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## **Trans-Curzonian and border people. Ukrainians deported from Poland in Contemporary Ukrainian and Polish literature<sup>1</sup>**

### **Zakerzonian i ludzie pogranicza. Ukraińcy deportowani z Polski we współczesnej literaturze ukraińskiej i polskiej**

**Keywords:** Trans-Curzonian, Polish-Ukrainian borderland, literary mapping of space

**Słowa kluczowe:** Zakerzonian, pogranicze polsko-ukraińskie, literackie mapowanie przestrzeni

#### **Abstract**

This article analyses the image of the contemporary Polish-Ukrainian borderland in Ukrainian literature, and for a comparative context, works by Polish writers are also included. The literary representation of Trans-Curzonian as a special border area, the ethnic borderland where Ukrainians lived before the deportation actions in 1940–1950, is examined. It is argued that the literary topography of this area is the main focus of Polish authors, especially Andrzej Stasiuk. Above all, it is a space at the intersection of cultures and time, which exists somewhat separately and according to its own specific rules. It was noted that in the prose of the Ukrainian novelist Vasyl Makhno, the main themes are the community of deported Ukrainians and their lost ideal place (home) and nostalgia. In journalism, the main actors have been the communities of Ukrainians who remained in Poland and the witnesses and descendants of those deported in “Operation Vistula”.

Even in today’s complex world, shaped by two world wars, the collapse of superpowers, ongoing armed conflicts, and rapid globalization and glocalization,

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the idea of borders, barriers, and frontiers continues to be relevant and requires further exploration.

The concept of space has long been an integral part of European philosophy (Weigel 2009: 194). More specialized explorations devoted to spatial images and their interpretation appeared at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries in the context of the development of the chorological concepts in geography<sup>2</sup> (Zamiatyn 2006: 11–12). At the same time, after the change of focus in the humanities to cultural theories in the first half of the 20th century, space became an even more important component of research in philosophy (Weigel 2009: 194).

Further study of the concept of environment/territory and its place in humanities was carried out in the scholarly works of representatives of the *Annales* school and Italian historians – supporters of the field of microhistory (Kümin, Usborne 2013: 308). Worldview changes in the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of a new philosophical paradigm of postmodernism enabled further methodological searches in the humanities (ibid.: 309). The next stage of spatial-related research was marked by the so-called ‘topographical turn’ (Weigel 2009: 191). The mapping and study of space became a topos – a common approach in cultural studies. In other words, there was a change from the historiographical narrative to an ethnographic perspective (Weigel 2009: 191; Yakovenko 2007: 219).

Another revival in the 1980s, in particular the renewal and creation of discourses of space in various aspects of human activity and multifaceted dimensions of identity, created a holistic understanding of social life (Warf, Arias 2008: 4). Therefore, in the 1990s, the interest of historians in the subject of the spatial dimension of the past was growing. This, in turn, contributed to cooperation with scientists in geohistory and cultural geography.<sup>3</sup> In general, the understanding of space, the creation of its images, symbolism, and deconstruction found its continuation in various branches of Western humanities and interdisciplinary approaches. Among these disciplines, a prominent place was occupied by geopolitics, which creates a modern, dynamic and promising direction of research and generally studies the ways of creating space in literature, art and culture, as well as the methods of giving it meaning (Kasperski 2014: 22). The founder of this discipline is considered to be the Scottish poet and philosopher Kenneth White, who

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<sup>2</sup> *Khorolohichna kontsepsiia* [Chorological concept], <http://www.geograf.com.ua/glossary/suspilno-geografichni-terminy/khorolohichna-kontsepsiya>.

<sup>3</sup> Torre Angelo (2008), *A “Spatial Turn” in History? Landscapes, Visions, Resources*, “*Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales. Paris*”, no. 5 (63), [https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E\\_ANNA\\_635\\_1127--a-spatial-turn-in-history.htm](https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_ANNA_635_1127--a-spatial-turn-in-history.htm).

formulated this idea at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s and promoted this term (Kasperski 2014: 27–28).

