

Storytelling at the Limit: Narrative Fiction in Contemporary Ukraine

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Pascale Casanova, famously extending Bourdieu's sociological theory to conceptualize what has become known as the field of "world literature", describes this field as profoundly heterogeneous. On the one hand, literatures are inherently national, tied to specific languages and implicated in the history of (re)construction of national identities (*World Republic of Letters*). On the other hand, the literary field today may have reached a certain degree of autonomy as a domain of creativity, unconstrained by national or political agendas. Autonomous in this sense, the literary field, however, operates as a literary market with unequal strategies of valuation of individual literatures and texts – especially those that do not embrace the cosmopolitan ethos and the dominant storytelling imperatives.

The world-literary field today may privilege literary works that do well in denationalized circulation and speak to 'global' themes (such as the so-called "global novel") or, at least, to the themes that are of interest in New York, the current capital of the literary field (Vermeulen 2017). But for many "combative" literatures (Casanova 2011), such cosmopolitanism is not an option as their national contexts become sites of heated political struggles or even wars for survival and writers join these struggles symbolically as well as physically.

In this contribution to the ENN section "Authors against the story economy", I would like to address such renewed *political and national* instrumentalization of literature – in addition to the erosion of the autonomy of the literary field under to the pressures of the story economy. I shall draw on the recent works by Volodymyr Rafeyenko, Serhiy Zhadan and Sofia Andrukhovych, whose political engagement in the Ukrainian context seems to drive their writing towards non-narrative genres, such as drama, satire and poetry, as well as expose the transformations and limits in the traditionally narrative genre of the novel.