LITERARY PORTRAYAL OF ELIZABETH-ELISIV IN VERA HENRIKSEN'S NOVEL "THE KING'S MIRROR"

Natalija Horbač
(Ukraine)

This research analyzes the novel about Jaroslav the Wise's daughter. This perspective is important for the Ukrainian-Norwegian historical retrospective, modern outlook on different cultures and understanding of the role and position of women in the Middle Ages as well.

Key words: Kyivan Rus', Norway, portrayal, novel, topos.

ЛІТЕРАТУРНА ПРОЄКЦІЯ ОБРАЗУ ЄЛИЗАВЕТИ-ЕЛІСІВ У РОМАНІ ВЕРИ ГЕНРІКСЕН "КОРОЛІВСЬКЕ ДЗЕРКАЛО"

Наталія Горбач

Об'єктом аналізу в статті є роман, присвячений доньці Ярослава Мудрого. Обраний аспект аналізу є важливим як у контексті україно-норвезької історичної ретроспективи, сучасних уявлень про інші культури, так і з точки зору осмислення становища жінки доби Середньовіччя.

Ключові слова: Київська Русь, Норвегія, образ, роман, топос.

The medieval period is appealing to mass historical fiction due to the abundance of the material it may provide to create a good story. Such factors as a long lapse of time, stereotypical view of many aspects of that epoch along with exoticism of its material and spiritual culture make the Middle Ages ideal for historical and artistic representation of reality, but, on the other hand, require from its writers to bridge the naturally occurring information gaps in a compelling manner. This is especially true when it comes to portraying historical figures which remain controversial, owing to a lack of firm research or incompleteness of the relevant historical process.

In terms of women characters, the above-mentioned aspects can be complemented by the discrimination of femininity. Being a cultural marker of the time, it set limits on social roles of women. Thus, O. Ščerbak, who identified three types of women characters in the old Ukrainian literature of the Middle Ages as follows: historical, religious and sinful, wrote about the former, "They were either members of princely families or foreign queens and princesses, etc. As a rule, they were mentioned only briefly in historical chronicles in relation to certain events. These records very seldom represented the individual author's view on a historical figure or gave the description of their appearance…" (Ščerbak 2016, 15). This means that a historical novelist who takes on the task to write about such distant times lacks sources and historical references regarding even the most famous personalities. A good example of this is Elisabeth, the daughter of Jaroslav the Wise, who is depicted in Vera Henriksen's novel *The King's Mirror* (1980). The novel, translated by Natalija Ivanyčuk, became available to the Ukrainian readers in 2002.

Of all the Grand Prince's daughters, Anna remains the most famous, owing largely to the fact that she was married to Henry I of France. As for the rest, the information is scarce and limited to the western sources (Vojtovyč 2006; Smoljar 1999). The reason for the Norwegian writer's interest to Elizabeth is that she was the wife of a Norwegian Prince, and subsequently the King, Harald III of Norway.

Marital agreements of the Medieval times reveal a lot about foreign policy aspirations and cultural orientations in the Middle Ages. According to Ja. Radyš and O. Kožuchar, priority partners of Kyivan Rus' were "the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark); the Romano-Germanic countries in the West (France, England, German feudal states) and the Slavic countries in the East (Czechia, Poland, etc.); the latter also include Hungary" (Radyš, Kožuchar 2015, 113). P. Hai-Nyžnyk's calculations show that only 44 out of 103 Princesses of Rus' became Grand Princess of Rus', while 39 of Princesses married foreigners. As regards Grand Princes of Rus', they had 53 wives from other countries (Haj-Nyžnyk 2011). Although far from exhaustive, these statistics, in the historian's view, make it clear that "Kyivan Rus' was a key player in the international political arena during 10th–13th centuries" (Haj-Nyžnyk 2011). It was this matrimonial 'expansion' that made known to the world

such royal figures as *Bolesław the Bold, King of Poland, the grandson of Volodymyr the Great; Valdemar the Great, King of Denmark, the grandson of Mstyslav I Volodymyrovyč; Saint Margaret of Scotland, a Scottish Queen, as well as Hugh the Great, a leader of the First Crusade, both the grandchildren of Jaroslav the Wise; Béla II, King of Hungary and Croatia, the grandson of Svjatoslav Izjaslavyč; Jevpraksija-Irene, the spouse of the Byzantine co-emperor and the daughter of the Kyivan Prince Mstyslav,* and many others.

