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# Artistic Conceptualization of Native Land in William Wordsworth's Poetry

### **Abstract**

The paper focuses on revealing linguistic and cognitive mechanisms that underlie the formation and functioning of verbal images of native land in William Wordsworth's poetic system. The artistic concept of Motherland is subjected to linguistic-poetic interpretation. The national specificity of Wordsworth's poetics reveals itself in the dominance of ethnographic details and naturalness of description, foregrounding the idea of inseparability of individual personal fate and the processes of ethnic environment transformation. Everyday themes and dramatic effect of personal and intimate events in the life of a poetic persona are ascribed symbolic senses and reflect the universal and national destiny of England at the turn of the century.

Keywords: English Romanticism, William Wordsworth, artistic concept, cognitive poetics, cognitive stylistics, national identity

### 1. Introduction

Romanticism as a literary process and a worldview movement represented the transformations in various spiritual spheres of the time. Among its numerous distinguishing features there is a reconsideration of human relations with the ethnic and national universe, which in its turn deeply affected the artistic embodiment of space and landscape, their poetic representation through the system of anthropic and natural images. The passionate attitude towards nature underlies the personification of natural phenomena and identification of the experiencing subject's feelings, emotions and states with nature. According to the principle of nature poetization, the landscape is presented as a dual essence, having a poetic value in itself and appearing as a reflection of the spirit that governs it. Romantic poets, who were the unceasing voice of the native land, believed that nature was endowed with moral qualities and was capable of exerting ethical influence on man (Vanslov 1966; Fedorov 1998; Janion 1969; Hartman 1970; Bloom 1971).

The well-known statement that the English romantics "discovered" national nature for their compatriots is primarily understood as a shift in the semantic content of the landscape, the emphasis on its dynamic, lyrical, intimate, sensual component. In the aesthetic system of Romanticism the native environment acquired the status of one of the central poetic themes. "Landscape poetry" in all its manifestations constituted the basis for the creation of "national markers", transforming the individual, personal feeling into a general, universal one, raising the poetic image of native land to the rank of national myth. The special view on nature and man and on human nature determined the poetic actualization of man as a subject of creative activity and national identity whose worldview was based on the priority of interaction between the individual and society. The space is inspired by human activity, it is inhabited by man, and the artistic reflection of this process has a clearly defined ethnic character, showing the features of both the author's individual and national poetic picture of the world.

The purpose of this paper is to disclose the specifics of the artistic concept Motherland actualization in the poetic world of William Wordsworth. The delineated problem is addressed from the perspective of literary text conceptual analysis as a highly productive approach in modern Ukrainian linguistics aimed at revealing the ways of representing the world in fiction, the definition of the world-modelling potential of textual forms, the discursive development of artistic concepts. In spite of an array of researches devoted to Romantic poetry, and to William Wordsworth's poetry in particular, the study of its conceptual structure specifics that contributes to the conceptions of literary criticism needs attention.

### 2. Theoretical background and methodology

Ukrainian artistic conceptology has accumulated rich and unique experience that integrates diverse vectors of foreign and domestic schools of ethno-linguistics, linguistic-cultural studies, cognitive poetics and cognitive stylistics and fosters the interdisciplinary approach (Prikhodko 2008; Vorobyova 2011). An artistic concept is understood as a form of universal artistic experience of the nation, an element of cultural memory that is able to function as a building material for the formation of new artistic meanings and to perform pragmatic, ideological and aesthetic functions. Following the ideas of Ukrainian scholars (Nikonova 2008, Kaganovska 2002), we define an artistic concept as a dynamic component of the artistic picture of the world, a linguistic and cognitive unit generated as a result of interaction of the author's and the recipient's artistic consciousness within the "artistic textual world" which is characterized by semantic diversity, interpretive infinity, aesthetic, cultural and social significance. An artistic concept is comprehended in the anthropocentric plane, i.e. in the act of communication between the author and the recipient as a permanent, constantly updated process in the context of historical realities and ideological guidelines of society (Romanyshyn 2021: 49–51).

