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## THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN FATE IN BYRON'S POEM "MAZEPPA"

*У статті "Концепт людської долі у поемі Дж. Г. Байрона "Мазеппа" зроблено спробу інтерпретації вказаного художнього твору з позиції когнітивно-концептуального підходу, що дає змогу створити та описати модель розгортання текстових концептів в ньому.*

**Ключові слова:** *концепт, текстовий концепт, когнітивно-концептуальний аналіз, лінгво-поетика.*

*The article "The concept of human fate in Byron's poem "Mazeppa" represents an attempt to interpret the famous poem by G. G. Byron from the point of cognitive- conceptual approach which enables to create and describe the model of its textual concepts development.*

**Key words:** *concept, textual concept, cognitive-conceptual analysis, linguo-poetics.*

**Introduction.** The problem of cross-cultural influence in literature is always in the focus of scientific attention and has not lost its **topicality**. The world literature knows numerous examples when one and the same megaimage, one and the same plot or idea finds different artistic interpretation in literary works of various authors in various epochs. The personality of famous Ukrainian Hetman Ivan Mazepa has become the protagonist of different literary works of native and foreign authors. The poem of G. G. Byron "Mazeppa" is the vivid example of how the famous historical personality of Ukrainian nation became the central image of the literary work that belongs to the cultural heritage of the British literature. The modern stage of the development of linguistics and, linguo-poetics in particular, is characterized by the fixed attention to the complex processes of literary text semantics. The textual reality is treated as the result of different factors of linguistic, cognitive, psychological, historical nature. The treatment of literary text as an organized hierarchy system of images, concepts and verbal means is based on the philosophic theory of "scintillation" of the text which occurs as a result of multiple interpretation of the text and contextual changes. A. Wierzbicka states that in this shimmering a new reality may be created on the ground of development of textual megaconcepts through the employment of metaimages [30, p. 126-128].

**The object** of this article is the poem of J. G. Bayron "Maseppa". **The subject** is the development of textual concepts of the poem through the employment of megaimage of Mazeppa. **The aim** of the work is to create the model of textual concepts development in the poem as, on the one hand, a reflection of authors cognition and representation of reality and, on the other

hand, the method to perceive and comprehend the literary work by a recipient involved in the process of text interpretation.

Mazeppa is a Romantic narrative poem written by Lord Byron in 1819, based on a popular legend about the early life of Ivan Mazepa, a Ukrainian gentleman who later became Hetman of the Ukrainian Cossacks. According to the poem, the young Mazeppa, while serving as a page at the Court of King John Casimir II, has a love affair with a Countess named Theresa, who was married to a much older man. The Count, on discovering the affair, punishes Mazeppa by tying him naked to a wild horse and setting the horse loose. The bulk of the poem describes the traumatic journey of the hero strapped to the horse. There is no historical evidence to support that Mazepa was exiled from Poland because of a love affair, or that he was punished by being strapped to a wild horse. However, this colorful legend was in circulation before Byron published his poem. Voltaire repeats it in *History of Charles XII, King of Sweden* (1731). This appears to have been Byron's main source for his poem: his 'Advertisement' to the poem includes three long quotations from this work [8, p. 308-312].

Actually the whole poem consists of one extended image, it is – the run of a wild, untamed horse, back to its motherland. Unrestrained flight of a steed causes the endless, unendurable physical and spiritual sufferings of the young man, tied to his spine. A powerless rider is doomed to death. Byron skillfully depicts as the hero loses forces, weakens, and finally nearly dies. The poet tries to reproduce the mood rather than the subject. But he also succeeded to create the central image, twofold, for in fact Mazepa is represented both in his youth, and in the afternoon of his life.