The portrayal of the Kyivan princess in the Norwegian literature started with visur, that is a genre of scaldic poetry, written by Harald himself, where he complained about the insensitivity of "Gerd[1] from Gardarike[2] who will not accept his gold rings" and the number of sagas (Pricak 2003, 121–129). As for contemporary literature, the depiction of Elizabeth can be found in the novels by Frid Ingulstad, in particular: *Elisiv*[3], *Maria* and *Ingegerd* (the latter two portray the characters of Elizabeth's daughters). There are several works of Ukrainian literature that portray the daughter of Jaroslav the Wise, including *The Song about the Girl from the Land of the Rus'* (Franko 1978), I. Franko's translation of Harald's poem, a dramatic poem *Jaroslav the Wise* by I. Kočerha (Kočerha 1946), a fiction-documentary story *Mother, Marry the King* by I. Korsak (Korsak 2007), fictional biographies *Jaroslav's Daughters Saga* by Ja. Chorunžyj and Ja. Jakymiv (Chorunžyj, Jakymiv 2004) and *Elizabeth, Jaroslav's Daughter, the Queen of Two States* by N. Krutenko (Krutenko 2015), and others.

The purpose of this research is to analyse artistic representation of Elizabeth Jaroslavna, in V. Henriksen's novel *The King's Mirror*, which is important for bridging historical gaps in the lives of women in the Middle Ages and getting a better understanding of the social role of women in different historical periods and in various cultural contexts. This research will also make a substantial contribution to the national imagology studies related to the vision of a Ukrainian / a Pole (R. Holyk, G. Hrabovyč, D. Nalyvajko, D. Sosnovs'ka, S. Uljaš), a Ukrainian / a

1 A woman from the Kyivan Rus'.
2 "The country of cities (towns)" – the name of the Kyivan Rus' in the Old Norse epic literature.
3 Elizabeth's Scandinavian name, which could come from the Slavic name *Olisava*.

Jew (D. Homon, G. Hrabovyč), a Ukrainian / a Georgian (L. Hrytsyk, O. Muškudiani, L. Rozsocha), a Ukrainian / an Italian (N. Bilyk, O. Pachl'ovs'ka, K. Konstantynenko, D. Nalyvajko), a Ukrainian / an American (T. Denysova, A. Mel'nyčuk, O. Nyčko, T. Ostapčuk, M. Tarnavs'ka), a Ukrainian / an Englishman (V. Narivs'ka), a Ukrainian / a Frenchman (D. Čyk), etc. in the literary discourse.

In a situation where the comparison of the images of a foreign and a home culture is being conducted in the number of imagological studies in the spheres of literature, history, culturology, political science and linguistics, and when the conceptual apparatus of the science is being developed, the above-mentioned research shows the specific nature of literary imagology which should be taken into account when exploring theoretical basis of this interdisciplinary field and doing imagological analysis of a literary work as well. However, we could not find any published literary studies research on V. Henriksen's novel and, therefore, there are grounds to claim that this is the first time that a chosen aspect has been studied.

The title of V. Henriksen's novel was inspired by the old Norwegian book *The King's Mirror*. This didactic Christocentric text is in the form of a dialogue between a father and a son, where the son is advised by his father. Such texts were quite popular then and could be found in many literatures of the Middle Ages (the author herself compares the Norwegian text with Volodymyr Monomach's *Admonition* to his children (Henriksen 2002, 279)). This allusion to *The King's Mirror* determines to some extent V. Henriksen's intentions to depict the life and battles of Harald the Ruthless. Since he is one of the three prominent Norwegian rulers who are in the focus of sagas, it seems quite natural that his life could provide plenty of fictional material. However, unlike the medieval writer, V. Henriksen does not give the narrator's voice to the king but Elizabeth-Elisiv instead who is telling about his father's life to her stepson Olaf, the son of Harald and Tora.