The model of artistic concept is traditionally represented as a multilayer entity (Nikonova 2008) that consists of notional (informative), figurative (image-associative) and axiological components the semantic volume of which is formed by 1) the development of the denotative-notional plane of a literary text, its semantic macro-structures emerged as a result of interrelations of all textual situations that reflect the objective or subjective worlds created by the author; 2) the continuous associative-semantic extensions and figurative transformations of textual elements within a certain context or/and within the boundaries of the author's artistic system; 3) the emergence of additional textual senses determined

by different extratextual factors (cultural or psychological). The organization of conceptual layers is an unfixed, open structure; they do not exist separately from each other, are superimposed on each other, up to the possibility of their mutual inclusion and intersection.

The explication of conceptual information involves various linguistic and aesthetic resources of the text – the verbal artistic forms of the literary text which are the result of cognition and construction of the reality by the author (Gavins & Steen 2003; Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007; Stockwell 2002) within the semiotic universe of culture. The analysis of conceptual information is carried out using a contextual-interpretive method, which is a set of procedures (mostly oriented on text reception) aimed at revealing the dominant artistic motives and meanings, the plot and composition, at disclosing the semantics of verbal and artistic images. Applying the contextual-interpretive method we rely on the principles of hermeneutics and receptive aesthetics about the relativity of textual understanding, the potential openness of the text, the fundamental inexhaustibility of its interpretations.

The analysis of the concept structure is inseparable from the analysis of the unity of text form and content, their interaction and transition, the integrity of all aspects of poetic language. The ontological essence of the artistic concept lies in the unity and interaction of its cognitive-discursive and linguisticaesthetic aspects that necessitates the integration of analytical procedures that take into account: 1) the semantic, semiotic and associative dynamics of an artistic / poetic text determined by the very nature of poetic language as a specific form of figurative reflection of reality in its (form's) aesthetic evolution; 2) the continuity of conceptual structure of the text in which associative-semantic fields of different concepts can intersect, interconnect on the principle of complementarity, inclusion, etc.; 3) the role of thematic, plot-compositional, symbolic levels of the text; 4) the extratextual connections of the literary work, its inclusion in the historical, cultural and social contexts.

The poetic form as an important component of individual writing provides significant material relevant to identifying the author's individual worldview, dynamics of the axiological existential dominants in the structure of artistic concept. Decoding the poetic structure of the work / the system of works in a certain aspect, reconstructing individual literary consciousness and individual use of poetic language (taking into account the personalized intratextual and extratextual experience) provides the entry into a set of cognitive-semantic features of the artistic concept.

The content of the concept is dynamic, capable of evolving from one work of the author to another and from one period of creativity to another. The recipient-interpreter can decode it differently depending on cultural, historical, ideological context, an artistic trend, a type of national artistic or the author's individual consciousness.

## 3. Wordsworth's poetic concept of Motherland in the system of spatial and anthropocentric images

The aesthetics and philosophy of Wordsworth's poetry, the dynamics of his socio-political, religious and moral views, innovation in the field of poetic imagery and stylistics are deeply and comprehensively elaborated in works on literary studies and history of English literature (Gravil and Rodinson 2015; Elistratova 1960: 107–197). Among the dominant themes of W. Wordsworth's poetry, scholars highlight the themes of nature, home and the patriarchal family, human relations, motherhood, the value of land

as spiritual and physical property and the concept of "small homeland": ethnic and social traits that best express the spirit of "true" good England.

