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# THE CONCEPT AND PROBLEM OF CODE IN MODERN LITERARY STUDIES

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**Annotation.** With increasing popularity in literary studies, linguistics, cultural studies, and anthropology, the concept of code remains undefined, which automatically translates a significant part of the results of these works into a polemical plane. Literary studies has already become accustomed to a similar situation in the field of research on mythopoetics, the author's myth, having developed a certain immunity (M. Zuienko, O. Kobzar, etc.). The plurality of proposed interpretations of the code term in literary studies, which are sometimes mutually contradictory, on the one hand, and the large body of studies based on this term, on the other hand, determine the relevance and perspective of our article.

The purpose of this article is to clarify the semantics of the concept of code in literary studies, based on a significant number of its interpretations in the most notable humanitarian and actually special studies of the end of the XX – the first decades of the XXI century. In this case, we see the main tasks as a) to highlight the general tendencies in the interpretation of the concept of code in current research with the identification of advantages and disadvantages by means of comparison; b) identify semantic clusters at different levels of the organization of an artistic work, which can function as elements of a semantic code.

Proceeding from the outlined semantics of the code in the content plane of the artistic work and relying on the practice of studies related to this problem, we can talk about the code (of various degrees of structuring) at the different levels. This is the level of *a) intention, imperative, archetypality* in Ukrainian literature; the code of demythologizing, westernization, postcolonial or gender, eschatological, etc.); b) the level of *thematic dominants of the intertextual content of the artistic work* (mythological, in particular biblical, ancient, etc.; autobiographical; zoomorphic, plant; invariant of the matrix work in relation to its mash-up version, etc.); c) the level of *expression of the environment* where events take place or are associated with it (rural, urban, in particular Kyiv, London, etc.; Gothic; cemetery; industrial; otherworldly; parallel world, etc.), as well as d) *code-canon*, including occasional (codes by T. Shevchenko, G.G. Byron and other national authors in the texts of successors, code by J.R.R. Tolkien, Narnian code by C.S. Lewis – in fantasy, etc.). Code in the sense

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of intertextual content can appear as a formal expression of intentional or imperative (in cases of, say, gender, post-colonial coding of the artistic work).

In particular, investigating the peculiarities of the national myth-making code of Ukrainian fantasy 2000–2020s in a multinational context, we take into account the spectrum of mythopoetic characteristics of the named prose, including accompanying ones. The correct interpretation of fantasy, as well as any other myth-making – its artistic genesis, ideological orientation, structural organization, etc., involves the analysis of the construction, functioning and reception of a system of variable semantic components (more often – legendary and mythological images, motifs, symbols, mythologems, general cultural signs or other elements in the corresponding occasional functionality); these components are the key for the fantasy modeling of this or that work or group of works of art. According to the degree and potential of reinterpretation, conceptual load, configuration, chronotopic orientation of the work, etc., the named components in a certain way program, encode the artistic text, are able to serve as identifiers of its mythopoetic paradigm, and as a result we speak of its myth-making code. The definition of the concept of code in literary studies that we have given can be considered optimal and a compromise at the same time, because it takes into account numerous attempts to define this concept by specialists – representatives of various fields of research. In this case, myth-making is naturally chosen as an important indicator, because it is in myth-making that the principle of the code can be realized most fully. The proposed provisions can be clarified in the process of practical work with specific artistic material and, in general, can serve as an element of correction and unification of complex comparative studies on the problems of the development of Ukrainian and foreign literature, particularly in the XXI century.

**Key words:** code, model, component, myth, system, compromise.

**The relevance of the research topic.** In the first decades of the XXI century in artistic literature, the arsenal of artistic techniques and concepts is systematically updated, which is reflected in the nature of a wide range of research and is most evident in the works on the problems of mythopoetics. As an innovative tendency can be considered the numerous attempts of scientists from 2000 to 2020s to determine the regularities of ideological and thematic trends, idiostyles, genre processes with the help of enlarged units of the research dimension, which in general brings similar works closer to structuralist ones. Some tendencies, which are associated with such aspects, were observed at the beginning and at the end of the XX century (C. Lévi-Strauss, A. Nyamtsu, etc.). A more often defined phenomenon in the scientific world of the XXI century articulated as a search for a code within an artistic work, in the work of a writer, in the genre or style, a national literary segment of a certain chronological level.

With increasing popularity in literary studies, linguistics, cultural studies, and anthropology, the concept of code remains undefined, which automatically translates a significant part of the results of these works into a polemical plane. Literary studies has already become accustomed to a similar situation

in the field of research on mythopoetics, the author's myth, having developed a certain immunity (M. Zuienko, O. Kobzar, etc.). The plurality of proposed interpretations of the code term in literary studies, which are sometimes mutually contradictory, on the one hand, and the large body of studies based on this term, on the other hand, determine the relevance and perspective of our article.

