Central European perspectives of the global campus: Slavic academic fiction after 1989

OKSANA BLASHKIV

DOI: 10.31577/WLS.2025.17.1.2

Central European perspectives of the global campus: Slavic academic fiction after 1989

Campus novel. Academic novel. Slavic literature. World literature.

The article discusses non-Anglophone campus fiction based on contemporary Slavic academic fiction. The author maintains that for the study of Slavic campus fiction in the context of world literature, the methodology of area studies and comparative literature is productive since it presents necessary tools for interdisciplinary research. This idea is illustrated by campus fiction written in the countries of Central Europe. The article discussed generic peculiarities of Slavic campus fiction, which primarily is constituted by the socio-cultural context of the area's university history and the themes, therefore, dealt with by the novels. As the themes common for Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Ukrainian campus fiction the author specifies the problem of identity, cultural memory, and the university's contemporary challenges. Among the specific features identified in these national literatures, campus metafiction by Slovak and Polish writers is mentioned. The author concludes that Slavic campus fiction offers a unique lens on multilingualism and hybrid identities, shaped by Europe's intricate history and opens up new possibilities for further research.

Oksana Blashkiv
Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies
University of Siedlce
Poland
oksana.blashkiv@uws.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-3607-9895

Until recently, campus fiction was viewed as an exclusively Anglo-American phenomenon, and therefore uncommon outside that context. However, recent studies reveal that campus fiction is to be found in other national literatures, both "large" and "small". While the campus novel emerged as a subgenre in English and American literature, "it is a subgenre that has appealed to many major literary novelists, including such authors as Vladimir Nabokov, Javier Marias, Zadie Smith, Philip Roth, A. S. Byatt, Bernard Malamud, and Nobel laureates Saul Bellow and J. M. Coetzee" (Moseley and Kucała 2019, 5). Campus fiction emerged independently and almost simultaneously in English and American literature in the 1950s. Scholars can agree that by now this subgenre has established its canon, which includes Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), Mary McCarthy's *Groves of Academe* (1952), Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1954), David Lodge's campus trilogy (*Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses*, 1975; *Small World: An Academic Romance*, 1984; and *Nice Work*, 1988), Malcolm Bradbury's *History Man* (1975), serving as foundational texts against which all other campus novels are inevitably compared. Most recently, Jenny Erpenbeck's *Kairos*, a love story between a student and a writer set in East Germany, won the International Booker Prize in 2024. Meanwhile, existing research shows that campus fiction appears to be both a genre that has existed within the given national literature roughly since the 19th century (though not being defined as a separate subgenre) and a genre brought to the fore or even appropriated from literature in English due to globalization. Regardless of its origins, campus fiction provides an inside look at higher education, opening up the possibility of interdisciplinary research that involves such fields as comparative literature and university studies (Barnett and Standish 2002; Williams 2019).

In the context of world literature, recent publications (Gruszewska-Blaim and Moseley 2016; Gruszewska-Blaim 2018; Fuchs and Klepuszewski 2019; Moseley and Kucała 2019; Selejan and Moseley 2022) suggest that the "geography" of campus fiction has substantially expanded. Along with Anglophone literature written in various countries, the genre of the campus novel has started to be discussed in relation to literature written in other languages. Campus fiction is not alien to Spanish, French, Italian (Soliński 2015), and Romanian literature (Selejan 2019a). In the 20th century it went through several stages of development in German (Trombik 2017; Selejan 2019b) and Austrian (Weiss 2019) literature. In Norway there is "a long tradition in literary depictions of academia, the students and the staff" (Christensen 2017) which apparently made a good basis for contemporary campus fiction; the same seems to be true for Finland (Juntti 2017).

In Slavic countries, the situation with campus fiction is a bit different. For quite some time campus fiction in Polish literary criticism has been discussed through the "category of exceptionality" (Trzeciak 2015, 57; cf. Sidowska 2015; Skubaczewska-Pniewska 2018, Klepuszewski 2019a, 2019b; Perkowska-Gawlik 2025). In Czech literary criticism, until recently campus fiction was not considered to constitute a separate distinctive genre (Pavera 1999; cf. Gwóźdź-Szewczenko 2019; Hrtánek 2025). In Slovak literary criticism, the campus novel is regarded as a marginal but persistent genre of contemporary Slovak fiction (Mitka 2018). In Croatian literature,

"the term 'academic novel' is fairly known" and that is due to only a few translations of academic literature on the topic and fiction itself and due to "different geopolitical and historical circumstances heavily connected with the development of science and the academic society" (Varga Oswald 2014, 125). In Ukrainian literature, campus fiction is also considered marginal and hybrid or functioning under the names of other genres (Blashkiv 2019). Meanwhile, it is difficult not to notice a certain uneven division regarding non-Anglophone campus fiction between "large" (Western) and "small" (Slavic) literatures, as well as literary criticism around it.