Many critics see "Mazeppa" as a transitional work in Byron's oeuvre. Its dates of composition (1818-1819) place it between the earlier Eastern tales such as *The Prisoner of Chillon* (1817), which describe agonized, maudlin Byronic heroes and the later satirical, ironic *Don Juan* (1818-9). Some scholars argue that *Mazeppa* is either a partly unsuccessful work, as it is torn between high emotion and lighter irony, or a transitional work of a "mongrel genre, the historical verse-romance", characterized by "moral ambivalence", and it remains unclear whether *Mazeppa* is a sympathetic hero or not [6, p. 120-124; 7, p. 265].

H. Babinski, however, suggests that the hero *Mazeppa* is "one of Byron's most realistic creations, heroic within the bounds of human potential" and that he is a "fine specimen of a man" [9]. *Mazeppa*'s death-in-life experiences during his "wild ride" are central to the poem's meaning and symbolic of the possibilities of human transformation and rebirth. More recent interpretations have attempted to apply the insights of critical theory to the poem. Zbigniew Bialas offers a Saidian postcolonial reading, suggesting that Byron orientalizes Eastern Europe and attempts to stamp an identity on *Mazeppa*,

who nonetheless evades fixed national and political identities. Jane Stabler [7, p. 265] reads the poem through the prism of postmodern theory, suggesting that uses Byron's *Mazeppa* as an example of a poem which "draws attention to the fictive contours of history". Among the native researchers who treat the subject was S. Pavlychko whose work is a complex attempt to analyze the text composition, the main textual material relevant for the interpretation of the realistic traits of *Masepa's* image, image of Ukraine as a certain emotional, romantic view of the land the poet had never seen before, and a number of other issues [3, p. 249-269].

What unites most of the approaches to the poem interpretation (both native and foreign) is that they proceed from the discussion on *Mazeppa* as real, historic personality and general prototype of the artistic image rather than advance into the artistically created world of the literary work as an imprint of author's cognition and an embodiment of his conceptual idea of the work. Whereas the conceptual idea of the work predetermines the precise system of knowledge as a correlation of cognitive and communicative processes and play a crucial text-creating role in the hierarchy of metaimages, textual concepts and verbal images in the integral semantic space of the literary text.

**The problem of the literary text interpretation in modern linguo-poetic studies.** The modern linguistic approach within the sphere of linguo-poetic studies is characterized by the precise attention to the complex processes of literary text semantics interpretation, the development of text conceptual structures and the problem of its modeling. The scholars proceed from the assumption that literary text is open and multilateral phenomenon. The mechanism of logical and content relations in the semantics of a poetic text makes it possible to treat it as polyphonic by its nature. The main goal of the interpretation of a text is to answer the question why the world in the text is split up in this way and what textual concepts participate in the creation of this world and to reveal the motivation of certain verbal forms. The idea of multilateral nature of the literary text, its inexhaustible depth is supported by Y. Stepanov, I. Galperin, Gadamer [1; 4]. The potential semantic diversity of a text is based on its ability to transcend not only the result of the literary exploration of the reality actualized in literal meanings of verbal forms but the system of more general concepts, where the text becomes the unique entity of cognition and secures the "consciousness awakening". In this sense, the literary work, completed for the author, is for his contemporaries and posterity the new beginning and the new creation.

In this paper we accept the definition of textual concept suggested by O. M. Kaganovska [2, p. 34]. Textual concept is a language and cognitive semantic entity, which is characterized by multilateral semantic tension and overcategorical nature and on the level of text represents the unity of certain features of artistic metaimages.

The analysis of the textual concept development presupposes several stages. On the first stage the body of text is processed by the method of representative sampling in order to select a number of lexical units or word combinations that presuppose the existence of certain semantic correlations with other lexical units or textual elements that are considered as conceptually "loaded".

On the second stage the selected elements are grouped by means of schemes or graphs that represent the development of logical or thematic fragments. The point of intersection of these lines is considered as conceptual. The textual concepts are defined from one or several related conceptually loaded lexical units which semantic nuclear enables to convert them into the status of textual concepts.

On the third level on the basis of concept correlation analysis the hierarchy of concepts is created.