The centers of this system are Man and Nature and it is based on the dominant creative principle of depicting the human world through its connection with the world of nature. Thus, the content of the artistic concept of motherland is informed by the idea of inseparable harmonious unity between man and national environment - family, home, native land - that finds its textual actualization in the interrelated systems of anthropic and spatial artistic concepts. The poem "Calm is the fragrant air, and loth to lose" (Wordsworth 1858: 342) serves as the best illustration of the statements mentioned above. This poem, which is full of sensory, acoustic and visual images of the end of the summer working day, depicts the concrete, everyday experience of a human being. It recreates the model of the microcosm that revolves around the axis between the earth and the heaven "given" by the vertical line of the church bell tower. In this microcosm the human life is programmed by the cycle between the work and the rest as a full turn of the hands of the village Church-clock, by the laws of nature, is determined by the movement of celestial bodies, the change of seasons. The foregrounding of the sensual and emotional bond between man and his native land, poetization of his everyday life are intended to the comprehension of the hidden essence of "simple things", their importance in the personal and collective identification, their place in the general scheme of existence and their role in determining the ethnic mentality. The poet develops the image of the land on the surface of which the ray of poetic generalization captures the point-separated, self-sufficient, stable integrities - the English peasant-owner, his home and the immediate natural environment. The "inner movement" of human thought, feelings, experiences is accessed by observing the "external movement" in space, and vice versa: the analysis of forms and ways of "living" and transforming the space provides access to the depths of the soul and mentality in the result of which the external and internal landscapes become symbolic correlates.

The figurative organization of space in the poetic works of W. Wordsworth opens to the reader in different directions. On the one hand, the poetic space correlates with the real geographical space verbalized by specific toponyms; on the other, the persona, the lyrical hero, the narrator experience and interpret it as native and strange, favorable and unfavorable, existing here and now or as a dream belonging to the past, the memory. The real (house, village, field) and mystical (grave, lake, forest) loci correspond to the mental and physical state of the character, serves as a background for the depicted events related to the concepts of movement and displacement.

Positive perception of space is thought of as unlimitedness, freedom, a sense of peace and happiness, as evidenced by the accumulation of vocabulary saturated with emotionally expressive connotations within the micro-contexts. W. Wordsworth strictly adhered to the principle of depicting man through the usual phenomena of nature, the idea of harmonious coexistence of man and the natural environment, man as a center that absorbs natural impressions, and nature that vibrates according to the internal state of the persona. Native inhabited land is filled with objects of love, the contemplation of which brings pleasure. Natural objects and elements of the landscape are personified, endowed with the ability to affect the subject emotionally. The space is not only the natural environment, but the essence of the individual existence. Maximum authenticity, naturalism in the imaginative depiction of space, the detailed description of the domestic and ethnic aspect of space aim to strengthen the pragmatic influence of the text on the recipients, to ensure their emotional "immersion" in reality.

### ARTISTIC CONCEPTUALIZATION OF NATIVE LAND

Aesthetic manifestation of space develops through the prism of perception and activity of Wordsworth's main character – a peasant-farmer, a peasant-shepherd. The idea of individual rather than collective development and transformation of space dominates in the large array of textual excepts. A lone reaper works in the field, singing, and the sounds fill the space of the valley like work (activity) that fills the space of life: "Alone she cuts and binds the grain, / And sings a melancholy strain ("A Solitary Reaper"). Shepherd Michael's hut is situated high in the mountains, far from the developed space:... "from the public way you turn your steps / Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll"; "Their cottage on a plot of rising ground / Stood single, with large prospect, north and south, / High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise, / And westward to the village near the lake" ("Michael"). The space of his existence is simple and understandable and makes his individual activity meaningful: "Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds, / Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes, / When others heeded not, He heard the South / Make subterraneous music, like the noise / Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills" ("Michael"). Lonelines, solitude, distance, precise identification of direction, visual and acoustic parameters of the landscape are the central semantic components of the images that delineate the intimacy of the personal space of the character or lyrical hero.