This status quo is the result of several issues, the first of which is language. Accessibility of texts translated into English is different for Western, Central, and Eastern European countries in general; when it comes to campus fiction, a marginal genre in Slavic literatures (if acknowledged at all), the choice for translation naturally lies with the "national canon" yet unknown to English literature, not the academic novel. The rare exceptions occur, like Josef Škvorecký's *Příběh inženýra lidských duší* (1977; Eng. trans. *The Engineer of Human Souls*, 1984), Dubravka Ugrešić's *Ministarstvo boli* (2004; Eng. trans. *Ministry of Pain*, 2005) or Oksana Zabuzhko's *Pol'ovi doslidzhennya ukrayins'koho seksu* (1996; Eng. trans. *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex*, 2011), but they are seldom viewed within the frame of campus fiction per se. Depicting visiting professors from Slavic countries in "hosting" universities abroad (a classical campus fiction motif), the novels are usually discussed in the context of expatriate (post-1968 in Czech and post-Yugoslav in the case of Škvorecký and Ugrešić respectively) and post-Soviet Ukrainian feminist writing in the case of Zabuzhko. The discussion is complicated even within literary criticism of different Slavic countries due to the marginal status of campus fiction in their national literatures, different Slavic languages of novels and academic discourse around them (campus fiction in Slavic languages often is not translated either to English or other Slavic languages or the neighbouring countries), but also due to attempts in the existing research regarding the genre of the campus/academic novel to level up with singular texts of English and American literature that make the canon of campus fiction, like Amis's *Lucky Jim* or Lodge's *Changing Places* and *Small World*. Another matter is related to the inextricable connection between literary and university history within the canvas of campus fiction. The connection is unquestioned, but university history in the Slavic lands is not widely known, which creates the next difficulty in discussing the Slavic phenomenon of campus fiction outside its geographical area. Therefore, paraphrasing the known witticism about national authors writing national literatures while translators writing world literature, Slavic campuses have not yet been marked on the literary world map and remain a local phenomenon.

This article attempts to outline the potential of Slavic campus fiction for the study of the genre in the context of world literature. Its focus is on the contemporary Slovak, Polish, Czech, and Ukrainian novel written after 1989. In addition to being Slavic, they constitute the geographical area of Central Europe, "the most complicated cultural complex, the region with colourful historical and religious developments, the cradle of revolutions and world wars" (Pospíšil 2015, 13), which, nonetheless, presupposes common values, history, cultural memory as well as a certain mindset.

Even though according to some scholars, Ukraine can be part of Central Europe only within the borders of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire (i.e. Western Ukraine), other scholars consider the European vector of its intellectual elite over the centuries to be enough to consider Ukraine within Central European cultural entity. The university as a factor in shaping Central European identity comes as a logical assumption though rarely paid enough attention. In his influential essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe" ([1984] 2023) Milan Kundera emphasized the university as an example of Central European identity saying:

> Central Europe is not a state: it is a culture or a fate. Its borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation. For example, by the middle of the fourteenth century, Charles University in Prague had already brought together intellectuals (professors and students) who were Czech, Austrian, Bavarian, Saxon, Polish, Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Rumanian with the germ of the idea of a multinational community in which each nation would have the right of its own language: indeed, it was under the indirect influence of this university (at which the religious reformer Jan Huss was once rector) that the first Hungarian and Rumanian translations of the Bible were undertaken. (48)

In the context of globalization, this cultural area poses even more interest due to its multi-ethnic and multilingual background, meanwhile, the history of the university and academic culture in these lands sheds specific light on the global campus. Therefore, the campus fiction of Central Europe presents a unique opportunity to combine the Anglo-American template of campus fiction with the traditions of Slavic literatures.

STRUGGLING AGAINST ITS OWN TEMPLATE: IS THERE A SLAVIC CAMPUS NOVEL?

In English there are several terms used to define a piece of prose focused on the depiction of the university environment, among them the campus novel, the academic novel, the university novel, or the college novel. In particular, some scholars distinguish between "university novels" and "campus novels". David Lodge maintains that "'campus fiction' is a term used to designate a work of fiction whose action takes place mainly in a college or university, and […] is mainly concerned with the lives of university professors and junior teachers […] and to a lesser extent with their students, both undergraduate and postgraduate" (2006, 1). Malcolm Bradbury provides the following generic criteria of the campus novel: it emerged after World War II, "is written by university teachers […], set in 'new universities', real or fictitious", discusses "some of the pressing social and intellectual questions of the time", and is "nearly always comic in spirit" (1996, 274). Meanwhile the university novel, according to Bradbury, which "has very deep roots" going back to the mid-19th century, is written by "reminiscing ex-students", "stylized, largely fantastic, […] describe[s] an ancient city drenched in sunlight and nostalgia" (1996, 274), which obviously fixes the distinction between Oxbridge novels and those set in "new universities". The comprehensive study by Mortimer R. Proctor (1957) maintains that the origins of the university novel in English literature can be successfully traced from Chaucer's