The final stage of the semantic and cognitive analysis presupposes the typology and classification of defined concepts based on the frame structure. The created scheme of textual concepts development ensures the identification of general metaimages of the text and (alongside with the identified metaimages) the general megaimages and megaconcepts of the literary work.

**Actualization of textual concepts in the poem.** The application of the textual concepts analysis allowed us to define four levels of Mazeppa poem semantic structure: 1) the level of textual megaconcept, 2) the level of textual concepts, 3) the level of metaimages – the central protagonists of the poem that alongside with their real, particular historic characteristics act as a conductors of author's ideal, kernel of the textual concepts, 4) the level of verbal images – the artistic canvas of the literary work represented in the form of complex system of interrelated and interconditioned textual elements, implicit and explicit information, different associative fields.

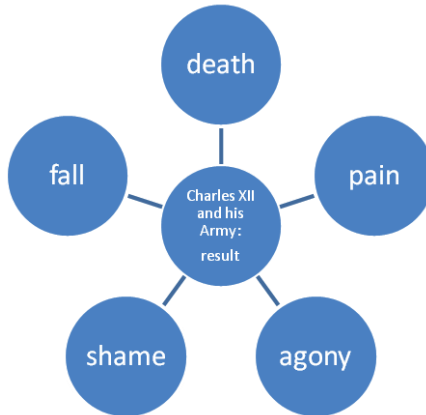
The level of verbal images – the language body of the text consists of the language units that perform artistic function, aesthetic and stylistic role and verbalize the general logic and content lines of the work; compositional pattern of the work; system of tropes, etc. The level of metaimages is represented by the images of Mazeppa, Charles XII, Polish King John Casimir, the image of the wild hoarse and the image of Ukraine as a wild unknown country. The level of textual concepts is represented by binary opposition of concepts: Victory & Defeat; Life & Death; Glory & Shame (Oblivion); War & Peace; Love & Revenge.

The level of megaconcepts include two sublevels, the highest is represented by the concept of Fate which we identify as a central concept of the analyzed poem. This concept has two manifestations: as a concept of Fate of a Man – as an individual and as a leader of the nation.

The validity of the represented results can be explained referring to the initial stanzas of the poem as an example. These stanzas unweave the initial compositional line – Charles's army defeat in the war, his retreat accompanied

by Mazeppa and his men and the introduction to Mazeppa's life and love story as an overt example of human fate.

Actualized semantics of the following textual elements: *dread Poltawa's day, When fortune left the royal Swede; slaughtered army; the hazard of the die; outworn nature's agony* – explicitly represent the development of the textual concepts in the locus of War, Defeat, Shame as constituents of the Fate of the Nation and its Monarch, and their interdependence through the metaimage of Charles XII.



**Picture 1. The realization of the concept “Fate of the Monarch and Nation” in the locus War – Defeat – Shame – Death**

As opposed to the images of Charles and Czar stands the image of other poem monarch – Polish King John Casimir – *A learned monarch who made no wars, and did not gain / New realms to lose them back again; /And (save debates in Warsaw's diet)/He reigned in most unseemly quiet; loved the muses and the sex; was the Polish Solomon.*

What place belongs to the image of Mazeppa in the development of the concept of human fate? The image of Mazeppa is depicted through the complex entanglement of content lines of Present that enframes the Past as a recollection of past adventure and the system of conceptual opposition Love & Revenge, Life & Death as constituents of human fate: Present1 (initial stanzas of the poem) – Past (stanzas V – XIX) – Present2 (final stanzas of the poem).