In the poetic picture created by W. Wordsworth, the characters act and live outside the collectively mastered space. Whatever falls into the center of poetic image is a point in the unlimited space of nature. Solitude, remoteness, loneliness of the object of image or the subject of experiences are marked by axiological ambivalence. On the one hand, loneliness and remoteness are the correlates of poverty and old age (poems "Goody Blake" and "Simon Lee"); on the other, they are the salvation from the invasion of negative social practices (urbanization, progress, war) into the personal intimacy (the poem "The Thorn") and the fate of the characters (the poems "Ruth", "The Ruined Cottage", "Female Vagrant" and others).

These ideas in their textual projection are objectified in the accumulation of spatial and temporal images, the key semantic features of which are

- the state of rest, statics, stagnation, absence of changes: "At evening, when the earliest stars began / To move along the edges of the hills, / Rising or setting, would he stand alone, / Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake";
- cyclical movement (in a circle, or up and down): "She wandered up and down; / And many a hill did Lucy climb"; "when like a roe / I bounded o'er the mountains"; "I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o'er vales and hills"; "among woods / At noon; and 'mid the calm of summer nights, / When, by the margin of the trembling lake, / Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went / In solitude, such intercourse was mine";
- the micro-images of mossy stones, a lonely distant tree, a mountain top, a valley, etc.

The images-symbols that both reflect the internal state of the persona and its external manifestation play a significant role in the artistic representation of the concept of native land and motherland. Thus, the parallelism of feelings and environment are of particular importance in terms of expressivity and artistic function. These images display the particular phenomena from an unexpected angle. The image of the land in its picturesqueness and ethnographic detailing reflected social and historical processes characteristic for this period. The separated and the local became the tokens of individual and collective destiny, since this familiar and natural world in its simplicity and authenticity was not devoid of grave social and spiritual conflicts. The space filled with realistic details, the

symbolism of colours, light and darkness expressed the loneliness of a human being, the fight against the evil, the fright of unconquerable powers.

When poverty and misery come to the family of Margaret – the heroine of the poem "Ruined Cottage" (Wordsworth 1858: 134-156) the behavior of her husband and children changes: "poverty brought on a petted mood/And a sore temper". Signs of destruction and decay intrude in the idyll and harmony of the natural environment. This state aggravates when family "space" and peace are destroyed by war: "the plague of war"; "a sad time of sorrow and distress". When the war takes away Margaret's husband, her grief and feelings emanate on the state of the environment. The feelings of hopelessness and despair are accentuated by the accumulation of images of inevitable physical destruction. In the unfolding of the textual narrative these metamorphoses become more tangible and striking not only in the dynamics of changes in natural images but are also enhanced by the contrast between the so-called "near" and "far" landscape: several times the narrator visits Margaret's hut. And every time her house and courtyard more and more resemble a wasteland, while the fields around turn green, a new harvest ripens, flowers bloom, and the life of nature begins its new cycle.

W. Wordsworth exposes the external and internal manifestations of the human spirit and soul in a set of artistic devices that consist in skillful combination of compositional "blocks" which accumulate verbal elements to denote feelings and states, and "blocks" which embody a detailed visual picture of the environment. When the narrator meets Margaret immediately after her husband's disappearance, when her grief and confusion are not so deep, when her soul is still full of hope for his return or at least news of him, the reproduction of the heroine's psychological state is framed by the changes in her yard and garden: the ivy envelops her house outside, the garden is gradually overgrown with weeds, while inside the house is still full of life and peace. However, the second meeting shows a striking change in the appearance of the heroine: "Her face was pale and thin, her figure too / Was changed; evermore / Her eyelids drooped, her eyes were downward cast. / And when she at her table gave me food / She did not look at me. Her voice was low, / Her body was subdued"; "I found her sad and drooping". The friendly and cheerful Margaret turned into a shadow of herself. Deep despair and sorrow poisoned her soul, her abandoned house turned into a wasteland.