It is appropriate to emphasize that during the last decade, the relationship between culture and space has been actively explored in Polish humanities as well. After the implementation of the research project appeared, literary critic Elżbieta Rybicka published *Geopoetics. Space and Place in Contemporary Literary Theories and Practices* (Rybicka 2014). During 2014–2017, an inter-academic team of scientists continued to work on the program *Regionalism in Literary Studies: Traditions and New Orientations* under the leadership of Małgorzata Mikołajczak, as a result of which meetings-conferences were held, a number of monographs were published, in particular, as part of a series of books *New regionalism in literary studies* published by the academic publishing house „Universitas”.<sup>4</sup>

In Ukrainian science, the study of regions, space, and their theoretical and methodological foundations was highlighted in the pages of the collection of scientific works *Regional history of Ukraine*, published in 2007–2017 by the Institute of the History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> These questions were also considered in the monograph of Ihor Chornovol, who thoroughly analysed the concept of the frontier, its evolution, and the perspective of its application to the study of the history of Ukraine (Chornovol 2016), and in Yaroslava Vermenych's publication on the problems of regionalism (Vermenych 2018). At the same time, the Ukrainian researcher Roman Holyk analysed a number of publications of a methodological nature, which highlighted the phenomenon of written culture as a part/form of cultural memory, and also deconstructed the image of Galicia not only as a cultural product of the turn of the 19th–20th centuries but focused his attention on a wider section of the problem (Holyk 2015).

One of the aspects emphasized in the mentioned historiographic studies is the possibility of using literature in the study of space. As we know, in the 19th – early 20th centuries, literature played an important role in the creation of the modern world, in particular, nation-building (Pavlyshyn 2013). Instead, modern

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<sup>4</sup> „Regionalizm w badaniach literackich: tradycja i nowe orientacje” – podsumowanie projektu, <https://filologia.uwb.edu.pl/index.php/2018/05/01/regionalizm-w-badaniach-literackich-tradycja-i-nowe-orientacje-podsumowanie-projektu>.

<sup>5</sup> *Rehional'na istoriia Ukrainy: zbirnyk naukovykh prats'* [*Regional history of Ukraine: a collection of scientific papers*], ed. by Smolij Valerij, [http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?&I21DBN=EJRN&P21DBN=EJRN&S21STN=1&S21REF=10&S21FMT=JUJ\\_all-&C21COM=S&S21CNR=20&S21P01=0&S21P02=0&S21P03=I=&S21COLORTERMS=0&S21STR=regions](http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?&I21DBN=EJRN&P21DBN=EJRN&S21STN=1&S21REF=10&S21FMT=JUJ_all-&C21COM=S&S21CNR=20&S21P01=0&S21P02=0&S21P03=I=&S21COLORTERMS=0&S21STR=regions).

literature, taking into account the cataclysms of the 20th century, is already developing in the direction of ‘memorization of texts’ (Monolatij 2019: 131). In this context, literature serves as a symbolic realm that encompasses experiences such as trauma or complete destruction, the erasure of memory, diverse encounters with coexistence, the creation of new meanings by those different from ourselves, and the process of searching, reproducing, and reconstructing both memory and the physical landscape (ibid.: 223). Under such circumstances, it is interesting and important to consider how the Polish-Ukrainian borderland appears in the literature – a special territory that appeared as a result of geopolitical changes and the creation and movement of interstate borders in the middle of the 20th century.

**The purpose** of the article is to study the image of the modern Polish-Ukrainian borderland in Ukrainian and Polish literature, mainly the territory of the so-called *Trans-Curzonion* (*Zakerzonion* in Ukrainian transliteration),<sup>6</sup> Literary mapping of this space is less studied in contrast to the image of *Galicja* (*Halychyna* in Ukrainian transliteration, *Galicja* in Polish transliteration)<sup>7</sup> or the city of Lviv, which has been comprehensively studied as part of the ‘borders of the imaginary triangle of Ukraine-Russia-Poland’, and various types of historical memory (Holyk 2015: 47–48).