Moreover, the still unclear definition of myth as one of the central concepts of modern mass culture, particularly artistic literature, is close to this problem. Classical or original, a myth or its elements are also able to encode and program the subtext of an artistic work in a unique way (Gurduz, 2021), and in this case we get the outlined problem as if in the second degree. At the same time, the excessive fascination with mythopoetics studies nowadays sometimes suggests the doubt of this particular methodology in certain cases.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Despite the high frequency of appeals by philosophers, culturologists, linguists, literary scholars of the XXI century to the concept of code and the importance of issues related to it (for example, N. Zborovska sees the search for code as the main problem of postcolonial literary studies (Zborovska, 2006, p. 3)), its semantics is not unified and differs markedly in the spectrum of research depending on the plane of application. Umberto Eco rightly points out the different levels of organization of codes, when, depending on the context, the "code" "...covers not only the phenomenon... but also the notion of purely combinational systems..." (Eco, 1976, p. 37); the researcher defines coding as a very general system: these are "...systems or "structures" that can also subsist independently of any sort of significant or communicative purpose... They are made up of finite sets of elements oppositionally structured and governed by combinational rules that can generate both finite and infinite strings or chains of these elements" (Eco, 1976, p. 38). A somewhat more specific interpretation by J. Baudrillard – this is "...matrix called code" (Bodriiar, 2004, p. 143).

R. Barthes, on the contrary, denies the paradigmatic nature of the code in the artistic text, since it is "a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures" (Barthes, 2002, p. 20); this thinker asserts the code in a kind of intertextual perspective as a unity of five components – "voices": Empirics (the proairetisms), Person (the semes), Science (cultural), Truth (the hermeneutisms) and Symbol (Barthes, 2002, p. 21). In essence, the interpretation of the anthropological code by the authors of the academic study "Anthropological Code of Ukrainian Culture and Civilization" is somewhat similar: "...a set of historically formed images, means of a biological and sociocultural nature, associated with a certain complex of stereotypes of the consciousness of an individual or a group of people, which are expressed in archetypes, mentality, intellectual, moral and material life, in the political and social organization of society, its culture and civilization, which has a transitory character and the ability to be inherited" (Rafalskyi, Kalakura, Kotsur, Yurii, 2020, V. 1, p. 6). We consider important for our work the conclusion in the mentioned work that "...the anthropological code of Ukrainian culture and civilization, its ideological core – the national idea, are undergoing significant changes... are being modernized" (Rafalskyi,

Kalakura, Kotsur, Yurii, 2020, V. 2, p. 530), which means that they must be deeply researched.

**Formulation of the purpose and tasks of the article.** The purpose of our study is to clarify the semantics of the concept of code in literary studies, based on a significant number of its interpretations in the most notable humanitarian and actually special studies of the end of the XX – the first decades of the XXI century. In this case, we see the main tasks as a) to highlight the general tendencies in the interpretation of the concept of code in current research with the identification of advantages and disadvantages by means of comparison; b) identify semantic clusters at different levels of the organization of an artistic work, which can function as elements of a semantic code.

**Presentation of the main research material.** Yuliia Vyshnytska, within the scope of one study, nominates artistic phenomena at the micro- and macro-level as codes, and understands mythologems "...as compressed linguistic ethnocodes, which, when deciphered, go through the process of creative reproduction of cultural information; they reconstruct complementary paradigms that reflect and model universal and unique meanings..." (Vyshnytska, 2016, p. 71). At the same time, the actual myth for this scientist is, in particular, "...a precedent constant model of culture, literature, art, code and matrix of the universe..." (Vyshnytska, 2016, p. 57). In the context of our work, special attention is drawn to the statement by Yuliia Vyshnytska that "[m]ythological code of Ukrainian literature is stored in three sealed semiotic boxes: background-cultural (borrowed) myth, ethnic pagan (pagan, folk poetic) and in ethnic Christian box, keys from which they find in the artistic text, which regenerates... a complementary paradigm: of the the individual-author myth" (Vyshnytska 2016, p. 119).

"Semiotic boxes", in this way, here are three arrays of the mythological space of modern domestic literature, depending on the source of income, which interact in the development of the literary system, which contributes to their diffusion with the the original "hermeticism". In the scientist's concept, the mythological code is actually the content of the mythological space of modern Ukrainian literature.

N. Ovcharenko sees in the code the ideological vectorality, orientation: she proves that the "retrospectiveness" of the heroes of the Canadian post-colonial novel is "a kind of structuring code that determines the type of discourse" (Ovcharenko, 2018, p. 10). N. Bedzir is somewhat close here, interpreting the myth of creation common to a number of novels as their "mythological code", as well as Stella P. Reward with the nomination "code of the hero" (New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, 1993, p. 362).

Judging by the interpretation by T. Bovsunivska of the function of sleep in the artistic work as a code ("a dream in literature acquires a certain orderliness, becomes a code of the future or past hidden from the character..." (Bovsunivska, 2015, p. 199)), code here is an absolute synonym of program. In developing the problems of the psychohistory of the art of words, N. Zborovska's decision is more abstract: "The code of literature is the connection of national symbolization with mental emptiness or the maternal-paternal matrix" (Zborovska, 2006, p. 13).