The inhabited house is the inner space of the world, the protection from external chaos. In its symbolic dimension the house is a counterpart of man. The concept of house is parametrized through the spiritual world of man, his essence. The analysis of semantic and associative relations between the elements of the artistic structure of the poem makes it possible to identify an implicit parallel between the concepts of HOUSE and MAN, which lay the foundations of the following figurative mapping:

- the hearth is the heart: "the hearth / Was comfortless";
- the windows are the eyes: "The windows too were dim";
- the books are thoughts: "her few books ... / now with straggling leaves / Lay scattered here and there, open or shut, / As they had chanced to fall".

The earth and the environment no longer serve as a source of strength and energy for the heroine. The earth in her garden is hard, covered with dry grass ("The earth was hard, / With weeds defaced and knots of withered grass"); grief has devastated the soul, turning it into withered flowers: "... her herbs and flowers... were gnawed away / Or trampled on the earth"). Frost, rain and snow deprived this devastated house of the last vital forces ("And so she lived / Through the long winter, reckless and atone, / Till this reft house, by frost, and thaw, and rain, / Was sapped"). The bare root of the apple tree symbolizes

the vulnerability and defenselessness of a single woman-widow. This textual parallelism between spatial and anthropocentric images sustains the development of complex compositional metaphors "a human being is a part of nature" and "nature/surroundings/land is an extension of human body/human soul/human destiny". The reiteration of this compositional principle to depict the dynamics of human physical and spiritual transformations through the changes of the environment secures the formation of stable symbolic meanings of words that nominate plants, natural powers, natural and artificial elements of the landscape, the fixation of negative emotional and axiological connotation in their semantics.

The expressivity of poetic depiction is also achieved by the foregrounding of tropes created on the basis of sensory vocabulary and the figurative elements that belong to the thematic micro-field "cold". The combination of the words "cold", "disease", "death", "ruins", "decay" reveals the closeness of their emotional and expressive colour, connotative meanings. The space of the house is filled with cold and the cold penetrates the body. The image of the house destroyed by the cold and the human body mortified by cold makes the concept of house the symbolic correlates of a living body that contains and guards the human soul, the life itself. Among the detailed signs of decline and destruction with which the poem begins and ends, there is the chain of figurative details designed to create maximum visual accuracy – the convergence of stylistic devices, reflecting the "attack" of nature on the space emerging as a result of physical and spiritual death of man who himself is an integral part of nature.

The artistic plane of W. Wordsworth's poetry is characterized by an alternation of vitality and thanatology in the forms of linguistic embodiment of space. The symbolism of natural phenomena and elements plays a specific role, for example: water – life, water – death and water – destiny. In "Ruined Cottage" the author turns the conventional movement of the traditional associative-symbolic perception of the concept of water as a source of human existence in the opposite direction: man can also become a source of energy and life for nature.

The man and the spring are capable of emotional and energetic exchange ("For them a bond / Of brotherhood is broken"), able to feel kinship, unity. The death of a person leads to drying of the spring (which in the given micro-context is marked by the micro-images "spider" and "cobweb" as associations of death and oblivion), the uselessness and functional destruction of the spring is actualized by the image of a useless fragment of a wooden bowl.

The analyzed image of a dried-up spring within the anthropocentric and spatial artistic-semantic plane of Wordsworth's poetic world contributes to the creation of axiological dominant of the concept Motherland. The drying of the spring symbolizes the process of decline and destruction of the peasantry which Wordsworth considered the only social stratum capable of preserving true spiritual and ethnic values and ensuring the continuity of the creative energy impulse for the national artistic discourse.

The spatial parameters of national existence correlate in W. Wordsworth's poetic discourse with the status, state, and psycho-emotional dominant of persona. The poetic image of Motherland is based on its understanding as physical and spiritual support of human existence, its main value, and the causes of spiritual and psychological transformations of the individual.

