, что люди, отчаявшиеся дождаться княжеского внимания, стали искать суда у княгини Ольги. <...> Игорь же мечтал прославить свое имя походом на Царьград, как прославился и остался жить в дружинных поминальных песнях вещей Олег»⁵⁷. V. Kargalov's point of view broadly coincides with the position of I. Bilyk (in “The funeral of Gods” Igor is treated as a prince-unwell), S. Ponomaryov (in “Thunderstorm above Rus” it is underlined Olga's dislike for “cautious and stingy”, “indecisive” prince⁵⁸) and others.

On the other hand, some of the writers endow Igor with the qualities of a shrewd, visionary ruler, tying his name with the strengthening of Rus. This applies, for example, to S. Sklyarenko, who characterized Igor as a wise and courageous prince, B. Komar, whose hero is portrayed as a supporter of the interests of the state (the story “Squirell” (1960)⁵⁹). In the historical science of recent times the prince was similarly characterized in the works of M. Polovy, A. Sakharov and others.

The fullest disclosure of Olga's abilities as a wise ruler are in the story of T. Babitskaya after Igor's death, when Olga lay on her shoulders the entire burden of state power. The record of the actions of this period reflected the main features of her personality – wisdom, authority, cruelty.

⁵⁶ Грушевський М. С. Історія України-Руси. К.: Наук. думка, 1991. Т. 1. С. 445 – 446.

⁵⁷ Каргалов В. В. Святослав: Роман. С. 103.

⁵⁸ Пономарёв С. А. Гроза над Русью. С. 95 – 96.

⁵⁹ Комар Б. А. Векша. Странствующий вулкан. К., 1984. С. 114, 116 – 117.

T. Babitskaya retains the historical basis of character, focusing on these qualities of the princess. In this way the heroine of our author differs, for example, from V. Panova's heroine Olga. In "The legend of Olga", this writer is interested in Olga first of all as "a baby-girl, girl, wife, widow, mother, mistress"⁶⁰.

Much space in T. Babitskaya's story was given to the activities of the princess in ordering the Rus lands. The main rivals of the Kyiv table here are the Drevlyans. By his extortion, Igor exacerbated relations between Kyiv and Iskorosten, which expectedly led to the Drevlyans uprising. The roots of this confrontation go back to the ancient times. "Вони (Drevlyans–А. V.) Києву як були ворогами з часів Кия, так і лишилися"⁶¹, – Olga says. The memory of the events of several hundred years of enmity lived in the minds of the Drevlyans, prevented them from quenching the freedom-loving sparks that roasted under a layer of outer obedience. It is known from the chronicle sources that the princes of Kyiv repeatedly had to "примучувати" rebellious neighbors. One of the uprisings, which by the "The Tale of Bygone Years" took place in the year 913⁶², was also attended by T. Babitskaya's hero, Prince of Drevlyans people – Mal, then still "юний і нерозважний"⁶³. The longing for the former might of the Drevlyan's land is felt in the words of the story's heroes, who form the "opposition" to Drevlyans' camp (Tuzhir, Radonega, Sukhan). But, as the potter Suhan remarked, "не вернеться минуле"⁶⁴: Kyiv was constantly extending its power to the land of the Drevlyans.

The chronicle of the three revenges of Igor's widow Olga, T. Babitskaya treats with a great care. Aware of his folklore origin, the writer uses only the legend of a sober after Igor, where five thousand Drevlyans were killed (Olga's "third revenge"⁶⁵). This episode naturally fits in with the events that took place after the death of the Prince of Kyiv. After all, as S. Solovyov wrote, "with the underdeveloped social relations then, revenge for a relative was mostly a feat; that is why the story of such a feat aroused the general live attention, and so it is so freshly and beautifully preserved in the memory of the people. <...> the one who had a holy duty of vengeance was a hero of truth, and the more cruel the revenge

⁶⁰ Нинов А. А. Примечания. *Панова В. Ф. Собр. соч.: В 5 т.* Л.: Худож. лит., 1989. Т. 5. С. 547.

⁶¹ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 102.

⁶² *Повість врем'яних літ.* С. 62 – 63.

⁶³ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 90.

⁶⁴ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 54.

⁶⁵ *Повість врем'яних літ.* С. 86 – 87.

was, the more pleased the society of that time was, the more it glorified the butcher as a worthy relative”⁶⁶. In the light of these words, the reaction of the Drevlyans to Olga’s revenge at first glance is understood: “Помстившись так страшно, княгиня високо піднеслася в їхніх очах, адже над усе вони шанували рід”⁶⁷. We add that the appeal to the chronicle of the plot gave T. Babitskaya the opportunity to decorate the story with a colorful picture of the funeral rite⁶⁸, the description of which is borrowed from the Arab author of the 10th century Ibn Fadlan⁶⁹.

