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## THE LITERARY MYTH OF UKRAINE IN THE WORKS OF THE DIASPORA AUTHORS, 1920S TO 1950S

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**Abstract:** Ukrainian literature in emigration is part of the Ukrainian cultural heritage. Its analysis shows that, unlike Soviet Ukrainian literature, it enhanced the importance of the national idea proclaimed by T. Shevchenko. The diaspora literature of the 1920s–1950s created the mythological paradigm of the occupied nation that was superior to the invader, a ‘source code’ for a future Ukraine in its own ancestral land in the centre of Europe, not for Ukraine in exile as it was viewed by Ukrainian politicians in emigration. The literary myth of Ukraine established by the diaspora authors is a vitaistic and consolidating metaphysical phenomenon that even now has a powerful impact on national consciousness.

**Keywords:** consolidating vitaistic literary myth of Ukraine, Ukrainian diaspora literature, archetypal literary criticism, mytheme, mythologeme, mythopoetic paradigm, mythological concept, domain.

The Ukrainian diaspora literature of the 1920s–1950s is one of the links in the monolithic chain [10, p. 3] of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century national literature. Unlike the authors of mainland Ukraine, their diaspora counterparts had ‘what Ukraine itself actually lacked: a consolidated editorial, institutional and financial basis for their scientific and cultural activity’\* [13, p. 18]. Being separated from their land, but unrestricted by censorship or control, the diaspora authors discussed the conception of Ukraine and Ukrainians from a temporal perspective. It ensured the objectivity of artistic thought. The outstanding authors of this period U. Samchuk, I. Bahrianyi, V. Barka, O. Olzhych, Ye. Malaniuk, T. Osmachka, O. Teliha were the only surviving shard of the phalanx of the Executed Renaissance; they witnessed its birth and tragic death; some of them (I. Bahrianyi, V. Barka, T. Osmachka) were repressed and persecuted. We value the works of these talented authors, the creators of a consolidating vitaistic literary myth of Ukraine, an important literary phenomenon that a priori could not emerge in mainland Ukrainian. Their endeavours fertilized the rich soil of Ukrainian literature eroded by the Soviet system, so that many outstanding authors, such as O. Dovzhenko, Yu. Yanovsky, M. Stelmakh, did not dare to work it and had to adjust their talents to the quasi method of socialist realism, which was actually the implementation of totalitarianism through literature.

The metaphoric and mythological thinking of the diaspora authors seldom, or even never, match the phenomena of real life (especially in T. Osmachka’s works), yet high artistic truth is the key to *what the author means* and *what they actually imply*; ‘The objectivity of literary works is as much a residual

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\* In this article, all the quotations are translated from the sources listed in References.

definition as any truth' because 'they are part of the universal context of reification' [1, p. 230]. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, many Ukrainian diaspora writers were nominated for the Nobel Prize (for example, Ivan Bahrianyi (1963), Ulas Samchuk (1980)). Such nominations or self-nominations (T. Osmachka self-nominated several times) can cause a skeptical smile (their ill-wishers may remind us that sometimes the texts were not translated into the required languages, and that other requirements were not met, including some basic ones – a proper proof-reading and editing before publication, letters of reference from Nobel Prize Laureates); yet the artistic achievements of these authors are much more impressive than those of their Soviet Ukrainian, and sometimes even of their German, English, French or American counterparts.

The Ukrainian diaspora literature has discarded the albatross of 'enlightenment', the 'birthmark' of the Ukrainian literary paradigm – the duty of the author to raise the consciousness of the working masses; it offers a reader difficult situations, protagonists, who are able to deal with them, and positive behavioural patterns; moreover, it gives a panoramic picture of life in Ukraine under the Bolshevik totalitarian regime and unmasks its draconian goal of destroying the Ukrainian nation. The greatest achievement of the Ukrainian diaspora authors is the creation of new literary characters, whose ambition is not to 'have' (some property, an occupation, a position, happiness, etc.) – a typical feature of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ukrainian literature and the socialist literature of mainland Ukraine, – but to 'be'; there is no mistaking their national self-identification: their priorities are social interests and national consciousness; they love Ukraine more than their own lives; their goal is to serve the national idea. These characters are the embodiment of resistance – not only the armed resistance to the colonizing policy of the USSR, but also an intellectual, a spiritual and moral resistance; they are able to revise old ideas; their dream is to make Ukraine a developed country, which is why they become the role models for the new generations of Ukrainians. The highly artistic, masterfully typified and specified literary characters (Andrii Chumak, Hryhorii Mnohohrishnyi, Maksym Kolot, Olha Urban, Mariia, Hnat Kukharchuk, Petro Stoian, Professor Spodaneiko, Andriiko Katrannyk), the heroic characters in the poems of Ye. Malaniuk, O. Olzhych, I. Bahrianyi do not choose to be victims or toys in the hands of a cruel fate; what they choose is to consciously oppose the national and metaphysical evil. The diaspora authors present their native land as the Promised Land given to the Ukrainians by God and regard it as a sacred space; they introduce and develop the concept of charismatic national leaders and show the people's readiness to realize their statehood aspirations.