The reader meets mature-age Elisiv and Harald at the beginning of the novel, shortly before Harald's campaign to conquer England where he was subsequently killed in the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066. The story about how they had met and lived in Kyiv as well as the further events from Harald's life and his long struggle for power in Norway are

presented in flashbacks, narrated by Elisiv. A female's perspective allows not only to see Herald the warrior who bribes, cheats and kills, but also a less-than-perfect husband (who, being a Christian, had two wives in addition to sending rebellious Elisiv to an island unsuitable for living), whom she still loves for his looks, intelligence and courage. Although Elisiv does not ignore the conflict between her husband and God, they are Christian virtues and values, impersonated by her ancestors, Grand Prince Volodymyr, princes Borys and Hlib and Grand Princess Ol'ha as well, that have become the benchmark by which the perception of her husband and herself is measured.

On the one hand, the princess is portrayed as her father's daughter. The governance of Jaroslav the Wise was characterized by economic growth, advances in science and education, regulation of legal and social relations and further Christianisation. "He followed the laws, prayed to God and acquired wisdom from books, and for that he was called the Wise" (Henriksen 2002, 98), Elizabeth-Elisiv says about the Grand Prince. She herself could speak Norwegian, Greek and Latin as well as the Old East Slavic language. Moreover, Elisiv was able to count and write (when in exile, she copied books). She was also a connoisseur of skaldic poetry, etiquette and Christian dogmas, including the writings of the Church fathers. Her teachers back in Kyiv were Hilarion, Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus', and Theodosius of the Caves. The Gospel and the Book of Psalms were the most precious presents that Elisiv would expect to be brought from Kyiv. The two of the most favourite Elisiv's icons accompanied her through her life. They were "the diptych of ivory, with major religious Holy Days on it, and a silver-framed folding icon, with Jesus in the middle and John the Apostle and the Virgin Mary on their chairs" (Henriksen 2002, 98).

Elisiv's Christocentrism is most apparent in her resistance to the moral scepticism of her husband. Despite being a Christian, Harald obeys religious dogmas only when they do not interfere with his endless encroachments on the authority, property and territory. This is best illustrated by the argument that Elisiv had with her husband about his arranged campaign against England. Harald sees it as a completely legitimate manner to take possession of the legacy of his nephew Magnus who died under unclear circumstances. "I might have killed him and

I might not. It doesn't matter," he says to his wife, without even trying to reduce her suspicions. "What is important to me is to get hold of his wealth in England and Denmark. I have to do it so that people wouldn't tell I didn't dare seize his legacy because I had taken his life" (Henriksen 2002, 11–12). The arguments that Harald uses to justify the breach of a peace treaty with Sweyn II Estridsson, King of Denmark, may well illustrate his treacherous nature, "What is a treaty? The way to keep peace until I benefit from it… Once I had a treaty with him but then I terminated it. He should have known better" (Henriksen 2002, 12). The four Elisiv's ancestors, who became saints of the Rus' Orthodox church for their moral standing, do not evoke any reverence in the Norwegian bellicose. Moreover, he negates their Christian virtues by reminding about ways of life they had led before receiving baptism. He means Grand Prince Volodymyr's concubines and three acts of revenge that "saint Valkyrie" Grand Princess Ol'ha took on the Drevljans. As for the Saints Borys and Hlib, who had been Christians from birth and did not stain their reputation, their fault was in "their letting kill themselves and refusing to take or defend their legacy" (Henriksen 2002, 12). For Harald, who respects only power, they are just worthless failures.

Faith is used in the novel to accentuate the spiritual bond between Elisiv and her motherland, "she never got accustomed to the Latin Church service. She still heard the echo of the other liturgy which was the song that could embrace and put the whole sky under the dome of the Saint Sophia of Kyiv" (Henriksen 2002, 52). Experiencing crisis in her island exile, the woman feels alienated from the Church and loses her connection with God. It is the period when she starts having nostalgic dreams in her native language and it is also the time when she turns to her "childhood God", "that Light Father, the God of Heaven who embraced people giving them his kindness and love?" (Henriksen 2002, 73). Even Kyiv, her hometown, is by and large marked with the Christian loci such as Kyiv Pečers'k Lavra, the Church of the Tithes, and of course, Saint Sophia Cathedral, "High above the city rises Kyiv Metropolis, the biggest church in the town, Holy Sophia Cathedral. My father has built it and it has taken him many years. The temple is spacious inside, and its vaults are held on the huge pillars. The walls there are decorated with wonderful pictures, some of them are painted, and oth-