Clerk of Oxford and up to the mid-1950s, while Bradbury maintains that it endures into the 1980s and possibly on. That, in turn, suggests the simultaneous co-existence of two parallel genres dealing with the university environment but different in tone. Similar in a way is the American tradition of distinguishing between campus fiction (student-oriented, developing in the 19th century often as *Bildungsroman*) and academic fiction (faculty-oriented, developed after World War II; Williams 2012, 567). At the same time, while John E. Kramer chooses the term "college novel" over "campus novel" or "university novel" by stressing the importance of the setting (2004, 1), Merritt Moseley chooses "academic novel" as most inclusively widening the scope of campus fiction (2007a, viii). Meanwhile, David Lodge (2006) uses these terms "more or less interchangeably" attributing to the academic novels more inclusion and to the campus novel "more expressiv[ity] of the unity of place which characterises the genre" (2). Lodge also stresses that "the rapid evolution of the genre" owes much to "the convergence of these three highly gifted authors [Mary McCarthy, Randall Jarrell, and Vladimir Nabokov] on the university or college as a subject and setting" (2006, 3) in addition to Kingsley Amis in England. These novels (all published in the 1950s) set the generic template of campus fiction, more specifically of "satire on professors themselves" (Moseley 2007b, 110).

For European literatures, defining the generic peculiarities of campus fiction is not entirely simple. Non-Anglophone literatures often borrow the word "campus" from English as well as the set of generic criteria, often taking David Lodge's campus trilogy as a canonical example or measure for campus fiction written in other languages and other cultural contexts. That, on the one hand, extremely narrows down the choice of texts and discards the variety of representations, and on the other, begs for a closer look at the Lodge trilogy which is generically "fluid" itself (Walsh 2007, 276). A common feature that all the scholars register is a non-satiric mode of non-Anglophone campus fictions, many also refer to the long-lasting tradition of literary portraits of "university life", which is rooted in the history of the institution.

The history of the university in contemporary Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, and Ukraine is closely tied with the history of kingdoms and empires of which their lands were a part. When the first universities started to be established in Central and Eastern Europe they were often called "academias" and even if they were sometimes short-lived, the later restored institutions often claim themselves to be their "spiritual heirs".[1] Historically, these academies were dedicated to preparing the religious elite and (despite being closed off) constituted integral parts of the towns and cities. The oldest university in the region, Charles University in Prague, was established by Charles IV in 1347.[2] Poland's Jagellonian University followed 20 years later, but after the first partition of Poland between three empires of Europe, the university history in its lands (including part of today's Ukraine) largely depended on the rule of Russia, Prussia, and Austro-Hungary.[3] The first university in Slovak lands was established in Bratislava in 1465 as Academia Istropolitana and functioned for over twenty years till 1488. The second one was founded in Trnava in 1635 gradually developing into an institution of four faculties; however, in 1777 it was relocated to Buda.[4] From then until the founding of Comenius University in 1919, there was

no "*complete* academic institution of higher education"[5] (Višňovský 2021, 139–140; emphasis added) on the territory of present-day Slovakia, which made young people seek education in universities of the neighbouring states.

After World War I, the university history in Central Europe was readjusted to the establishment of new nation-states, but in the late 1930s, the university development in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Soviet Ukraine was interrupted by World War II. As postwar satellites of the USSR, the Warsaw Pact countries received individual treatment on the part of Soviet authorities, which reformed their systems of education following the models particularly adjusted to the country and its culture (Connelly 2000). Meanwhile, the university in post-war Soviet Ukraine is marked by the same characteristics as that of the whole Soviet Union, performing primarily the function of the interpellator of ideology and that of the mouthpiece of the regime. Therefore, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the moment when literary representation of the university could change and not be censored.

The political history of the peoples that lived in Central Europe seems to be more important for understanding contemporary campus fiction by Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Ukrainian authors than their literary history. Nonetheless, the (re-)emergence of campus fiction took place simultaneously with these national literatures finding their voice in post-communist times, with the incorporation of literary practices of postmodernism, and with the globalization of the world which was behind the iron curtain a short time ago. Under such socio-cultural circumstances, campus fiction in the countries of Central Europe combines the features of student- and professor-oriented novels, being set both in distant and recent past alongside the present, addresses the problems that concern both academic and national identity solving them differently depending on their nations' history and aspirations for the future, presented in the satirical tone or not. Therefore, the generic diversity and hybridity within which Slavic campus fiction operates is quite high (Sidowska 2015; Skubaczewska-Pniewska 2018; Blashkiv 2024). The themes that dominate in these fictions are the theme of identity, cultural memory, and contemporary challenges of the university against the background of the post-communist/post-colonial past. The three themes often intertwine within the same novel but are realized within the historical contexts meaningful to Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, and Ukrainians. It may be worth reminding that these novels were written after 1989 and mainly reflect the contemporary discontents and anxieties of the academic community (cf. Showalter 2005) but also may be extrapolated onto the nations they represent.

