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## ELEMENTS OF THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE REGAINED TERRITORIES IN THE WORKS OF HALINA AUDERSKA AND ZYGMUNT TRZISZKA\*

Every emerging community needs foundation myths – stories about the beginning, which not only convey narrative representations of a certain turning point but also legitimize and stabilize the new order. This article considers the need for a founding story that appeared after the end of World War II, which was the result of geopolitical changes – shifting the state borders of Poland, mass migrations, the need to build life anew in previously unknown conditions – on a territory that remains to be foreign hitherto. The former provinces of the Third Reich joined Poland. Several German regions including Upper and Lower Silesia, Lubusz Land, Western and Central Pomerania, and Warmia and Masuria were parts of the new borders of the country. These areas were called the Recovered Territories (or the Regained Territories, the Western Lands, and the Western and Northern Lands). Polish people were relocated to these areas from the Eastern Borderlands, i.e., areas that were separated from Poland for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). People from central Poland, returnees, and former forced laborers also came here to start a new life. From 1947, as part of the Vistula Action, the Ukrainian population was also resettled to the former German regions. In effect, “a cultural and ethnic mix”<sup>1</sup> was created in the Recovered Territories.

The critical moment that triggered the need to create the founding myth was the year 1945, when the territorial borders of Poland changed. As Joanna Szydłowska states, “[...] the narrativeisation of the fate of the newly formed Occident had to be preceded by a description of the initial state. Here the most important thing was the caesura of 1945 – practically impassable, funding the perspective of assessing the present day”<sup>2</sup>. This “starting state” of the new space (in other words: post-war devastation and destabilization and a sense of alienity and temporariness of the acquired

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<sup>1</sup> B. Halicka, *Polski Dzik Zachód. Przymusowe migracje i kulturowe osuwajanie Nadodrza 1945-1948*, trans. A. Łuczak, Kraków 2015, p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> J. Szydłowska, *Narracje pojtańskiego Okcydentu. Literatura polska wobec pogranicza na przykładzie Warmii i Mazur (1945-1989)*, Olsztyn 2013, p. 356.

territories) meant that the Polish Occident was perceived on the one hand as a “land that has been won” and on the other hand as a place of martyrdom, the territory for which “the blood sacrifice was made as a legitimacy of the rights to the new land”<sup>3</sup>.

The topic of migration and post-war settlement in the Recovered Territories quickly entered literature<sup>4</sup>. Its time frame is 1945-1989, and it was undertaken by Natalia Bukowiecka-Kruszona, Eugeniusz Pauksza, Jerzy Pytlakowski, Jan Wilczek, and Jan Brzoza, among others in the second half of the 1940s. In the following decades, Anna Kowalska, Igor Newerly, Henryk Panas, Tadeusza Mikołajek, Dionizy Sidorowski, Henryk Worcell, Janusz Olczak, Zygmunt Trziszka, Halina Auderska, Józef Hen, Zdzisław Morawski and Stanisław Srokowski joined the group of writers associated with the Western and Northern Lands.

In this article, the selected works of only two writers, namely, Zygmunt Trziszka and Halina Auderska, will be analyzed. The article is intended to be only a sketch, an introduction to the issue, therefore the presence of mythological tradition in the narratives of Recovered Territories I exemplify only on these two examples mentioned above. However, the choice of works by these authors is not accidental. In the prose of Trziszka, inspirations of the ancient tradition are clearly visible, and this tradition became the matrix of the story of the Regained Territories. By contrast, the novels of Auderska present a non-affirmative vision of migration experience. One can point to the diversity of migration experience in the example of these two strategies for creating the mythology of the Recovered Territories. However, it is not my aim to make a detailed analysis of the works of these authors. However, I am going to point out the presence in their works of the mythological tradition that was part of the founding mythology of the Recovered Territories.

The settlement trend in literature was basically from the beginning associated with the cultural policy of the Polish People's Republic, and literature was one of the tools for constructing the founding story of these “recovered” lands. Due to its social and political function, this literary trend was subject to certain censorship restrictions, according to which the Regained Territories were to be represented as a land of prosperity and happiness, where life can be started from the beginning, revived after the trauma of war experiences. Consequently, an elementary story (and synonymous: base, founding, and foundation story<sup>5</sup>) was to be created that would provide specific narrative patterns relevant to explaining uncertain, unstable social realities.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> See B. Bakula, *Między wygnaniem a kolonizacją. O kilku odmianach polskiej powieści migracyjnej w XX wieku*, [in:] *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. H. Gosk, Kraków 2012.

<sup>5</sup> These synonyms are mentioned by Andrzej Zawada, see: A. Zawada, *Pochwała prowincji*, Wrocław 2009, p. 32.

The prose about the Regained Territories was eager to draw on the description of the initial situation recorded in the literary tradition. The source for such a narrative turned out to be the ancient tradition, among others, and threads related to travel and space were adapted from this prose. Moreover, antique motifs in the post-war migration literature arose with such frequency that they could even be considered a characteristic feature of the entire literature about the Western Lands. The use of well-recognized narrative patterns in culture allowed for describing a new, emerging social reality.