ers are lined with tiny shards of stained glass and gold flecks. The rays of light, which come from above through the big windows, brighten the colours, making the gold shine and sparkle magnificently. It seems as if the earth and the heaven have combined all together. Mary raises her hands to the heavens praying for us, mortals. Jesus Christ comes alive and walks the Earth, with prophets, apostles, saints and angels beside him. Over all of them, high in the sky, there is Christ Pantocrator who …" Elisiv stumbled, "It's not that easy to describe Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv in the Norwegian language. I have run out of words" (Henriksen 2002, 101–102).

The portrayal of Harald's wife, however, is not one-dimensional. In addition to being an educated, intelligent and sensitive woman, fictional Elisiv is presented as "Harald's Valkyrie" who followed him in his military campaigns. With this, V. Henriksen substantiates that her heroine became like this not only because of the challenges of those times and the king's wife's status, but also due to her origin. In doing so, the author characterizes the Rus' people as a warlike nation on several occasions throughout the novel. "In the ancient times, long before Christianisation of Kyivan Rus', my forbears would put a drawn sword in front of a newborn son saying, "Don't count on my legacy. You will earn everything with your own sword" (Henriksen 2002, 101–102). Except Jaroslav the Wise, almost all men in the main heroine's paternal line followed this admonition, "My brothers saw the blood too, but I don't know whether they enjoyed that. Fighting with neighbors was just their daily grind. Having defeated their enemies, they would burn their towns and villages, take prisoners and sell them into slavery" (Henriksen 2002, 152).

Although Elisabeth-Elisiv respected her father for his contribution into economical, social and cultural development of Kyivan Rus', she really looked up to her grandfather Svjatoslav whom she admired for his military prowess. According to her, Svjatoslav "had been fighting all his life and conquered a lot of countries. He sneaked around like a cat… He never took any provision with him but cooked his meat in the campfire. He never had a tent, neither, so when he got tired, he just put a saddle under his head and went to sleep" (Henriksen 2002, 31). She tends to think that consanguinity may explain her own recklessness, "I am a real descendant of Svjatoslav, flesh of his flesh, his kindred spirit.

I used to take pleasure from looking at the battlefield. I loved to see how bravely Harald would rush into a battle under the banner which I embroidered for him. You can only imagine how many times I had the chance to watch his battles! Even Herald himself once asked me to be more careful or he would have to give me a helmet and armor" (Henriksen 2002, 152). Svjatoslav is also the one from her family who is the most respected by Harald. He talks about him when he tries to justify his own aggressive ambitions to his wife, "You once told me that you wanted me to be more like Svjatoslav than your educated but fearful father" (Henriksen 2002, 31–32). Nothing can change his plans, even reminding about the humiliating death of Svjatoslav, whose skull served as a drinking vessel for his enemies. "Do you think my sculp will make a good vessel? Look, how good it is" (Henriksen 2002, 32), he just laughed the matter off. For this reason, his rushed words addressed to Elisiv, "Svjatoslav's spawn!" (Henriksen 2002, 215), sound more like admiration of her strong will than criticism.

From a psychological perspective, relations between Elisiv and Harald, the two people with extremely strong personalities who are not willing to make compromises, appear very convincing. The author starts to follow the fates of the characters beginning with their first meeting in Kyiv, where a 15-year-old Harald and his half-brother Olaf came to wait out uncertain times away from their homeland conquered by the King of Denmark. He became the head of the mercenary unit in the service of Jaroslav the Wise. The family ties of the future king with the Kyivan princely are worth mentioning here since his elder brother Olaf's wife was the sister of Ingegerd, the second wife of the Grand Prince of Kyiv and Elizabeth's mother. Young Harald's ambitions involved not only the Norwegian throne, but also a marriage to a Jaroslav the Wise's daughter. These plans at first had not come to fruition since Hovdings preferred Olaf's underage son, Magnus, and the Grand Prince of Kyiv refused to marry his daughter to an outcast whose fate was precarious and uncertain. As a result, Harald entered into service at the court of Byzantium emperors in Constantinople. Having won a lot of battles, which made him extremely prosperous, he came back to Kyiv and, finally, married the princess. Two years later, young couple left for Norway where Harald "executed his half-brother Olaf's intentions

of taking control over the whole kingdom, including agricultural areas of Trondelag and Oppland" (Helle 2001, 25) and became a sole ruler. However, the main obstacles to their love were not the wars and a political power play of that time but Harald's bad temper. Thus, he decided to teach his pertinacious wife a lesson and gain support from the local nobility by banishing Elisiv to an island and taking Tora Torbergsdatter as a concubine and his wife.