HISTORICAL THEMES IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN ACADEMIC FICTION

Anglo-American campus novels do not commonly discuss themes such as patriotism as an academic value, questions regarding national identity, preserving the collective and cultural memory. These are recurrent themes in Central European campus fiction, however, due to which (and probably because of the absence of satire), they are seldom defined as such and are more often referred to as historical novels.

Eva Maliti Fraňová's novel *Tajomstvá mladého Bajzu* (Secrets of young Bajza, 2023) is based on the life story of Josef Ignác Bajza (1755–1836), a Catholic priest and the author of the first novel written in literary Slovak, *René mládenca príhody a skúsenosti* (1784; Eng. trans. *René, or a Young Man's Adventures and Experiences*; Pucherová and Brtáňová, 2025). The importance of history for understanding the protagonist's motivation and actions is revealed in the novel through the history of Slovak education. In 1777, the protagonist Jožo, after having spent a year in the University of Trnava (which had just relocated to Buda), journeys to Vienna to enroll in the Pazmaneum seminary for Hungarian theological candidates, with the intention of becoming the author of a book in Slovak. However, when he wants to write a letter to his mother in his native village (Predmier, near Žilina in present-day Slovakia), he cannot choose which language to write it in:

> if he wrote a letter in Hungarian, she would not want to understand it, so alien it would sound for her. He would not be able to write the whole letter in German and his father would not be able to read it. It would be best to write in plain Slovak. His mother would like that. However, he realized that this would not be easy either. It would not be possible to do it properly. Jožo tried to do it this or that way and finally understood that to become a Slovak writer would not be easy. (30)

Even though the novel naturally may be read as a literary biography and a history novel, the character of Bajza the student, his campus life within the walls of the seminary, and a love storyline suggest that the novel may also be read as a variant of *Bildungsroman* and campus fiction. Bajza's story is also about the formation of Slovak national identity in the end of 18th – earlier 19th century, when Slovaks had neither their own state, their own written language, or any institution of higher education.

The prominence of the protagonist, the time, and the place of action in the novel *Tajomstvá mladého Bajzu* stresses the importance of history, cultural memory, and national identity as leading themes in campus fiction in Central Europe. An important detail for the development of education in Slovakia was religion: during the counter-Reformation, Protestant students of Slovak descent had no other choice but to go to study at the German universities of Halle or Wittenberg, returning home with a certain mindset ready to raise national awareness among their own people. Therefore, the typical enclosed and isolated structure of the university does not pose this self-sufficient microcosm known to the English campus novels that focus on exclusive rituals and experiences. Instead, the protagonist's campus life is not detached from the world outside university life of his local ethnic/national community, which would have an impact on his identity as a learned man and a representative of his people. This corresponds to the history of Slovak culture, which was predominantly produced by scholars of Slovak origin educated and operating in different parts of Central Europe (Višňovský 2021).

The same matter of national identity is illustrated in the academic historical mystery *Głowa: Opowieść nocy zimowej* (The Head: A winter night's tale, 2016) by Tadeusz Cegielski. The murder investigation takes place against the background of a big conspiracy organized by the Russian authorities governing part of the Polish lands

after the Third Partition of Poland. The student of medicine and self-appointed sleuth Mikołaj Obrycki turns out to be not only a prominent forensic investigator but also a politically conscious Polish patriot who sees through the provocations and manipulations of the authorities. However, in his investigations he is not alone: the university community of fictional and historical figures in the novel is depicted as united in their efforts and aware of the dangers entailed by the political subordination of Poland. Moreover, the university is an integral part of the city and its social life, the source of its cultural existence while its statehood was destroyed. This sense of community rooted in the Polish university would also be consistent with the historical role it played for over 200 years.

The "Kapranov brothers" Dmytro and Vitaliy Kapranov, the Ukrainian authors of the "historical anti-mystery" *Sprava Syvoho* (The case of the Greyhaired, 2019) focus on the story of a Soviet official and university dropout, who fabricates a case against a historical figure, the professor Dmytro Yavornytsky (1855–1940), makes it his life mission and a means of upward social mobility.[6] In the novel, the professor is consistently persecuted by both regimes, that of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and both times by Russified and ideologically corrupt Ukrainians. Professor Yavornytsky symbolizes Ukrainian identity and a gradually destroyed cultural memory, while the young investigator of the internal services and his "tutor" represent the ideology of the colonizer. Both novels present a "university mystery" that deviates from the academic mystery template known to Anglophone campus fiction.