Wordsworth's poetic word focused on the microworld of the individual – his ethnic, psycho-mental, behavioral, ethical characteristics – and the macroworld of national existence (represented by a system of domestic, ethnic and social realities, the result of human development of natural space) embodies all the complexity and ambiguity of interaction between these worlds. The elements of the ethnographic reality, locality of space, domestic themes and drama of personal and intimate events are transformed

into the symbols that reflect the universal and national destiny of England at the turn of the century. From axiological point of view, the Motherland, the native land is manifested as an ambivalent category: its beauty, life-giving force is the basis for structuring the life of man and his fate, and simultaneously his burden, limiting factor, personal tragedy. The concentric structure of the spatial-landscape perspective – the house, threshold, yard, hedge, field, valley, high hill, shore, sea (designed to provide a sense of security, impenetrability into intimacy, loneliness) – is unstable.

The space can be both favorable and aggressive, absorbing, while acting as a symbol of the inevitable changes and stagnation. Displacement of man for socio-political reasons, due to the dynamics of socio-historical progress, rebirth and reorientation of moral guidelines outside the native inhabited space inevitably leads to his moral and physical death, turns the native space into "foreign", hostile one. This process at the level of the discursive dynamics of conceptual interaction is manifested in the blurring of the boundaries between freedom and limitation, life and death, stability and variability, strength and vulnerability, native and strange land.

#### 4. Conclusions

In the artistic world of William Wordsworth the native land is the basis of human existence, the source of vitality, the object of love and devotion, the absolute value. This worldview dominant that constitutes the core of the notional conceptual level is actualized by the artistic images which reflect the inseparable emotional and spiritual unity of man and nature, is based on the creative principle of depicting the human world through its harmonious connection with nature, culture, history, politics and social context of the epoch. At the level of linguistic and aesthetic textual forms it is expressed by: the poetic images that represent the everyday empirical, historical, moral and religious, economic experience of the ethnic social group; the symbolic function of artistic details that reflect the transformation of specific ethnic phenomena into the facts of socio-cultural and moral identity; the actualization of multifaceted semantic potential of the nominations of household items and culturally loaded artifacts, natural phenomena and landscape elements, the poeticization of everyday realities in order to reveal the corresponding stereotypical and unique ethnic mental, behavioral and cognitive features of a definite social stratum.

The cognitive features that reflect the idea of individual development and transformation of space, physical and social "loneliness", "remoteness" of a human being, the invasion of negative social space in the intimate and physical spheres of the individual dominate in the content of the artistic concept of Motherland. The connection between man and the environment is reproduced 1) by the accumulation of verbal resources depicting the correlation between the external manifestations of space and human psychological state; 2) by foregrounding the spatial images the semantics of which is "static" or "stagnation"; 3) by strengthening the symbolic load of vocabulary to denote color, acoustic, sensory aspects of the environment.

The axiological perception of Motherland is ambivalent. This ambiguity is exposed in the variability of the directions in which the space and the persona interact: the emanation of psychological and spiritual states of the persona on the parameters of the environment is possible. Space turns from a favorable, life-giving resource, a factor of stability and protection into an antagonistic, hostile one, which absorbs a human being or fills a void after his death. The negative influence of the environment on the persona

is reproduced by the accumulation of figurative models that reflect the idea of defenselessness, sacrifice, doom, human vulnerability to fate, social inequality; by the tropes with the meaning of destruction, death, melting, depletion, overgrowth, drying, aimless movement. Elements of landscape, natural powers and phenomena symbolize the confrontation of good and evil, life and death, social and physical alienation. The recurrence of poetic motives of the loss of land, the displacement of the individual outside the usual, native natural and social environment, the reciprocity of concepts of homeland and strange land raises them to the status of artistic dominants in depicting the tragic manifestations of national life.

The native land is not only the natural environment, but the essence, the meaning of human existence. Maximum authenticity, naturalism, detailed recreation of the domestic and ethnic parameters of the space contributed to the renewal of the national language poetic resources. The enrichment of intellectual, axiological and symbolic aspects of poetic context secured the appropriate emotional response of the recipient.

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