The novel is set in the first decade of the Christianisation of Norway, that began circa 1000 and is associated with the Harald's brother, Olaf II Haraldsson, King of Norway. Apparently, the new religion did not gain much popularity at that time, and Harald's impertinent behaviour eloquently attests to this, "I'll do whatever I want. I'll go to England even if Michael the Archangel and all his army gets in my way" (Henriksen 2002, 29). Throughout the novel Harald, who is a typical Scandinavian adventurer of the period, shows even greater religious skepticism. "It would be hardly possible to call God my friend" (Henriksen 2002, 18), he says. The author further maintains that "The unsurmountable wall was growing between Harald and God" (Henriksen 2002, 136). The reason for this internal conflict is the confrontation between Christian morality and the traditional way of life of the Norwegians, who, due to the lack of arable lands and overpopulation, were engaged in constant raids, military and naval campaigns, piracy and looting. Nevertheless, life went on and the feudal society replaced the clan system, having transformed a semi-nomadic way of life into a settled one. These changes put the end to wars of conquest in the first half of the 11th century. St. Olaf and Harald were the last Norwegian Viking leaders. Moreover, Harald's death marked the end of a three-hundred-year history of the Viking expansion.

This explains the reason why fictional Elisiv represents more than just a new type of personality. She also embodies the new type of conscience that is intendent to replace pre-Christian morals. The concept of her portrayal may be interpreted as a response to Olaf's question about whether it is possible to be a Valkyrie and a saint at the same time. "It's possible," the woman said, "I've never lied about my love to God. I've been searching for God" (Henriksen 2002, 259). Thus, conversations with Harald and Tora's son, besides providing the reader with the facts

from the family history and the summary of the late king's ruling, serve as admonitions to his son who will succeed the throne. It is noteworthy that under his rule (at first as his brother Magnus's co-regent and then, after his death, as the sole ruler of the Kingdom of Norway) the country saw an increase of trade and towns as well as strengthening of the Church and the power of the king. Olaf II Haraldsson was the first literate king of Norway and was also known as Olaf 'the calm' due to his overall peace-loving policy.

For Elisiv, personal relationships refer to physical love coupled with a Christian virtue. Although she is aware of such Harald's negative traits as treachery, revengefulness, greediness, pettiness, wiliness and vanity, she never stops fighting for him. She says, "If he [Harald – N.H.] is destined to eternal damnation in hell, I'd rather suffer with him than go to Heaven alone" (Henriksen 2002, 259). Elisiv's value conflict is a result of her contradicting feelings of love for Harald ("I loved him for his reckless courage, restlessness, zeal for combat and strength" (Henriksen 2002, 259)) and repentance for her husband's sins ("She held herself responsible for the harm her husband inflicted. She felt as if she rose with Harald together to his stardom, and then fell with him into the abyss. She paid for this dearly, living in fear for Harald's soul and praying daily for his salvation and deliverance for those whose lives he had destroyed" (Henriksen 2002, 268).

What makes fictional Elisiv human is the depiction of her relations with her daughters, Maria and Ingegerd. In this respect, she is portrayed as a loving mother, who cares about lives, security and happiness of her children. She has love not only for Harald and her own children but also for her stepson Olaf. She first met him after his father had died. Olaf, who was sixteen then, hated his father and Elisiv, drank a lot and would not listen to anyone, "She used to worry about Maria, you know, it's not easy to be the King Harald's daughter. She shouldn't have. It might have been much more difficult for a son to have Harald as a father. This is especially true for an emotionally vulnerable young boy. By the way, Olaf and Maria look alike … She was almost sure that Olaf was suffering …. She wanted to help him" (Henriksen 2002, 62). She treats her rival Tora with dignity as well and will not listen to bad things about her, emphasizing that "King Harald has two widows" (Henriksen 2002, 62).