The concepts in the meaning by following scientists are oriented towards a more substantive expression of coding in an artistic text. Distinguishing two “basic codes” in T. Shevchenko’s artistic work, Hr. Hrabovych similarly sees the first such code as mythological, and the second one as “symbolic-autobiographical” (Hrabovych, 1998, p. 169). Based on the analysis of the postmodern code as a whole, A. Merezhyńska and T. Kominarets consider as a symbolic code of modern prose and drama the system of signs-concepts and symbols leading in the artistic works (such as a mirror, a labyrinth, a map, a web, a hollow), interpreting the total vectors of semantic fields of the latter. Fabian Gudas distinguishes “linguistic and cultural codes” in the artistic work (New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, 1993, p. 71), although, again, according to R. Barthes, “...all codes are cultural...” (Barthes, 2002, p. 18).

Proceeding from the outlined semantics of the code in the content plane of the artistic work and relying on the practice of studies related to this problem, we can talk about the code (of various degrees of structuring) at the different levels. This is the level of a) *intention, imperative, archetypality* (N. Zborovska’s statement about “...symbolization of masculinity in women’s form” (Zborovska, 2006, p. 277) in Ukrainian literature; the code of demythologizing, westernization, postcolonial or gender, eschatological, etc.); b) the level of *thematic dominants of the intertextual content of the artistic work* (mythological, in particular biblical, ancient, etc.; autobiographical (Hrabovych, 1998, p. 169); zoomorphic (Turhan, 2011, p. 591), plant; invariant of the matrix work in relation to its mash-up version, etc.); c) the level of *expression of the environment* where events take place or are associated with it (rural, urban, in particular Kyiv, London, etc.; Gothic; cemetery; industrial; otherworldly; parallel world, etc.), as well as d) *code-canon*, including occasional (codes by T. Shevchenko, G. G. Byron and other national authors in the texts of successors, code by J. R. R. Tolkien, Narnian code by C. S. Lewis – in fantasy, etc.). Code in the sense of intertextual content can appear as a formal expression of intentional or imperative (in cases of, say, gender, post-colonial coding of the artistic work).

Among the revealing aspects of this problem, we can mention the research on the beast code by O. Turhan (Turhan, 2011) and on the bestiary code by Halyna Bokshan (Bokshan, 2017, p. 121). Filling the “zoomorphic code” (Turhan, 2011, p. 591) in the texts by Lesia Ukrainka, O. Turhan reads as the sum of the semantics of the images of animals and the motives associated with them, played by the poetess; Halyna Bokshan traces the role of the symbolism of animal images in revealing the plot by H. Pagutyak’s texts. Reflecting on the criteria of genre qualification of a number of modern prose works, the concept of genre code is applied by N. Bernadska (Bernadska, 2004, p. 215, 216).

Judging from the context of the proof by Olena Leonenko that “...H. Pagutyak relies on the European fantasy code and contributes to its design” (Leonenko, 2010, p. 12), we can talk about the researcher’s interpretation of the code as the sum of the principles of modeling by European authors of fantasy reality. However, the logic of O. Leonenko in the following statement is problematic: the writers (Hr. Shton and H. Pagutyak) “...go on the path of forming a new identity of the Ukrainian nation, which is represented by fantastic motifs and

mythologems, by modern themes and national coloring” (Leonenko, 2010, p. 15). In our opinion, the representativeness of these mentioned elements in prose is an insufficient basis for such global conclusions about the work of artists, although Hr. Shton and H. Pagutyak, indeed, belong to the authors who contribute to the renewal of Ukrainian identity.

In particular, investigating the peculiarities of the national myth-making code of Ukrainian fantasy 2000–2020s in a multinational context, we take into account the spectrum of mythopoetic characteristics of the named prose, including accompanying ones. The correct interpretation of fantasy, as well as any other myth-making – its artistic genesis, ideological orientation, structural organization, etc., involves the analysis of the construction, functioning and reception of a system of variable semantic components (more often – legendary and mythological images, motifs, symbols, mythologems, general cultural signs or other elements in the corresponding occasional functionality); these components are the key for the fantasy modeling of this or that work or group of works of art. According to the degree and potential of reinterpretation, conceptual load, configuration, chronotopic orientation of the work, etc., the named components in a certain way program, encode the artistic text, are able to serve as identifiers of its mythopoetic paradigm, and as a result we speak of its myth-making code. In this way, in our formulation, the code problem finds its solution for the field of literary studies, because the invented definition can serve as a certain common denominator in the spectrum of modern research.

**Conclusion.** The definition of the concept of code in literary studies that we have given can be considered optimal and a compromise at the same time, because it takes into account numerous attempts to define this concept by specialists – representatives of various fields of research. In this case, myth-making is naturally chosen as an important indicator, because it is in myth-making that the principle of the code can be realized most fully. The proposed provisions can be clarified in the process of practical work with specific artistic material and, in general, can serve as an element of correction and unification of complex comparative studies on the problems of the development of Ukrainian and foreign literature, particularly in the XXI century.

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