In view of such a wide range of issues, artistic and journalistic (collections of reportages) works were selected for analysis, which describe (reconstruct) the specified space and its inhabitants (both past and present) not only by Ukrainian authors but also by Polish authors, expanding the research optics. However, this list does not include the memoirs of Ukrainians resettled from Poland, or their descendants, which, in the author’s opinion, constitute a separate genre and require a more thorough analysis. The following works were selected for the study: Stasiuk A. *Tales of Galicja*; Beley L., Saturczak L. *Asymmetric Symmetry. Field research of Ukrainian-Polish relations [Asymetrychna symetriia. Pol’ovi*

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<sup>6</sup> *Trans-Curzonion* (*Zakerzonion* in Ukrainian transliteration) – the ethnic borderland, the region where Ukrainians lived as part of the Polish Republic before deportations in 1944–1946 and 1951 to the Ukrainian SSR, and in 1947 – to the north-western regions of Poland.

<sup>7</sup> *Galicja* (*Halychyna* in Ukrainian transliteration, *Galicja* in Polish transliteration) – historical region of Eastern Europe. In 1199, Roman Mstyslavych (the prince of Volhynia) united under his power Galicja and Volhynia. Roman’s dynasty died out in 1323. The principality of Galicja-Volhynia existed until 1340. After the death of Polish Prince Bolesław Jerzy of Mazovia 1340 (elected to rule this land by the boyars), Polish King Casimir III the Great annexed Galicja to his lands. Before Austrian annexation (1772) it was a part of Poland (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), in the XX century it became a part of the restored Republic of Poland and after the Second World War it was divided between Poland and the Soviet Union. Today, the region is a part of southeastern Poland and western Ukraine (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Galicja-historical-region-Eastern-Europe>).

*doslidzhennia ukrains'ko-pol's'kykh vidnosyn*]; Smoleński P. *Syrup of Wormwood. Expelled in Operation Vistula* [*Syrup z piołunu. Wagnani w akcji „Wisła”*]; Kryshtopa O. *The last Ukrainians in Poland* [*Ostanni ukraintsi Pol'schi*]; Makhno V. *Eternal Calendar* [*Vichnyj kalendar*]. The author analyses the works written by Ukrainian authors in their Ukrainian edition and the Polish authors in the Polish edition. The only exception is the book Stasiuk A., a review of which is based on the English translation. The original transliterated titles of the works are given in square brackets after the translation into English (made by the author). The focus is on artistic works and reportages about the Ukrainian and Polish communities in the border areas, published after 2014 – at a new stage in the development of Ukraine, particularly in relations with neighbouring states. An exception is the book Stasiuk A. *Tales of Galicia*. The work was written in Polish in 1995, translated into English in 2003, and into Ukrainian in 2014.

In the centre of the postmodern collection *Tales of Galicia* by the Polish novelist Andrzej Stasiuk (published in Polish in 1995 and translated into English in 2003) is the theme of the border and periphery. The place of action is the “southern border with Slovakia... a few years after 1989, and this peripheral setting offers a prime vantage point from which to view the effects of transition spreading out from the centre” (Stasiuk 2003: 134). Although the author does not specify the names of the settlements, “a fictional village” in “the region as a centuries-old palimpsest created by a succession of migrating (or invading) cultures” (Stasiuk 2003: 134). The publication is a collection of stories of ordinary people who are experiencing the 1990s, which marked the time of great social and political changes: the fall of the USSR and the Polish People’s Republic. The space constructed by A. Stasiuk in the book, i.e. „a place destroyed by time” reflects the concept of a „Small Homeland” popular in Polish literature of the late 20th century. The image created by the author appears on the basis of his subjective ideas because it shows the world that disappeared under the influence of major cataclysms, such as world wars (Kropyvko 2017: 126). These nameless villages about which the author talks seem to have fallen out of the passage of time. Their mapping has a high symbolic weight and demonstrates an interest in the geographical context, which is important for the creation of meanings (ibid.: 126–127) and, above all, in the local community (Dovzhok 2011: 342). In this community of „locals” [*tutejszy*]: „the ethnically distinct Other is not a stranger...The stranger, regardless of nationality, is always a newcomer who brings chaos to the ordered, ‘local world’” (ibid.: 342).