Elisiv's emotive and evaluative attitudes toward Kyivan Rus' and Norway constitute the 'homeland'/'foreign land' dichotomy. The former is described as fertile and blessed, and also as the land "that is good for wheat, that gives birth and becomes a bed for those who have lied into it" (Henriksen 2002, 74). As for the latter, it is rocky, empty and impoverished. Kyiv has become a central topos of her home world. It is the princess's home town, "a place of unprecedented beauty" (Henriksen 2002, 101), which has "forty churches, eight markets, … surrounded by a long wall with numerous gates, one of which is golden" (Henriksen 2002, 101). The fact that market places are mentioned just after buildings for Christian worship highlights the importance of foreign and domestic trade in the economy of that period. According to Elisiv, it is the trade that have made Kyiv so prosperous, "But for the trade, there wouldn't be any Kyiv, the goods are brought here from everywhere. Fur and copper come from boundless northern forests, weapons arrive from the western countries, sophisticated cloths are from Constantinople, exotic vegetables appear from the south and magnificent jewelry is from far away oriental countries whose names are all mystery to us!" (Henriksen 2002, 101), "camelcades travel from the east whereas mule pack trains deliver goods from the west, making their way through impenetrable forests" (Henriksen 2002, 101). The main waterway of Kyivan Rus' is also described in terms of its importance for the trade, "The Dnieper river is the biggest trade route… Every spring Kyiv harbours a big fleet of merchant ships. A lot of boats come from the towns upriver, some of them arrive from far away towns like Novhorod… At the beginning of the summer they are ready to leave, loaded with goods and slaves. Merchants set off on a long journey to Constantinople" (Henriksen 2002, 101). This description of the broad lands of the Kyivan state reminds the one from the ancient records, where the narrator gives an impression of looking at them from above and connecting in his mind the territories that are thousands of miles apart. In terms of the novel by V. Henriksen, this active and mobile map shows both the scope of the country and its place on the trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks.

Literary space becomes an important indicator of the changes that Elisiv's character undergoes throughout the novel. For example, the description of the one of the Dnieper Rapids, Insatiable or Nenasytec'

(Nejasyt' in the novel), which presented a big danger to navigation, at first glance, seems to be just a part of the Dnieper topos, "The most petrifying is the fourth[4] rapid. Here the garrison has to carry ships and drive shackled slaves over land. This rapid is called Nejasyt', which means insatiable[5], and this name fits it perfectly. Nejasyt' has twelve rifts and the river seethes there, it thrashes about, breaking against the cliffs, which are as sharp as sword blades. There is a thick mist in the air, and many whirlpools swirl among stones. A terrible roaring noise silences everything around the place" (Henriksen 2002, 103–104). In terms of numbers, the rapid was approximately 2.5 km long downstream and about 1 km wide; the total drop height of the water from its 12 rifts was above 5 m; it never froze even in the harshest winters due to the speed of the current of 4-6 m/s (Vermenyč 2004, Vermenyč 2010). With that in mind, the novelist uses toponym 'Nenasytec" to signify the challenge that requires from a person moral and physical strength. This seems especially relevant if we keep in mind that water symbolizes a purifying elemental force. The situation that will require the heroine to suppress her feelings will be her love to her stepson, "Here it is, that rapid, her own Nejasyt', which she was carried to by the relentless river" (Henriksen 2002, 261). Elisiv cannot help but be attracted to Olaf's personality, who, unlike his father, "can cry and fight at the same time" (Henriksen 2002, 261), who will not send his troops to invade other lands because peace for his country is paramount and a human life is more valuable for him than spoils of war. Having had a moment of weakness, the woman realizes that there is no future in a sinful relationship, "What is a sin? Elisiv felt like Whore of Babylon. If somebody found out that she made love to her husband's son, she would be stoned to death. But her heart was still filled with hope that even Creator God would not

4 In historical sources it is the fifth out of the nine Dnieper rapids.

5 In the work *De Administrando Imperio* (946–953) by Constantine Porphyrogenetos ('the Purple-born), Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, where we find the first historic mention of Nenasytec', its name is derived from the owl-like bird Nejasyt' that lived on the rapid cliffs. Nevertheless, semantic interpretation of the toponym as 'insatiable and bloodthirsty', which is given in the novel, is widely accepted and was cited by D. Javornyc'kyj who linked the name to the fact that the rapid was difficult to navigate.

judge her and would forgive her, telling her not to sin again" (Henriksen 2002, 261).