Andrzej Braun's *Cyfrograf* (2006), Yuri Makarov's *Za chvert' desiata* (A quarter to ten, 2013), and Pavol Rankov's *Legenda o jazyku* (The legend of the tongue, 2019) illustrate the ways the national identities of Poles, Ukrainians, and Slovaks were transformed under the rule of the state socialism in these countries. While none of these fictions has received sufficient attention in the context of campus fiction, all of them bear great potential in illustrating the peculiarities of the university environment in the countries of Central Europe after World War II and under the close "supervision" of the Soviet Union. Moreover, in this case, campus fiction becomes the keeper of the collective memory passed down to the third-generation descendants by those who actually lived through this experience. In addition, they also testify to the coming-of-age in a certain period in history in Central Europe, which drastically differs from the Anglo-American perspective.

The importance of history and cultural memory is also crucial for understanding Slavic campus fictions dealing with contemporary problems of the academia. What seems to be the familiar problems of the contemporary globalized academic world, in these countries' campus fiction it is also linked to their post-communist and hence post-colonial past. This is obvious in the Slovak author Oliver Bakoš's *Katedra paupológie* (Department of paupology, 2001), when the need to restructure the department of Marxism-Leninism leads to the invention of a new field of research called "paupology" (science about the poor) and to an attempt to seize power and take the position of the department head. The same post-communist heritage underlies the events in Jozef Puškáš's latest novel *Vivat, akadémia, zbohom, Čechov* (Vivat, academy, goodbye, Chekhov, 2024). Similarly in Jiří Fanta's *Univerzita* (Uni-

versity, 2007), a detective story only partially set on campus, the political changes prompt the dean's elections at the Department of Economics, as a result of which the department remains in the hands of the former communist secret service informant, using the same methods to reach his goal. The same idea is developed by Michal Sýkora in the academic mystery *Modré stíny* (Blue shadows, 2013) revealing not only the university's underside but also the complexity of Czech society regarding the ramifications of its communist past. In the Ukrainian context, Daryna Berezina's *Facul'tet* (Faculty, 2017) and Petro Bilous's *Universytet suvoroho rezhymu* (The university of severe order, 2022) portray the university as a corrupt institution operating on Soviet principles of total submission to power and intolerance to professionalism and any kinds of otherness.

To discuss the trait of neoliberalism in these fictional universities without ramifications of their previous mode of existence under the communist ideology and state control would be missing not only a great deal of understanding but also irony regarding the contemporary state of the university outside the campus novel – in real life. Even though these examples probably do not cover all the novels united by the theme of the communist/Soviet heritage, the choices made by authors in terms of genre may give some clues as to the national differences in elaborating the given topic. While the Czech writers prefer academic mystery, Slovak and Ukrainian writers choose bitter satire.

While historical traumas, memories, and the search for identity unite many campus novels by Central European writers, there are some unique literary phenomena as well. Among these, one cannot omit Stanislav Rakús in Slovak literature and Arthur Przybysławski and Wit Szostak in Polish literature for their unique campus metafiction. A professor of Slovak literature and a literary critic, Rakús is the author of three novels: *Temporálne poznámky* (Temporal notes, 1993), *Nenapísaný román* (Unwritten novel, 2004) and *Excentrická univerzita* (Eccentric university, 2008), which make a trilogy that is often defined as "academic". Marek Mitka states that Rakús "absorbed" the best that "the campus novel elaborated over the half a century" (2018, 124), in particular drawing on the humor and intellectual depth of David Lodge, on the one hand, and "the so-called non-humorous kind of university fiction, saturating theoretical and pedagogic activities of the protagonist", as presented by John Williams, on the other (2018, 125). In one of his interviews, Rakús notes that in his literary texts he "creates decent people who live in relatively indecent times and their decency becomes a certain source of conflicts in their lives" (2010), the "indecent times" being the pre-1989 era. By that alone, the novels become literary reflections on the essence of creative writing in times of silence. In the context of Slovak culture, where the writer/poet traditionally serves as a symbol of "people's consciousness", Rakús's university men (both students and professors) who write novels but face the obstacle of not being able to publish them, receive a much wider context for interpretation. The novels' narrative structure gives rise to the question of how the contemporary novel should communicate recent experience and preserve cultural memory in a period that appears to have little to remember the past by, except "the unwritten novel". On the contrary, the Polish writers, both professors of philos-

ophy, address contemporary academe through dialogue with key texts in world literature. While Wit Szostak creates a Polish Don Quixote of the 21st century in *Sto dni bez słońca* (One hundred days without sun, 2014), Arthur Przybysławski in *Pan Profesor* (Mr. Professor, 2020) and *Pana Profesora dziennik sekretny* (Secret diary of Mr. Professor, 2022) unfolds in front of the reader a Rabelaisian literary feast (Skubaczewska-Pniewska, 2024). In the novels of both writers, rich literary communication with world literature takes place against the background of contemporary academia with all its absurdity, unrealistic estimations, and the loss of humanity. By the degree of intertextuality, these novels may be justly compared to canonical Anglo-American campus fiction. In addition, the writers' professional expertise in philosophy and parody as the main means of conveying ideas brings these novels to a whole new level. At the same time, as in the case of Rakús, they cannot be regarded without the context of national history and culture.

