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Summary of doctoral thesis

"Childhood after Yalta - poetics and axiology in the context of Polish contemporary literature"

The main subjects of this dissertation are poetic and prose works of Alexander Jurewicz, Paweł Huelle, Adam Zagajewski and Stefan Chwin, generation of poets who were "born after Yalta". The problematical issues are reflected by particular places like Lida, Vilnius, Lviv and Gdansk and considered in the works of the above writers.

Lida, Vilnius, Lviv and Gdansk are the cities from which the writers originate or are associated with. The cities can be also treated as the main topics or "characters" of their poetry or prose. Beginning from the geographical details, that individual cities are, and through the analysis of the novels I am going to underline the relationship between a writer (in other words, the literature) and the place.

In the dissertation I tried to concentrate on the problems of generation "born after Yalta". I mean children of inhabitants of Pomerania, children and grandchildren of repatriates, those who were living in the east of the Bug river or mixed marriages, as a result of the Yalta Conference (February 1945), which determined the post-war order in Europe and our eastern border. Living after Yalta is a very important factor, which "casts a shadow" of the writers' lives. As a result their biographies are marked by the "stigma of Yalta". They create family genealogies in order to better understand themselves in historical processes and find longlasting values which are unnoticed in that time, as if in a "gesture of self-defense", not having such painful experiences as their parents. They emphasise the idea of understanding and reconciliation with all without special underlining of Polish nation, being reluctant to different ideologies.

"Childhood after Yalta" is particularly determined by the place. Metaphorically, "the place raised, as if just after an earthquake". Two places and childhood on the move, split between the past and the present, traumatised by the exile. The post-war childhood takes place in separate areas. The authors present the situation of their childhood and later life outside the

place of birth, on the other hand, if the childhood and later life are happening in the place of birth, it is "like being born just after arrival". Consciousness of being a newcomer and a "newborn" is a significant aspect of the relationship between parents and children.

The following chapters present issues such as space, objects and residents – creating "literary portrait" of the city in prose and poetry of writers who had to part from his beloved homeland. I am interested in the issues related to the creation of stories connected with places, the terms, such as nostalgia, longing for the lost place, homesickness, and the need to create your "new" home.

So-called: "homelands" or "narrative homelands" (a term according to P. Czapliński) seem to be important elements in literature describing the areas located on the Polish – Russian border. That is why, the presence of the city is described in a special way, treated as the place that should be known, its legend and location - a kind of *genius loci*.

In the process of reconstructing "lost places" and creating the new ones, both "poetics" and "axiology" seem to be very important. Undoubtedly, literature exposing "childhood after Yalta" offers the characteristic poetry and his own axiological system.

The subject of the dissertation makes it possible to locate it between cultural and historical – literary studies, in which we deal with the analysis of the cultural heritage of the past. The 90s literature of the twentieth century can be compared to a process of creating a new myth of the city - Gdansk - rejecting nationalist, Polish – German conflicts. The existence of "lost place" in the prose and poetry is the result of the writers' imagination and the ability of telling a narrative. These two categories: narrative and imagination are concepts that appear in cultural, literary or historical studies and also in philosophy, psychology, urban planning, or the arts.

Some arguments were taken into consideration while trying to restore the portrait of "little homeland" in prose and poetry. Firstly, the writers, and in fact their works: "Lida" by Jurewicz, "Two Cities" by Zagajewski, "Stories on the move time" by Huelle and "A short story of a joke" by Chwin, strongly contributed to promote that literature and at the same time encourage readers to reflect on the fate of the cities and their inhabitants on so-called "Eastern lands".

Secondly, the authors, whose parents came to the new cities from the Eastern Borderlands, in search of new home, a place to live and work, they often belonged to the first

generation of people born already on the new land (Chwin, Huelle). The representatives of the generation "born after Yalta," were to face the new place – discovering remains of former German reality and observation of specific identity changes of the city – in a difficult communist reality.

Thirdly, "little homeland" is very clearly present in the works of the writers. A variety of themes, characters or the descriptions of individual fragments of the city, which authors are associated with, not only allow to recognise the place as a very important for them, but also to characterise and recreate the literary portrait of their private homeland. It should be added that in recent years there have been attempts to promote the terms like "fatherland private", "private space", "homeland", "province", "patrimony" and even "heimat".

The aim of this thesis is to describe how the writers perceive the "homeland" and a portrait of the new place that emerges from their literature. The considered context, is a dichotomy between the writer and the city. At the same time, the question arises – how the city affects the writer, and how the inspiration and fascination of the place is used by writer.

The first chapter of dissertation is devoted to the meeting of the three leaders of the world - Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States and Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union – in Crimea in February 1945, widely regarded as the Yalta Conference, also called Crimean, when important decisions during the Second World War were taken.

The second chapter, I would like to devote to the artistic strategies in the selected works of writers "born after Yalta". I tried to identify the following strategies: a witness, identity, narratives based on migration, memory and rhetoric. These features seemed to be worthy of discussion. The issue of the connection between people, space and things is considered in this chapter.

The third chapter describes the fate of prose characters of Eastern Borderlands, residents of the cities, they had to leave. The starting point is a reflection on migration and (social) identity of the man. Additionally, in this part of the discussion I consider historical events connected with the exchange of residents that occurred on the eastern territories after the Second World War.

The fourth chapter concerns the reflections connected with the topos of the *homo viator* in the literary achievements of the writers "born after Yalta". The main aim used here is

the presence of topics connected with a wanderer and a wander. At the same time, dealing with the theme of travel; its educative aspect, anthropological – philosophical context of wandering and exile in the post-war world.

The fifth and final chapter concerns important issues connected with my thesis – I mean borderland cultures and discourses. The point of view is said to be a result of observation and consideration of the frontier topics included in Polish literature, which for several centuries developed in the vicinity of other cultures, using and borrowing various components, without them the literary portrait would be incomplete and untrue.

All in all, the previous analyses and considerations of the thesis are summarised leading to the conclusion that "childhood after Yalta" in the works of the four writers plays a special role. It is an inspiration to each of them, writing about the childhood is the way to restore the memory of the distant past of the city and possibility to start a new life in a new foreign place. Ways of presenting and describing "childhood after Yalta" is a kind of creation a myth connected with the "little homeland", which lost forever is a symbolic place and the background to consider various dilemmas of a modern man, influencing on "inside autobiography of authors".

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