From the very beginning, Elisiv has been adjusting to her new role in a foreign country simultaneously with her psychological and physical adaptation to an alien landscape, that is associated with depicted in the novel islands, fjords, straits, cliffs and the sea. This can be observed most clearly in the connection with the latter topos.

Being from a mainland state, Elisiv initially perceives the sea as an incomprehensible and hostile force to mankind, "I was standing on the deck, watching the last outlines of the sea shore disappearing over the horizon… You'll never see what I mean, Olaf. You've known the sea since you were a child, whereas for me the boundless sea, that was breathing and pulsing below, with its horrible monsters lurking in its depths, was a living being… It didn't take long before I could see how dangerous it could be … The sky grew dark, the clouds became heavy with rain; the storm began, bringing high winds and gales. Big waves were tossing our ship like a nutshell; hanging over the deck, they were showing their white fangs as if they wanted to swallow us …" (Henriksen 2002, 145). More than once the writer endows her characters with pagan consciousness, but the sea seems to be so alien to Elisiv that it does not fit into any polytheistic worldview, "I could not imagine it being a woman, as, say, mother Earth, or a man who would look like an ancient idol. The sea was just a shapeless giant, who was unfathomable and strange like nothing I've ever seen before" (Henriksen 2002, 145). The depth of her heroine's inner turmoil in the new environment is masterfully conveyed by V. Henriksen through Elisiv's childhood fears, "I felt like a small girl, abandoned by her mother and left with strangers" (Henriksen 2002, 145).

When her fear of the sea wore off over time ("My wife has to be accustomed to sea voyages" (Henriksen 2002, 145)), Elisiv, according to Olaf, "never ceased to be a Valkyrie, the protector of her husband in battles" (Henriksen 2002, 258) alongside Harald in his naval campaigns. Just like Elisiv's older daughter Maria who since her early age "hasn't seen anything but the sea and the cliffs" (Henriksen 2002, 36), her mother is gradually getting used to the sea landscape, "She could stand for hours on the shore admiring stones in the harbor, white with

frost; watching how sea forth glistened in the sun when the tide came in or how the mist glowed with myriads of sparkling droplets" (Henriksen 2002, 144).

Fourteen years (out of her over twenty-year-long marriage to Harald) that Elisiv spent in exile on the island, exposed to the winds and waves, taught her to perceive the sea as divinity, "It seemed to her that high and low tides were the manifestation of God's will… She felt as if she opened her soul to God with the boundless trust. She let the waves of His love to carry her along. And when the sea rolled back, it took the scum, washing away her sins" (Henriksen 2002, 34). Thus, in the woman's mind, the sea acquired both purificatory and purgatory powers. This is why at the moments when Elisiv faces a conflict between her spiritual and terrestrial callings and wishes her husband a victory at any cost ("it doesn't matter who he should thank for that victory, God or Satan himself" (Henriksen 2002, 34)), she regards the high tide as recompense for her sinful thoughts, "God's will that manifested itself in a flux terrified her because she, a mortal, had rebelled against the Lord" (Henriksen 2002, 34).

Apart from this, high and low tides are a part of the natural cycle according to which the woman lives on the island. The way she compares seasons with the rise and fall of the tide, by saying that "seasons alternate with each other as fast as flood and ebb" (Henriksen 2002, 228), is evidence of the importance of the sea in her life. Although Norway was initially in contrast to Kyivan Rus', Elisiv later realizes that a foreign country has become closer to her through the years of hardships and struggles, "The sea breeze used to be strange to her when she first arrived with King Harald in his weather-bitten and rocky homeland, but it has become her friend. She could hear the sea waves roaring below and thought that they sounded like a pipe organ song. With the difference that God the Father himself played it, not a monk" (Henriksen 2002, 6).

As can be inferred from the above, the sea in V. Henriksen's novel *The King's Mirror* is a constituent of a spatial description that has characteristics of unknown space requiring familiarization. The main heroine's physical and psychological adaptation is conveyed through the

change of her attitude to the sea, which went from fear and hostility to harmonic coexistence.