Ukrainian poet and editor Les’ Beley and Polish journalist and writer Łukasz Saturczak conducted a study of the unofficial dimension of Polish-Ukrainian relations, which ended with a collection of reportages recorded in ten settlements on

both sides of the border between Poland and Ukraine. *Asymmetric Symmetry* ran along the border areas of Shehyni and Medyka, the space of the difficult history of *Volhynia*<sup>8</sup> and *Subcarpathia* (*Podkarpacie* in Polish transliteration)<sup>9</sup>; including the symbolic centres of both Galicias, Lviv and Kraków. In Ukraine, Les' Beley spoke to the Polish community, and in Poland, Łukasz Saturczak spoke to the Ukrainian community (Beley, Saturczak 2014: V–VI).

Considering the topic of the article, the section dedicated to Przemyśl is interesting. In this town, Ł. Saturczak recorded conversations with four Ukrainian townspeople (two of them moved from Ukraine and have no family in Poland, and the other two are from the north-western regions of Poland and have roots in Subcarpathia) (ibid.: 46–49). The author himself comes from a Subcarpathian village that was Ukrainian before the deportations, and although there are several elderly Ukrainians living there, he decided to write stories in Przemyśl, where he also lived for a certain period. It should also be noted that the interviews for the book were recorded in 2013–2014 during the Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine, i.e. before the wave of the so-called „war of monuments”.

Maria, who moved with her parents to Przemyśl in the mid-1960s (her family came from near Przemyśl, and her parents returned after her grandfather and grandmother), noted that in Soviet times the atmosphere in the city was tense because her family was branded as „Ukrainians” (in a negative connotation) and „Banderivtsi” („Banderites” – an offensive term for pro-nationalists) (ibid.: 50). In the 1990s, as the woman recalled, the Poles were still hostile to the organization of the festival of Ukrainian culture, but in recent years the situation has improved, „relations are returning to good neighbourliness”, and the collection of aid for the Maidan protests shows that there are problems that Poles and Ukrainians can cooperate in solving (ibid.: 51).

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<sup>8</sup> *Volhynia* – the historical region of northwestern Ukraine, was a principality (X–XIIth century) and part of Principality of Galicia-Volhynia (until to XIVth century) and then an autonomous component of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. After the Polish-Lithuanian union of 1569, Volhynia became part of Poland. As a result of the second partition of Poland (1793) most of it was incorporated by the Russian empire. After 1921, Volhynia was divided between Poland and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The entire region became a part of the Ukrainian S.S.R. after the Second World War. Today, Volhynia encompasses most of Volhynia, Rivne, Zhytomyr and Ternopil regions in Ukraine (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Volhynia>; <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CV%5CO%5CVolhynia.htm>).

<sup>9</sup> *Subcarpathia* (*Podkarpacie* in Polish transliteration) in the reporter's interpretation, the region of the Polish-Ukrainian border, located in the southeastern part of modern Poland. Subcarpathia occupies the historical regions of Galicia and Bukovyna (<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CS%5CU%5CSubcarpathia.htm>).

The focus of the collection of art reportages *Syrup of Wormwood* by the well-known Polish author Paweł Smoleński is the fate of the deportees – “expelled in Operation Vistula”. The human dimension is pivotal in the 2017 publication because „many of the individuals who remained silent for years about their experiences have either passed away, become more confident to speak up, or prefer not to recall the events. Furthermore, as the generations pass, many of them have grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are now scattered throughout Poland” (Smoleński 2017: 7–8). The book *Syrup of Wormwood* is a collection of conversations with eyewitnesses of Operation Vistula, as well as those who were imprisoned in the Jaworzno concentration camp (a former branch of the Auschwitz concentration camp), which is complemented by documentary stories about the reasons and course of deportation (ibid.: 19–29). Therefore, the authors focused on the destruction of Orthodox churches in 1938, the times of the Second World War, the inter-ethnic conflict and terror on the part of the Polish authorities and various underground formations (in Pawłokoma, Piskorowice, Wierzchowiny and Zawadka Morochowska) (ibid.: 48–68), forced deportation to the Soviet Union in 1944–1946 and attempts to avoid it (ibid.: 30–47). Eyewitnesses’ stories about them are full of experiences, fear and uncertainty. Depicting the atmosphere in which the Ukrainian community lived during the war, Smoleński outlines the broader background of the events that preceded Operation Vistula, which essentially became the final act in resolving the Ukrainian question: „During the first evictions, we went to the forest, because the Poles [*underground formations*] and Soviet soldiers carried out raids only in the village because they were afraid of the forest... It was hard... After that, all we wanted was peace” (ibid.: 107).