CONCLUSION

Central European campus fiction is a rich and multifaceted literary phenomenon, yet to be fully discovered by readers and scholars of both Slavic and world literature. Academic literature suggests that contemporary Slavic writers, while accepting the campus novel template, modify the genre adjusting it to the local material. One such modification is the high hybridity of Slavic campus fiction, embracing features from the *Bildungsroman,* biography, historical novel, satire, and mystery to anti-mystery, anti-biography, life writing, and utopia. Despite the dominant genre characteristics, Slavic academic fiction is deeply grounded in the local culture, university history, and literary traditions of the region's separate nations. The fact that these fictions are produced in national languages and are rarely translated testifies to their local scope rather than a broader Slavic or European one. However, judging by the common themes developed by such fictions, like post-colonial/communist trauma, cultural memory, and identity, Central European writers do share some characteristics that could probably be discussed in terms of "common mentality" or collective memory. Dealing with its traumas, nonetheless, takes an individual national turn. That is also the reason for the absence of satire as a dominant feature of campus fiction. With its focus on the intellectual and the university as his natural habitat, the Slavic academic novel, nonetheless, sheds light on a bigger picture of the highly nuanced history of Central Europe. Therefore, its "learned men" along with the fluidness of their identity remain acutely aware of the national question and their position regarding it. Due to the Slavic university history and political regimes that controlled it, the whole city (or country) becomes the primary setting for the novel, alongside or instead of the university campus or department. That, in turn, may explain why the professors are not burdened by the dilemma of whether to stay or leave the institution; instead, they survive in it against all odds. The one academic year of cyclic time traditional for the Anglo-American campus novel is seldom observed in Slavic fiction; instead, it may be compressed to several weeks or extended to a lifetime, to illustrate the cyclicity of social events rather than academic ones. The dominant themes are developed around the reconstruction of distant and recent historical events connect-

ed to university education or "the learned men" important for the history of the nation (cultural/collective memory); the problem of identity against the background of the recent colonial (communist/Soviet) past; and dealing with contemporaneous neoliberal challenges the university finds itself while it still deals with its decolonial (post-colonial issues). Simultaneously, Slavic campus fictions revise the university's changing role in contemporary globalized society, the ramifications of the humanities' decline or failure, and the national character, history, identity complexity, or cultural memory construction. Thus, the academic community appears torn by multiple, often opposing messages and challenges that keep academics on the brink of breakdown, often both personal and professional.

The case of Slavic campus fiction shows that non-Anglophone fiction offers a unique lens on multilingualism and hybrid identities, shaped by Europe's intricate history. This, in turn, highlights the plurality and diversity of literary representations of higher education, enriching the global discourse on university life, which may help find insights into the current condition of the university worldwide and possibly look for universal solutions, especially in the face of recolonization as a new global tendency.

NOTES

[1] These included the Academia Istropolitana in Bratislava (1465–1488), the Ostroh Academy (1576–1636) and the Mohyla Academy (1632) in Ukraine.

[2] The second oldest university in the crown Czech lands was Palacký University in Olomouc, established in 1573 and led by the Jesuit order.

[3] In Poland the university history is connected to the key moments in the country's history: the establishment of the Polish Kingdom (Jagiellonian University in Krakow [1367]), the loss of statehood due to three partitions (Imperial University of Warsaw [1816]), and regaining of statehood (the Piast [Poznań] University [1918]).

[4] Its successor institution is Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest.

[5] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the present author.

[6] Yavornytsky was known for his research on the Zaporozhian Sich, destroyed by Catherine II in 1775.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Bakoš, Oliver, 2001. *Katedra paupológie*. Levice: L. C. A.

Berezina, Daryna. 2017. *Facul'tet*. Kyiv: Smoloskyp.

Bilous, Petro. 2022. *Universytet suvoroho rez͡hymu*. Zhytomyr: FOP Khudyakov O. V.

Kapranov, Dmytro, and Vitaliy Kapranov [Braty Kapranovy]. 2018. *Sprava Syvoho*. Kyiv: Nora-Druk.

Braun, Andrzej. 2006. *Cyfrograf*. Lodź: Biblioteka „Tygla Kultury".

Cegielski, Tadeusz. 2016. *Głowa: Opowieść nocy zimowej*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Fanta, Jiří, 2007. *Univerzita*. Prague: Pragoline.