The Ukrainian diaspora authors were beyond the reach of the Soviet censorship and repression systems; they could freely draw on the artistic truth of the collective subconscious of the nation and fulfill their creative potential, avoiding the hindrances of the Soviet reality. Hence the dominant features of the diaspora literature are: a) the authors' metaphoric and mythological thinking; b) the redesigning and interpretation of popular myths; c) mythologemes, mythemes, mythological allusions, visions, dreams, revelations, insights, frames, patterns, elements of reframing, mythological concepts, domains, holograms. Such a powerful arsenal used in order to frame the authors' creative conceptions make their works innovative and popular. Europe and the Communist Ukraine pretended they did not notice the Ukrainian diaspora authors, but only because their political sympathies were determined by the 'scheme of the Allies' history' [13, p. 18]. In strange lands, the Ukrainian authors did not feel they had lost ties with their people; they were the representatives of the 'leading stratum' (Dmytro Dontsov) of society, and the nation immanently remained part of their human essence; after the declaration of independence in the 1990s, the nation became aware of its connection with this host of literature.

Humanity exists in nations and ethnic communities. Reading the diaspora authors, we understand that an enemy can destroy a state, invade its territory, reduce its people to poverty, prohibit them from studying the history of their native land, crush their language and culture, impose an alien order; but a nation is destroyed only with the destruction of the national domains of STATE, MORALS, ART, LANGUAGE, CULTURE, ARMED FORCES, EDUCATION and ETHNO-PEDAGOGY. The most important and the most powerful metaphysical domain is the domain of THE NATIONAL STATE. It is a specific structure with dozens of extensions and internal multifunctional substructures (for example, the domains of ART, FAMILY, EDUCATION and ETHNO-PEDAGOGY, ARMED FORCES, CULTURE,

MORALS; for the Ukrainian people, each of these domains is a part of the domain of THE UKRAINIAN NATION). A strong, civilized, advanced political nation in an independent and sovereign state values its metaphysical structures. The domains of national minorities that live on the territory of the state are subordinated, to a greater or lesser extent, to the domain of THE NATIONAL STATE. On the territories occupied by an enemy, national domains can survive and exist in the form of phantoms, ruins, waiting for better times to breathe new life into them. It is only when people lose faith in the necessity of their presence on Earth that the occupied nation develops a mass social amnesia, which reveals itself through the absence of self-identification. The Ukrainian diaspora literature often highlights the metaphysical existence of those Ukrainian national domains that in the absence of statehood sustain people's life in mainland Ukraine and in emigration; in literary texts, some of these metaphysical structures (the domain of ARMED FORCES, the domain of LANGUAGE, the domain of ETHNO-PEDAGOGY) are depicted as almost ruined. In his piece *Rozhrom (Defeat)*, I. Bahrianyi contrasts the domains of THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE, UKRAINIAN EDUCATION and ETHNO-PEDAGOGY with the corresponding Russian and German domains. In *Ohmenne kolo (The Fiery Circle)*, his other novel, the domain of UKRAINIAN PATRIOTIC EDUCATION is presented as a horribly impaired phenomenon: the typical national kitsch of 'embroidered blokes' does not give the younger generation any chance of survival, to say nothing of victory.

Most often, the authors interpret the domains of MORALS and ART. Within the domain of MORALS, characters are identified as martyrs, sinners, fighters, criminals; the domain of ART interests the authors as the demiurges of their own literary worlds. The principles of the domain of ART are somewhat different from those of the domain of MORALS, because 'the artistic value is about art, while the moral value is about the human being' [9, p. 252]; but there is a two-way connection between these metaphysical structures. A work of art may be created for the sake of art, not for the sake of human beings; at the same time, humans and human passions are the objects of both the domain of MORALS and the domain of ART, and the walls between these metaphysical structures cannot stop the author, if they feel an inner urge to come to the defense of beauty and morals, to write – in a particular literary context – about human love in all its manifestations and human sufferings, whatever they might be. The domain of MORALS affects the domain of SCIENCE and the domain of EDUCATION: the moral and ethical responsibility of a scientist, a scholar, an educator and an artist is determined by their principles. In Vasyl Barka's novel *Rai (Paradise)*, the domain of the FREEDOM OF CONSCIOUSNESS has a perennial, sacral meaning; Barka's character remains adamant against the atheistic propaganda, the Bible helps Oleksandr Astriab to survive among thugs and scums. The author shows that in the totalitarian state, the social underworld and the upper crust are equally abominable. Moreover, the social underworld is capable of rebellion, which can bring about catharsis – a desperate attempt of separate individuals to change their life; while in the highest social echelons, people become depersonalized, deprived of a chance to save their souls. There exist mysterious connecting channels between the world of fiction and the real world; the characters can use them to get into real life. V. Barka employs this literary device to describe a mystic scene: the devil in the guise of a jester shakes classic literary characters out of their books and demonstrates what would happen to these famous people if they lived in the pre-war USSR and what pseudo-ideals they would support.