The profound analysis of the textual material allows us to represent the development of textual concepts through the image of Ukrainian Hetman in the following form (Picture 3):



**Picture 2. Realization of the concept of Fate of the Monarch and Nation in locus Love, Peace, Glory through the image of Polish King John Casimir**

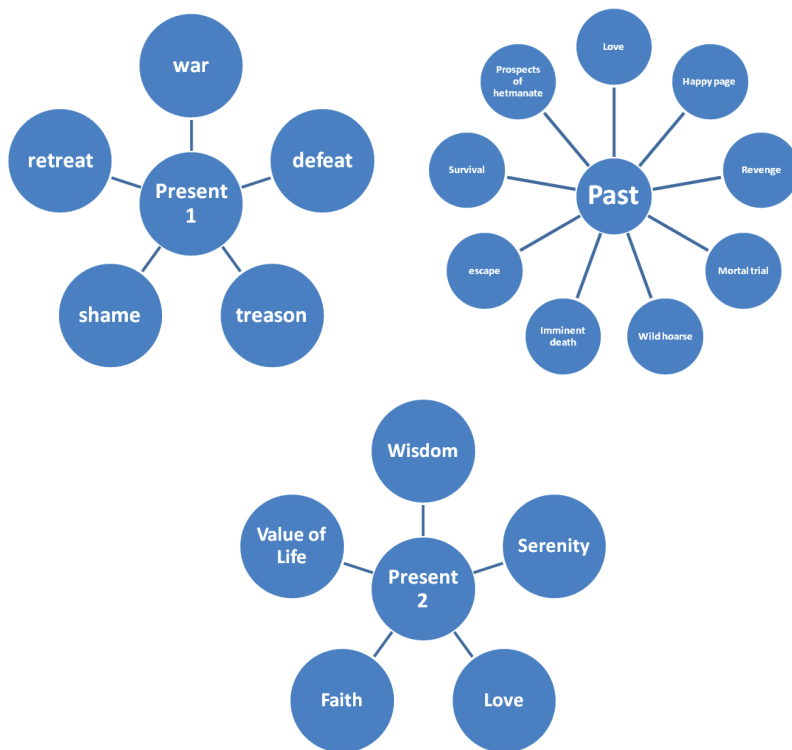
The presented models prove the correctness of our initial assumption concerning the key concept of the literary work – as a concept of Fate. In the last lines of the poem Byron through Mazepa’s lips concludes:

Thus the vain fool who strove to glut  
 His rage, refining on my pain,  
 Sent me forth to the wilderness,  
 Bound, naked, bleeding, and alone,  
 To pass the desert to a throne, -  
What mortal his own doom may guess?  
 Let none despond, let none despair!  
 Tomorrow the Borysthenes  
 May see our coursers graze at ease  
 Upon his Turkish bank, – and never  
 Had I such welcome for a river  
 As I shall yield when safely there.

Consequently, Byron referred to the image of Mazepa ( as a real historic person and a romantic hero) in order to shape through the intricate interlacing of the rational and emotional, the general and particular, the objectivity of background details and poetic form his artistic and aesthetic comprehension of the problem of human fate.

Moreover, the general tendencies of Byron’s literary heritage and his personal life allows us to make a conclusion that the reference to the personality of Ukrainian hero was not unmotivated. The image of Mazepa

in the poem might inspired the great British author by the mystery of his legend and the feature of his personality. The image of Mazeppa fits with the nature of “Byronic hero”, which pervades much of his work, and Byron himself is considered to epitomize many of the characteristics of this literary figure. The Byronic hero presents an idealised, but flawed character whose attributes include: great talent; great passion; a distaste for society and social institutions; a lack of respect for rank and privilege; being thwarted in love by social constraint or death; rebellion; exile; an unsavory secret past; arrogance; overconfidence or lack of foresight; and, ultimately, a self-destructive manner. As we can see most of these feature pertain to the image of Mazeppa.



**Picture 3. The model of textual concepts development through the image of Mazeppa**

**Conclusions.** The cognitive-conceptual approach to the interpretation of a literary text initiates the retreat from the purely formal text characteristics and accentuates the significance of the conceptual organization of a literary text as

a hierarchy system of concepts actualized in the complex interrelations of its main megaimages. The suggested analysis of the textual concepts development enables to reveal the inner logic of a literary text continuum, to explain the nature of the form-content correlations within the literary text semantics as a reflection of author's cognition and a constant dialogue between the author and the reader.

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