Fraňová, Eva Maliti. 2023. *Tajomstvá mladého Bajzu*. Bratislava: Slovart.

Makarov, Yuriy. 2013. *Za chvert' desiata*. Kyjiv: Nora-Druk.

Przybysławski, Artur. 2020. *Pan Profesor*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo w Podwórku.

Przybysławski, Artur. 2022. *Pana Profesora dziennik sekretny*. Lodź: officyna.

Puškáš, Jozef, 2023. *Vivat, akadémia, zbohom, Čechov!* Bratislava: Orman.
Rakús, Stanislav, 1993. *Temporálne poznámky*. Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ.
Rakús, Stanislav, 2004. *Nenapísaný román*. Levice: L. C. A., Koloman Kertész Bagala.
Rakús, Stanislav, 2008. *Excentrická univerzita*. Levice: L. C. A., Koloman Kertész Bagala.
Rankov, Pavol. 2018. *Legenda o jazyku*. Bratislava: Slovart.
Sýkora, Michal, 2013. *Modré stíny*. Brno: Host.
Szostak, Wit, 2014. *Sto dni bez słońca*. Warsaw: powergraph.

REFERENCES

Barnett, Ronald, and Paul Standish. 2002. "Higher Education and the University." In *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing, 215–233. Malden: Blackwell.

Blashkiv, Oksana. 2019. "Intellectuals in the Face of Historical Turmoil: 'The Revenge of the Printer' as Academic Fiction." *Naukovi zapysky Kharkivs'kogo natsionalnogo pedagogichnogo universytetu im. G. S. Skovorody, Literaturoznavstvo* 3: 3–15.

Blashkiv, Oksana. 2024. "Univerzitný román v literatúrach strednej a východnej Európy po roku 1989" [The campus novel in Eastern and Central European literature after 1989]. *Slovenská literatúra* 71, 5: 463–480. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31577/slovlit.2024.71.5.2.

Bradbury, Malcolm, ed. 1996. *The Atlas of Literature*. London: De Agostini.

Christensen, Sofija. 2017. "Anglophone Literature as a Framework for 'The First Norwegian University Novel'." In *English Studies Today: Words and Visions. Selected Papers from the Third Conference "English Language and Anglophone Literatures Today"*, ed. by Bojana Vujin and Mirna Radin-Sabadoš, 53–64. Novi Sad: University of Novi Sad.

Connelly, John. 2000. *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Education, 1954–1956.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Fuchs, Dieter, and Wojciech Klepuszewski, eds. 2019. *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?* Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004392311.

Gruszewska-Blaim, Ludmiła, ed. 2018. *Literaturoznawca literatem czyli rzecz o akademii i kreatywnym pisaniu* [Literary scholar as literary figure, or academe and creative writing]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Gruszewska-Blaim, Ludmiła, and Merritt Moseley, eds. 2016. *Academia in Fact and Fiction*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-06565-7.

Gwóźdź-Szewczenko, Ilona. 2019. "Czeska i słowacka powieść uniwersytecka z transformacją ustrojową w tle" [Czech and Slovak campus novel with political transformation in the background]. In *Nowoczesność i tradycja: 50 lat wrocławskiego Instytutu Filologii Słowiańskiej*, ed. by Ewa Komisaruk and Izabella Malej, 165–176. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

Hrtánek, Petr. 2025. "The Campus Novel and University Satire in Recent Czech Literature." *World Literature Studies* 17, 1: 56–70. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31577/WLS.2025.17.1.5.

Juntti, Eira. 2017. "The Student as a Representation of Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Finnish Literature." *Scandinavian Studies* 89, 3: 301–325.

Klepuszewski, Wojciech. 2019a. "Academic Poles Apart: *Inauguracja* and *Lucky Jim*." In *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?*, ed. by Dieter Fuchs and Wojciech Klepuszewski, 76–92. Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004392311_008.

Klepuszewski, Wojciech. 2019b. "*Zamek* – Jerzy Kaczorowski's Conference Topography." In *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?*, ed. by Dieter Fuchs and Wojciech Klepuszewski, 64–75. Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004392311_007.

Kramer, John E. 2004. *The American Campus Novel: An Annotated Bibliography*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press.

Kundera, Milan. 2023. *A Kidnapped West: The Tragedy of Central Europe*. Trans. by Linda Asher and Edmund White. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Lodge, David. 2006. "Nabokov and the Campus Novel." *Cycnos* 24, 1: 1–23. Accessed on August 30, 2024. https://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/cycnos/597.pdf.

Mitka, Marek. 2018. "Naratívne a literárnoteoretické korelácie diskurzivity v románoch S. Rakúsa: hľadanie autora (nielen v časoch socializmu)" [Narrative and literary-theoretical correlations of discourse in novels of S. Rakús: searching for an author (not only in the era of socialism)]. In *Codex Historico-Critica: Noetické východiská v kontexte interdisciplinárnych prístupov k histórii, literatúre, jazyku a umeniam*, ed. by Lucia Šteflová and Peter Karpinský, 124 – 134. Prešov: Prešovská univerzita.