Following the chronology of the events, the author outlines the further course of Olga’s struggle with Prince Mal, who, having been defeated in the battle, hid in Iskorosten. Using lightning arrows (not birds like it was in the chronicle⁷⁰), Olga’s soldiers burned the city. The last prince of Drevlians people Mal was suffocated in smoke⁷¹. After that Drevlyans land once again became a part of the Kyiv state.

It should be noted that the author’s concept of the eternal confrontation of Polyans and Drevlyans has a certain historiographical basis. It, apparently, is based on the existing assumption about the ancient belonging of Kyiv to the Drevlyans land, which was stated by I. Zabelin⁷². Archaeological excavations of the 1970s on the top of Starokyivska Gora revealed a cultural layer of the 6th century with ceramics of the Drevlyans type⁷³. It was suggested that in the 6th century there was a Drevlyan’s village, which in the 7th century was seized by Polyans Prince Kyi. Kyi built in this place a fortress named after him. In due time, scientists noted that Kyiv was obliged by its exaltation to war of Polyans with the Drevlyans⁷⁴. It should be said that the “Drevlyanska” concept was in demand in historical prose. For example, in “The funeral of Gods” by I. Bilyk, Y. Jejula’s novel “New Sky”, the era of Igor and Olga is presented as the dramatic finale of a long-running battle between two powerful rivals – Kyiv and Iskorosten, which ended with the conquest of the Drevlyans⁷⁵. Actually, we see the same in T. Babitskaya’s work.

⁶⁶ Соловьев С. М. История России с древнейших времён. *Соловьев С. М. Сочинения*. М.: Мысль, 1988. Кн. 1. Т. 1 – 2. С. 147.

⁶⁷ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 113.

⁶⁸ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 107 – 110.

⁶⁹ Славяне и скандинавы. М.: Прогресс, 1986. С. 70 – 73.

⁷⁰ Повість врем’яних літ. С. 90 – 91.

⁷¹ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 132.

⁷² Членов А. М. По следам Добрыни. М., 1986. С. 148.

⁷³ Членов А. М. По следам Добрыни. С. 151.

⁷⁴ Членов А. М. По следам Добрыни. С. 153.

⁷⁵ Джеджула Ю. Новое небо. К. Радян. письменник, 1989. 399 с.

The story of “Princess Olga” ends with a description of the Kyiv’s ruler trip to Constantinople. Describing this visit, the writer has encountered some difficulties, because historians still have no unanimous opinion on the purpose, content and results of the Rus-Byzantine negotiations. P. Tolochko on this occasion suggested that Olga and Konstantin Bagryanorodny discussed issues of a trade and economic nature, confirming the provisions of the 944 treaty, as well as the problem of the Christianization of Rus⁷⁶. Today, the question as to when, where and under what circumstances Olga was baptized remains open. If chronicle and hieroglyphic sources link this event to being in Constantinople, then there is still no such unanimity among the researchers.

Having thought of “дати русичам нову віру, грецьку”, T. Babitskaya’s heroine goes to Constantinople. But it is not the only thing that excites the princess. However, if the issue of increasing the Byzantine tribute to Rus and the security of the Rus borders from the Pechenegs was resolved, the problems of duty-free trade for Kyiv merchants and dynastic marriage remained unresolved.

Focusing on the chronicle, as well as on the works of S. Solovyov, A. Sakharov, V. Pashut, T. Babitskaya writes about the baptism of Olga in Byzantium. Thus, she draws closer to V. Panova, who relied on ancient Rus sources⁷⁷, and at the same time disagrees with S. Sklyarenko, whose Olga has already been baptized in Constantinople. If S. Sklyarenko, casting aside the chronicle of Olga’s baptism in Byzantium and Konstantin Bagryanorodny’s courtship, tells of the important political and economic negotiations of the Princess⁷⁸, then there are several other accents in the story “Princess Olga”. T. Babitskaya, like her predecessor, leaving aside the “chronicle of fables” about the emperor’s courtship, focuses not so much on the negotiation process as on the psychological state of Olga, who was on the verge of a new faith. In Kyiv, Olga realized that a Christian god, who “з жодним племенем не зв’язаний, а найголовніше – чужий для роду”⁷⁹, can give her power of a new quality. But it was only in the church of St. Sophia in Constantinople that the princess, fascinated by “неземною музикою” made it clear that the new faith was also the way to inner renewal, peace and harmony. «Музика розчулила її до сліз.

⁷⁶ Толочко П. П. Древняя Русь: очерки социально-политической истории. К.: Наук. думка, 1987. С. 42.