The most important, given the tragic nature and unpopularity of the subject in Poland, are the chapters dedicated to the prisoners of the Jaworzno concentration camp. Smoleński, again using his memories, rejects claims about an insignificant number of imprisoned Ukrainians (several thousand) and, therefore, about the insignificance of the problem. The author presents not only excerpts of stories that he managed to write down but also parts of memories and requests to the authorities of the 1990s and 2000s made by former prisoners in order to obtain clarification and clarification about their own cases and the possibility of crediting these lost years to the length of service (ibid.: 177–193). They mainly refer to baseless accusations and the harsh, inhuman living conditions, torture and suppression of evidence. The tragedy and absurdity of the situation in which innocent people found themselves is reflected in every memory. However, the most vivid are the stories about the convicted priest, whose testimony was extracted by torture that he „confessed gang members” (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army / UPA)

and „on the first day of the Easter holidays, he was invited to consecrate products according to tradition” (to the Dahany forest, 5 km from Werchrata) (ibid.: 122); a 17-year-old girl for allegedly sewing and repairing socks for Ukrainian rebels (ibid.: 178–179); a young, pregnant Pole married to a Ukrainian who wanted to wait out deportation to the Ukrainian SSR and stay in Poland (ibid.: 183–184).

The contemporary dimension of the life of the Ukrainian community is revealed by the author in the last three chapters and shows the significant impact left by Operation Vistula. Fear, dispersion among the Polish majority, and a sense of threat slowed down the development of Ukrainianism, making it hostage to the tragic events of the Second World War. It is significant that one of the final parts of the book is dedicated to the visit to Ukraine in 2001 and the-then symbolic acts of apology for past mistakes by Pope John Paul II and Cardinal of the UGCC Lubomyr Husar (ibid.: 194–201). Instead, the last chapter depicts the current situation in Poland with various forms of oppression of the Ukrainian minority, from offensive graffiti on walls to the beating of Ukrainian workers, the destruction of a number of monuments and memorial tablets during 2015–2016, and the attack on a Ukrainian procession in Przemyśl in 2016 and 2017 (ibid.: 207–216).

Vasyl Makhno’s fiction book *Eternal Calendar* (published in 2019) tells the story of the fictional village of Mytnytsia in Podillia from the 18th–21st centuries (the prototype was the village of Bazar, Chortkiv district, Ternopil region) (Makhno 2020). In the third part, the story is dedicated to immigrants from Poland who were resettled in the above-mentioned area in 1945. As the author of the work noted, „...it would be a mistake to bypass the resettlement of Ukrainians from the borderlands. In addition, this is really a family story” (ibid.). However, V. Makhno weaves family history into a broader narrative, i.e. it has an important (but not central) place. This distinguishes this book from the works of authors from the immigrant community, in which the main focus of the plot is a description of the experiences of witnesses of deportation or their descendants. In addition, the *Eternal Calendar* contains a brief background of the village of Romanova Komora (a fictional village on the left bank of the Sian River) and the Mekhamet family (a generalized image built from family traditions, memories, scholarly literature) (ibid.) with fairly realistic stories about the organization of resettlement, conditions and life in a wagon, moving to the destination (Makhno 2019: 413–419).

Not for the first time in Ukrainian literature, the author tells not only the story of Ukrainians deported from Poland but also depicts the families of Poles from Mytnytsia and surrounding villages who are forced to leave their native countries (ibid.: 427–428). It is also significant that the families of resettled Ukrainians



from Poland are settled on a farm which belonged to the Polish Korytowski noble family (ibid.: 458).