Spatial images as components of the author's individual picture of the world are closely related to other elements of the imagery system of the literary work. In particular, they may be an important means to portray what the character is like 'through place'. When it comes to a character who, like Elisiv, is the bearer of medieval consciousness, the spatial coordinates are defined by the presence of their own (inner, close, comprehensible and relatively safe) and alien (external, unknown, unpredictable, distant and threatening) worlds within this consciousness. When the heroine of V. Henriksen's novel overcomes the barrier between the worlds of Kyivan Rus' and Norway, she moves from one ethnic, sociopolitical and cultural dimension to another. In this manner, Elisiv abandons the role of a character with 'spatial and ethical statics' (according to Ju. Lotman) and becomes the active character capable to eliminate the obstacles. This successful move enables the heroine, despite her many losses and suffering, to overcome not only geographical distances, but also differences in mentality and bond with the topos of the country that used to be alien to her.

As for Elizabeth's later life, the writer follows the concept of Scandinavian sagas and concludes the novel with the heroine's marriage to Sweyn II Estridsson, King of Denmark. It was also an arranged marriage, just like the first one, with difference being that this time it was Elisiv's step-son Olaf, not her father Jaroslav the Wise, who decided whom she should marry. Thus, a peace treaty between Norway and Denmark was strengthened by the marriages of Elisiv and Sweyn on the one hand, and his daughter Ingerid and Olaf on the other. Although dynastic marriages disregarded women's feelings, V. Henriksen again departs from this stereotype, "Elisiv has been watching Sweyn; she took to him twenty years ago when she lived in Sweden. Sweyn was an amiable man, but he often lost his temper. She hoped she might have a tolerable life with him" (Henriksen 2002, 277). Notwithstanding the open ending of the novel, Sweyn's last phrase, "I'm going to invade England. Do you fancy being the Queen of England, Elisiv?" (Henriksen 2002, 277), makes us think that it is impossible for a woman to be happily married in the system of wrong values.

Both historical and literary portrayal of Elizabeth, Jaroslav's daughter, remains controversial due to the absence of fundamental research into that historical period as well as information gaps concerning the life of the Kyivan Princess. However, there are indications that Ukrainian translation of the novel by V. Henriksen may cause the renewal of interest in a historical figure of Elizabeth-Elisiv, which implies involvement of various literary and academic works on the topic. The novel can be considered as a source of historical evidence about that distant epoch and a means of forming mass historical consciousness. As rightly pointed out by I. Lučuk, "Ukrainian readers may find historical allusions and citations too transparent[6]. However, it must be born in mind that for readers from Norway and other foreign countries, where V. Henrikson's novels are published and translated, important events and facts in the history of Ukraine need additional explanation. Therefore, this novel by Vera Henriksen is a powerful tool … to popularize our history in the world" (Lučuk 2002, 6).

Although intercultural contacts have become part of everyday life in modern times, people still may perceive other cultures through the lenses of their own, limiting themselves by its boundaries. Literature has always helped people push these limits, having created certain genres where foreign cultures are accurately portrayed, being presented through the prism of author's consciousness. Ukraine and Norway have a rather long history of literary relations, if we regard the translations of the Nobel laureate B. Bjørnson's works at the end of the 19th century as their beginning. But it is only in recent years that these contacts have intensified. As a result, the joint literary events have been held, Ukrainian literature collections have been established in Norwegian libraries, several Ukrainian publishers have printed the number of translations from Norwegian, which familiarize our reader with new names and literary works. In terms of building positive interethnic relationships, an important role is played by cross-cultural literary works. Being a representative of this literary genre, V. Henriksen's novel *The*

6 While discussing preparatory aspects of writing her historical novel, V. Henriksen pointed out that she had used both Western European sources and early written records of Rus', including *The Chronicle of Nestor*, old sermons, biographies of saints and the *Admonition* of Prince Volodymyr Monomach (Henriksen 2002, 281).

King's Mirror facilitates understanding of a multipolar world, extends our knowledge of the historical Ukrainian-Norwegian retrospective and enriches contemporary views on the world and a place of our own culture in it.

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