Moseley, Merritt. 2007a. "Preface." In *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*, ed. by Merritt Moseley, viii-xii. Chester: Chester Academic Press.

Moseley, Merritt. 2007b. "Types of Academic Fiction." In *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*, ed. by Merritt Moseley, 99–113. Chester: Chester Academic Press.

Moseley, Merritt, and Beata Kucała. 2019. "From the Editors." *Polish Journal of English Studies* 5, 2: 5–7.

Pavera, Libor. 1999. "Český univerzitní román: absentující?" [Czech campus novel: is it absent?]. *Alternativa Plus* 5, 1/2: 29–31.

Perkowska-Gawlik, Elżbieta. 2025. "The Academic Murder Mystery as a Popular Subgenre from the Polish Perspective." *World Literature Studies* 17, 1: 41–55. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31577/WLS.2025.17.1.4.

Pospíšil, Ivo. 2015. *Central Europe: Substance and Concepts*. Nitra: Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of Central European Studies.

Proctor, Morton R. 1957. *The English University Novel.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pucherová, Dobrota, and Erika Brtáňová. 2025. *Jozef Ignác Bajza. René, or: A Young Man's Adventures and Experiences. An Edition with Commentary of the First Slovak Novel*. Trans. by David Short. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Rakús, Stanislav. 2010. *Stanislav Rakús – víťaz anasoft litera 2010*. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sMrtbcB_8A. November 2. Accessed on September 21, 2023.

Selejan, Corina. 2019a. "The Romanian Academic Novel and Film through the Postcommunism/Postcolonialism Lens." *Polish Journal of English Studies* 5, 2: 87–102.

Selejan, Corina. 2019b. "'How to Save Difference': Contemporary Romanian, German, English and American Academic Novels." In *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?*, ed. by Dieter Fuchs and Wojciech Klepuszewski, 166–179. Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004392311_014.

Selejan, Corina, and Merritt Moseley, eds. 2022. *East-West Cultural Passage*, Special Issue: Campus Nostalgia, 22, 1. https://sciendo.com/issue/EWCP/22/1.

Showalter, Elaine. 2005. *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sidowska, Karolina. 2015. "Polska powieść uniwersytecka" [Polish campus novel]. *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica* 30, 4: 149–157.

Skubaczewska-Pniewska, Anna. 2018. "Czy istnieje polska powieść uniwersytecka?" [Does the Polish campus novel exist?]. In *Literaturoznawca literatem czyli rzecz o akademii i kreatywnym pisaniu*, ed. by Lidia Gruszewska-Blaim, 93–115. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Skubaczewska-Pniewska, Anna. 2024. "Absolutny arcyarchetyp profesora: Wielogatunkowość rabelaisowskich powieści uniwersyteckich Artura Przybysławskiego" [The absolute archetype of the professor: The multi-genre structure of Artur Przybysławski's rabelaisian university novels]. *Litteraria Copernicana* 49, 1–2: 79–92. DOI: https://doi.org/10.12775/LC.2024.006.

Soliński, Wojciech. 2015. "Umberta Eco powieści profesorskie" [Umberto Eco's Professorenromans] *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich* 58, 2: 88–98.

Trombik, Vojtěch. 2017. *Der deutschsprachige Universitätsroman seit 1968: Die Verwandlung eines wenig geachteten Genres*. Brno: Filozofická fakulta, Masarykova Univerzita.

Trzeciak, Katarzyna. 2015. "Ślady kampusu albo akademiccy są zmęczeni" [Traces of campus or the academics are tired]. *Nowa Dekada Krakowska* 4, 1/2: 56–63.

Varga Oswald, Tina. 2014. "The Academic Novel in the Context of Croatian Literature." *Journal of Language and Cultural Education* 2: 123–142.

Višňovský, Emil. 2021. *Akademický svet a jeho tradície* [Academia and its traditions]. Bratislava: VEDA, vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied.
Walsh, Chris. 2007. "'Not a Comic Novelist, Exactly': The Academic Fiction of David Lodge." In *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*, ed. by Merritt Moseley, 268–290. Chester: Chester Academic Press.
Weiss, Rudolf. 2019. "From German to Austrian Academic Fiction: Regionalism Exponentiated." In *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?*, ed. by Dieter Fuchs and Wojciech Klepuszewski, 93–110. Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004392311_009.
Williams, Jeffrey J. 2012. "The Rise of the Academic Novel." *American Literary History* 24, 3: 561–589. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajs038.
Williams, Jeffrey J. 2019. "University Studies." In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Jeffrey R. Di Leo, 323–332. London: Bloomsbury Academic.