The author of the *Eternal Calendar*, in contrast to most memoirs of deportees, or their journalistic investigations, shows two vectors – the resettlement of both Ukrainians and Poles within the framework of the so-called „exchange of territories”. The „human dimension” of this story is the experiences and losses of the deportees on both sides, faith in the possibility of return, and longing for home. In particular, the author talks about the threats received by the Poles from the Podillia village of Mytynysia, and then about the abandoned property and land, the stay at the station and the long wait for the carriages to move, the death of an infant in one of the families (ibid.: 429–430). V. Makhno concludes this chapter by symbolically drawing the attention of readers to Ukrainian deportees who, on the contrary, after arriving at Mytynysia, were nostalgic and dreamed of returning to their native lands in Trans-Curzonian: „How many times did his parents dream of the plain banks of their river...”. (ibid.: 458–459).

In the book, V. Makhno also gives descriptions of the borderlands, which testify to the longevity of the neighbourhood of Ukrainian and Polish settlements: „From Lemko region to the Białystok area, settlements stretched along the sky and rivers – towns no bigger than a walnut, and villages – made of poppy seeds. In the triangle of three towns – Łańcut, Jarosław and Przemyśl – for centuries, from the time of the first censuses and debt books, nut towns rolled and small villages were planted...” (ibid.: 419). The author also incorporates the lives of the families of his heroes into the historical canvas of the region, noting that the inhabitants of Romanova Komora at the beginning of the 20th century went to earn money in Canada and the USA or emigrated forever (ibid.: 421).

The book of art reports by Oleh Kryshchop, *The last Ukrainians in Poland* (2019), depicts the Ukrainian community of the first, but mainly of the second and third generations of those deported as part of Operation Vistula. The eloquent name reflects the numerical decrease in the number of Ukrainians: „70 years after that, only 30,000 call themselves Ukrainians in Poland. The few who still remember the deportation and their children are those who, contrary to official policy, did not assimilate” (Kryshchop 2019: 17). So, the key characters of the stories are people – different generations of Ukrainians in Poland. In eight chapters, divided according to the geographical principle, is the story about the war and deportations, life in new territories after Operation Vistula, the difficulties that Ukrainians experienced in order to preserve their identity, and the problem of assimilation in contemporary realities. The space described by the author is the northwestern terrain of Poland and the almost depopulated space of the

mountain massifs of the Lemko and Boyko regions and Przemyśl, which acts as an expressive landscape that strengthens the emotional component of life stories.

Conversations with the generation of eyewitnesses mainly reflect the past. The heroes tell about the persecution on the eve of the eviction in 1947, oppression by the Poles, hiding, the difficult journey and life afterwards in new territories. These fragments of memories are similar to each other: full of pain and despair, fear of the unknown: „I was 16 years old when we were evicted. They gave us one cart, where we had to collect all our belongings and go. Into the unknown. No one said where we were being taken... They took us for a long time... We found an empty house. A village where there were only our people... And it was scary, and there was nothing to eat. Then we collected and boiled sorrel. It was not our school, not our church, not our language. Only what was in the house... They were also afraid of the Poles, and the Poles were afraid of us.” (ibid.: 34–36).

Instead, the heroes from the second and third generations are those descendants who survived, grew up with a sense of Ukrainianness nurtured by their parents, and ultimately joined the development of the Ukrainian community in one way or another. The stories of these people, scattered all over Poland, are also about: the trauma of parents who survived the eviction or the Jaworzno concentration camp: „Among other things, they were very hungry in Jaworzno. And then, wherever dad went out of the house, even for a few hours..., he always took tea and buns with him” (ibid.: 162); the influence of parents on later life, desire to return to native lands: (says Ivan, who moved to his native village of Volia Romanova after emigrating to Canada, where his father returned back in the 1950s) (ibid.: 101); practising, or else preserving one’s own identity, built on partially idealistic memories of Ukraine: „Our parents taught us Ukrainian, it was our first language. I have already heard Polish from the children I played with. Our parents told us that our Motherland is Ukraine... And where is the Motherland for you?...- Ukraine!... The parents did not know Ukraine, but they never said that they lived in Poland. They said: we are at home” (conversation with Stefania) (ibid.: 165).