Each nation is immune to colonizing assimilation. The mythological concepts of 'Us'/'Them' are revealed, first of all, through the notion of home as the smallest cell of human existence; they are metaphysical markers of the domain of STATE; if an indigenous nation is invaded and deprived of its right to statehood, they become reliable frontier and customs guards in the domain of NATION, which in this case takes over the function of the domain of STATE and helps the nation to resist the colonizing assimilation. Invaders' attitude to the notion of home of an indigenous people is always negative; for example, in Vasyl Barka's novel *Zhovtyi kniaz (The Yellow Prince)*, the communists, so-called 'twenty-five-thousanders' openly mock the disempowered villagers of Klenotochi; in Ivan Bahrianyi's novel *Tyhirolovy (The Tiger Trappers)*, the Great Russians sneer at the 'Khokhols', who whitewash their peasant houses even in Russia's Far East; the attitude of the Ukrainians to the homes of the colonizers, their ethics and aesthetics, style of life and morals is also described as negative. Consider, for example, an

excerpt from *Volyn (Volyn)* by Ulas Samchuk. *I just hate it how you, sons of a bitch, break into other people's house and pretend you are some kind of gentry ... That henhouse you call home – just the place to gather soot, to crash lice at splinter-light, and to roll from side to side on the sleeping ledge. These God-forgotten places... Mikhailovkas or Lice-ovkas, or Spit-ovkas, squirming around in the forests of some Riazan guberniya. There stands an izba. You come inside – yuck, what is this place? Fumes, filth. And again, here is a pig, smugly snouting around. Then there is this sleeping ledge, some strange structure for twenty persons or so, like in a jail. It's getting late and the father tells his son, "Hey, you, Mishka, don't you rock it with that daughter-in-law all night long..." The mother sleeps with her bast shoes on – to save herself the trouble... You even don't know how to use spoons, eating with those small spades. Boors, that's what you are!..* [5, p. 352–353] (emphasis added). We see that Samchuk's character – a man of Ukrainian origin, a soldier, a holder of the St George Cross – vividly contrasts the Ukrainian way of life and customs with the Russian ones, presenting the latter as primitive, immoral.

The long-term Russian expansion into the national living space of Ukraine resulted not only in the loss of statehood; on their own ancestral land, every Ukrainian felt as if they lived on the frontier between 'Us' and 'Them'; in other words, they were not their own masters, not citizens, just representatives of an inferior – because a stateless – nation. In U. Samchuk's novel *Maria*, Maksym, being infected by the Bolshevik virus of permissiveness, behaves like a brutal, immoral person; he savagely desecrates the holy pictures in the father's house; thus the mythological seed of evil turns a person into a traitor of their nation and faith, an infernal type of the mythological frontier. According to the Ukrainian diaspora authors, the greatest of all human sins is betraying one's nation, serving the colonizer, losing one's cultural identity because of materialistic considerations or career ambitions. Betrayal is a constituent of the concept of turning 'Us' into 'Them'. In Ukrainian mythological interpretation, God turns away from an invader, who is backed up by Satan and is part of universal evil. Typically, confrontation between the representatives of the two opposing nations manifests itself in offensive actions on the part of the invader and defensive ones on the part of the invaded. The actions of V. Barka's characters Otrokhodin and Shikriatov in *The Yellow Prince* and Iona Lotosov in *Paradise*, the contemptuous attitude towards an old hard-working Ukrainian, a soldier in U. Samchuk's *Volyn*, the outrageous behaviour of Tiurin in T. Omacka's *Plan do dvoru (The Plan for the Household)* are not accidental; they all fit into the invader's behavioural pattern. In return, invaders and traitors receive a silent hate wherever they go. The border line between 'Us' and 'Them' is invisible, and yet it is felt like a material, constantly pulsating membrane. It is dangerous and unadvisable to stay close to it; in the works of the Ukrainian diaspora authors, all the traitors, who disregard national feelings, choosing submission and symbioses, eventually realize it.