⁷⁷ Повість врем’яних літ. С. 92 – 93.

⁷⁸ Чумак В. Г. Семен Скляренко: Літературно-критичний нарис. К.: Радян. письменник, 1972. С. 159.

⁷⁹ Бабицька Т. М. Княгиня Ольга. С. 165.

Повільно напливала вона на княгиню, і душа її купалася в цих звуках, як у літеплі, звільняючись від лжі, бруду і всього, що накопичилось за довгі-довгі роки життя та володарювання. Серце защеміло від почуття непоправності минулого і страшної провини, але солодкі голоси, що лилися зусібч, переконували, що все ще можна спокутувати»⁸⁰. In this scene, the author portrays not an austere and powerful ruler, but an old woman, tired of a difficult life, which required the utmost exertion of physical and moral forces. This view is a good touch to the princess' colorful psychological portrait created in the story.

Proving that Olga became a Christian even before her visit to Constantinople, S. Sklyarenko emphasizes to some extent her independence from the Byzantine emperor⁸¹. Since T. Babitskaya's Olga was baptized in the capital of Byzantium, her patriotic feelings have not diminished at all. The composition of the princess' character does not allow her to think that she is able to yield to the emperor at the expense of Rus. "Princess Olga бажала для Русі високої долі. Щоб велика, могутня, багатолюдна держава стала взірцем для інших царств"⁸².

CONCLUSIONS

Appealing in the story "Princess Olga" to the important for the East Slavic history era of the first descendants of Rurik, T. Babitskaya first of all drew facts, plot collisions and interpretations from the chronicle heritage, modeling of which is generally related to the scientific work of the past and nowadays studies (works of M. Pogodin, M. Hrushevsky, O. Rydzevska, V. Pashut, B. Rybakov, M. Brychevsky, P. Tolochko, A. Sakharov, M. Kotlyar, etc.). From this material, the writer first of all selected the one that most suited her author's intention – to create images of the Kyiv statesmen, to reflect (of course, in the language of artistic creativity) the leading socio-political tendencies of the chosen era. The image of the chronicles of the Rus rulers Olga, Oleg and Igor by the writer, on the one hand, is marked by the originality of the author's approach against the background of other writer's interpretations (Z. Volkonskaya, I. Bilyk), and on the other – executed in the focus of traditional imaginative experience (S. Sklyarenko, V. Panova, V. Kargalov, S. Ponomaryov). A special place in T. Babitskaya's story takes the author's reconstruction of events, which are briefly reported by domestic or foreign sources. The scanty lines of the document act here as a kind of impulse to

⁸⁰ Бабицька Т. М. Princess Olga. С. 175.

⁸¹ Чумак В. Г. Семен Склярєнко: Літературно-критичний нарис. С. 159.

⁸² Бабицька Т. М. Princess Olga. С. 186.

create an original reconstruction of a situation that may have polemical color. And this already testifies to the appropriate level of historical thinking, characterizes the writer as a thoughtful researcher.

The events of the historical source overgrow in the “Princess Olga” with motivated details, get a psychological connotation, fit logically into the story canvas. The fact used here relates to T. Babitskaya with the characters of the heroes, the relationships of the historical persons acting in the work, “working” on the author’s conception of a certain image and historical situation (Prince Oleg’s plot line, “Drevlyans” collisions of the story, etc.).

SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to make an attempt to characterize T. Babitskaya’s story “Princess Olga”, to look through the works about Kievan Rus of V. Panova (“The legend of Olga”), S. Sklyarenko (“Sviatoslav”), V. Kargalov (“Sviatoslav”), S. Ponomaryov (“Thunderstorm above Rus”), I. Bilyk (“The funeral of Gods”), etc. in the historical and literary context. The author seeks to find out the conceptual features of the approaches of these writers to the artistic reconstruction of ancient Rus reality, the nature of the usage of source materials. At the same time, the achievement of the historiographic thought of both the previous and the contemporary prose is taken into consideration, which expands the understanding of the connection between scientific experience and artistic creativity. We are also aware of the expediency and fruitfulness of the identification of figurative traditions in the works of these authors, which date back to the historical prose of the 19th century. The substantive originality of the novels and stories selected for analysis is in line with the writer’s principles of using the source, attention is paid to the specifics of the artistic generalization of the documented features of early medieval reality and its reflection. The content of the publication helps to understand more precisely the specifics of the creative position of the author’s “Princess Olga”, to clarify the original features of artistic and historical works of V. Panova, V. Kargalov, I. Bilyk and others. The results of the study may lead to the conclusion that further consideration of these issues will be relevant to characterize both the literary process of the 60 – 90 years of the last century as a whole and to assess the creative skill of a particular artist.

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