Another important plot line that is present in almost all conversations with the children and grandchildren of Ukrainians in Poland is the issue of building one’s own identity, the search for landmarks that would help in the future to create and feel one’s Ukrainianness (ibid.: 215–223). In the end, O. Kryshchyn highlights the problems of generations brought up in Ukrainian traditions, who feel somewhat less pressure for their ethnic origin, but the problem of assimilation appears more acutely before them (ibid.: 166–167).

Literary mapping of the Polish-Ukrainian border area has a long history. The area of compact cohabitants of Ukrainians and Poles before the Second World

War in Poland, and the modern Polish-Ukrainian border, has been the focus of Polish writers since the 1990s. Moreover, this theme has gained popularity in Ukraine, especially actively after 2014. The Revolution of Dignity actualized the issue of Ukrainian identity, democratic transformations in the state, and the establishment of good neighbourliness in internal relations with Poland influenced interest in the region with a common history.

Trans-Curzonian in Ukrainian and Polish fiction is a forgotten and lost pastime of small towns and villages with a measured tempo of life and good-neighbourly relations within the Polish-Ukrainian community. The cataclysms of war, inter-ethnic conflict and forced displacement change the space – a significant part of its inhabitants disappears, and later also the traces that marked their dwelling. This theme opens up to the reader thanks to fiction, collections of art and interviews with former (Ukrainian) and current residents of this region.

The constructed images of Trans-Curzonian in Polish and Ukrainian literature reflect not only the stylistic features of the works, the author's style and approach but also the culture and socio-political context. The borderland terrain described by A. Stasiuk is a timeless space that resists the rapid changes that have taken place in Poland. In other words, the break with socialism and the transition to a capitalist and more democratic way of life. Vasyl Makhn's *Eternal Calendar* presents a collective image of the borderland: small towns and villages that have a long history of common good neighbourliness between Ukrainians and Poles. For this author, the key context is nostalgia, a sentimental connection with the territory where the family comes from.

Collections of art reportages are more critical in terms of genre and outlined problems. The joint Polish-Ukrainian book *Asymmetric Symmetry*, published in 2014, updates the issue of the lives of the Polish and Ukrainian communities in Ukraine and Poland and its perception in the context of establishing good neighbourly relations after the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine. The authors of the collection of reports – Les' Beley, Łukasz Saturchak, considering all the historical contradictions between nations, in their generally positive and empathetic image of the other, demonstrate the generational break in the perception of international, neighbourly relations based on understanding and mutual respect.

The other two publicists, Smoleński Paweł and Oleh Kryštopta, mainly focus on the people of Trans-Curzonian, in particular those representatives of the Ukrainian community (and their descendants) who lived before the deportations of 1944–1946 of Operation Vistula in the border areas. In these reports, land plays a secondary role because the key is people's stories and their emotions, which are clearly present in the text. These journalists' materials show how the space of the borderland changed through the history of the community. The cataclysm of the war destroyed the Polish-Ukrainian

community that represented this area. Ukrainians were deported to the Ukrainian SSR and resettled among the Polish majority in the north and west of Poland. As witnesses of war and deportations, their descendants created an area around them that had a feeling of their own native, local Ukrainian culture, but smaller and more private with the passage of time. After 2014, the number of Ukrainians in Poland increased significantly due to migration from Ukraine, but the assimilation processes were stronger.

The full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine on February 24, 2022 renewed the horror of the effects of war on society. Destroyed cities, front-line casualties and many people sought refuge in relatively peaceful cities. Neighbouring countries, particularly the Republic of Poland, fully felt the presence of refugees from the war and accepted the challenge and continued to help, particularly in the humanitarian sphere.

The analysed fiction books and collections of art reportages, which tell about the changes in the territories and the population after the Second World War, written from the perspective of half a century and a longer period of time, demonstrate the persistent effects of socio-political cataclysms and how societies continue to remember them. Key elements in this post-generational commemoration are mostly negative emotions (fear, pain, despair) and the sentiments behind an idealized past, which form the basis of collective memory.

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