Special attention in the works of the diaspora authors is given to the notion of literary time and its variations. Being aware of the fact that time offers us future possibilities; the authors encode the development of contemporary events. A talented author feels the impulses of the future, its breathing; their target audience is the coming generations. Similar to live biological cells that carry information on their own evolution on this planet since the Proterozoic age (Petro Anokhin), symbolic literary images contain huge stocks of contents and meanings, which reveal themselves as required. That is why, according to Heidegger, the author has the ability to foresee future events, and literature and art are the 'history of being' for the future.

Even in physics, the phenomenon of time is considered as the most mysterious and the least researched one. Metaphorically speaking, the law of the indestructibility of matter covers this area too, and information that is not required at a particular period of time is preserved as an underlying message. The more talented an author is, the more diverse is the time in their works. In his piece *Defeat*, Ivan Bahrianyi compresses the chronology of events in order to show that a person is more than themselves; they are much stronger than they think, because even death on a cross is evidence of the weakness of the one who passes the verdict, while self-reliance and sufferings become the victory of the one who dies for their ideals. In his novel *Maria*, Ulas Samchuk masterfully reveals the mythological concept of time similar to the 'immutable' time of ancient literature. The author measures the length of his heroine's life not in years, but in days, thus giving it a new mythological interpretation.

The national mythological concept of time in literary works has a full set of moral, ethical and aesthetic components. Literary subtext is a kind of temporal bracket that fastens the past to the present. The time of inspiration, when the Archives of Heaven open their doors to the author, is unique: each time the author receives a new flow of information. It can be compared to our experience in the real world and in the world of fiction: a repeated real-life experience is different from the initial one; but rereading a book, we can immerse ourselves in the same historical epoch. The time in a literary work differs from time in real life: the former passes, but may be returned. Time works differently for an individual and a nation as a whole: for the latter, there are specific 'source codes' of Astral National Time provided by the Forces of Providence so that a nation will be able to fulfill the mission assigned to it by God. According to the law of the 'reflection of the future', national time is in the 'subtext'; but under favourable circumstances, the 'voice of the Spirit' [15, p. 21] will make both the 'leading stratum', which is most responsive to metaphysical imperatives, and the whole nation comply with the requirements of Astral National Time.

The literary myth of the Ukrainian state created by the diaspora authors is a unique phenomenon, a specific 'natal chart' of the emerging political nation. Only national myths can defeat the colonial ones. In his piece *Defeat*, Ivan Bahrianyi gives his vision of the Ukrainian nation – risen from the ashes, young and strong again, destined for a flourishing future – and opposes it to the Russian (the Third Rome) and the German (die Blonde Bestie) 20<sup>th</sup>-century chauvinistic myths.

A nation in its own right needs a consolidating national myth that presents it as a chosen one, very special, the best; it was the statelessness of Ukraine that prevented the development of this important artistic phenomenon in mainland Ukraine, because 'the sonority of literature is directly related to the strength of the Nation-state' [11, p. 179]; in other words, the author does not suffer oppression only if they live in their own national state. Unfortunately, it has taken a long time to comprehend the real worth of the consolidating vitaistic national myth. Heated and not always scientifically based discussions around the early attempts at archetypal literary analysis, whose initial mechanisms were far from being perfect (the monographs of O. Zabuzhko and G. Grabowicz), clearly demonstrate that many Ukrainian critics cannot or do not want to abandon the materialistic approach; they recognize only materialistic methods and evidence, and consider abstract, a priori, transcendental methods unacceptable. The analysis of the Ukrainian diaspora literature of the 1920s–1950s in terms of Ukrainian and world philosophy, culturology, ethnography, psychoanalysis, theology and literary criticism demonstrates the true value of the consolidating national myth of Ukraine; the full potential of the Ukrainian diaspora literature is easy to see if we consider it from a mythological perspective and easy to overlook if we employ only classical methods of analysis.

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Слоньовська Ольга. Літературний міф України в красному письменстві діаспори 20–50-х років ХХ століття. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, 6 (2) (2019), 79–85.

Шляхом аналізу творчої спадщини українських письменників-емігрантів встановлено, що ця ланка національного красного письменства, на відміну від радянської української літератури, творчо живила й удосконалювала національну ідею, започатковану ще Т. Шевченком. Література української діаспори 20–50-х рр. ХХ ст. виробила міфологічну парадигму переваги окупованого народу над окупантом, створила код-програму України майбутнього на прабатьківській землі в центрі Європи, а не України в екзилі, як пропагували українські політики-емігранти. Літературний міф України, зреалізований творчими зусиллями письменників діаспори, позначений важливими ознаками вітаїстично-консолідувального метафізичного явища, тому потужно впливає на свідомість українців і в наш час.

**Ключові слова:** літературний консолідувальний вітаїстичний міф України, література української діаспори, архетипна критика, міфема, міфологема, архетип, міфопоетична парадигма, міфологічний концепт, домен.