According to the cultural policy of the Polish People's Republic, the literary representations of the Regained Territories were to show, above all, an optimistic vision of settling new territories. The vision of a happy place is connected with the necessity of a dangerous trip, which in effect is crowned with success-finding your place in occidental realities. A symptomatic example of the articulation of migration experience is the reference to the history of Odysseus in Polish post-war prose. The Homeric tale was transferred to the migration literature by Zygmunt Trziszka, the author of a collection of autobiographical and essay sketches entitled *Podróże do mojej Itaki* [*Travels to my Ithaca*]. By using the title of the entire collection and that of the first chapter (*Początek Odysei* [*The Beginnings of the Odyssey*]), the author gives the reader a clear interpretation hint and makes a clear reference to the ancient odyssey. Despite numerous references in the stories of Trziszka to childhood years spent in Weldzierz in the former Stanisławów Province, the author states that the abandoned land of childhood did not become his Ithaca. His real home is "Ithaca of Noteć ["Itaka Notecka"], i.e., areas around Gorzów Wielkopolski and Noteć River:

The majeure forces decided that the "Eastern Borderlands" did not become my Itaka [...]. The Gorzów region, and later Lubusz Land in general, was the land of early childhood that programmed me in this way [...]. In what came out of my pen, there is always an attempt at an odyssey and reference to Ithaca of Noteć, because only there I see the mainland<sup>6</sup>.

Paying attention to the multifunctionality of the odyssey motif in settlement works is worth it. In this myth, a certain anthropological pattern of getting to know oneself and the world, which is accompanied by the topos of the journey into the unknown, in a place outside the area of previous experience; the topos of the wandering, over which the traveler has no control, finally – the topos of traveling home and the obstacles that accompany it. The story of Odysseus transposed into the literature about the Regained Territories can be read not only in an individual but also in a collective perspective: as a reference to the historical process, and with it to the Piast myth. Returning home does not mean a real home, but the territory which was to be the cradle of Polish statehood. The figure of Odysseus is a symbolic projection of a com-

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<sup>6</sup> Z. Trziszka, *Podróże do mojej Itaki*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 8-9.

munity in which processes and development lines of societies, migrations, assimilation, divisions, and the intergenerational transmission of experiences are included.

The Western Odyssey is the story of the individual and the entire society to which this individual belongs. It is a society of displaced people who are ultimately to take root in a new place by developing it. However, this process is not immediate, and it requires time, effort, and the fight against adversity. This is another resemblance to the story of Odysseus, who must first experience failures and dangers to “come out of the final humiliation in a triumph of bravery and steadfast will”<sup>7</sup>. The myth about the journey of Odysseus in the settlement literature “is to emphasize the courage of those who set off into the unknown, and give time, but also the place (new Ithaca) a unique dimension”<sup>8</sup>.

In a similar way, you can read a comparison of settlers to Argonauts, which Trziszka uses in the *Podróże do mojej Itaki*. His Argonauts settlers living around Głogów are looking for a golden fleece, which can literally mean copper, in which these areas abound. However, it is not just a precious metal, that is, literally and materially understood wealth, but it is also a symbolic taming of the place, rooting, building social bonds, and collective identity of migrants. “Just like in the Argonauts legend, a time of trial came for the settlers. It was necessary, though shallow, to take root, overcome the most difficult obstacles, and then think about looking for the ore whose existence was announced”<sup>9</sup>. In the capture of the golden fleece, meaning the wealth of the land full in copper, and simply settling in, the post-war Argonauts were hindered by numerous obstacles:

In the Głogów region, this mythical image receives a new incarnation [...] There was nothing to put into the mouth. There were only two cows in the village [...] It all had the aftertaste of the truest trip to Kolhida. The events turned into legends. And although there is a lot of pathos in compared to the Greek heroes, you have to agree with it that these were heroic times, even though so ordinary times<sup>10</sup>.

It is not without reason that these two mythological motives – the journey and expedition of Odysseus to Kolhida – were used in narratives about settlement in the Regained Territories. The stories of Odysseus and Argonauts are tales of travel and search. Northop Frye states that the narrative of search is a central literature myth in its narrative aspect. More important, however, is the semantic aspect of the mytho-

<sup>7</sup> J. Parandowski, *Wstęp*, [in:] Homer, *Odyseja*, przeł. J. Parandowski, Z. Parandowski, R. Szczepkowska, Warszawa 1998, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> M. Mikołajczak, „Szli na Zachód osadnicy...” *Rola metaforyki przestrzennej w tworzeniu mitologii Ziemi Lubuskiej*, [in:] *Od poetyki przestrzeni do geopoetyki*, ed. E. Konończuk, E. Sidoruk, Białystok 2012, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20, 23.

logical story about the search: "In the semantic aspect – the central myth of art must be a vision of the goal of social effort, an unblemished world of fulfilled desires, and a free human society"<sup>11</sup>. This social effort in the foundation literature of the Western and Northern Lands is the effort not only to reach the "promised" place but also the problems of developing this place and building it almost from the foundations, the result of which is "this unblemished world of fulfilled desires".

We can indicate pairs of opposing and complementary topos in the literature on the Regained Territories<sup>12</sup>. On the one hand, motives subordinated to the topos of a place of happiness (not only Itaka but also the Promised Land, Eden, and Arcadia) and, on the other hand, those that fit into the topos of the cursed place (Tower of Babel, barren land, and cursed place: "devil's land"<sup>13</sup>) would emerge. The images belonging to the first of these groups were to become the central element of the mythology of the Regained Territories, but the settlement literature also implements topos *locus horridus*. We can find descriptions far from the affirmative attitude to the new living space in the narratives of the Western Lands, changing the supposed settlement arcadia into "negated arcadia"<sup>14</sup> or "unwanted places"<sup>15</sup>.

According to Joanna Szydłowska, using the topic of *Ulitma Thule* in the Recovered Territories literature as *locus horridus* and as *locus amoenus* has two ways. This topos meaning the mythical end of the world, a place located at the edge of the map<sup>16</sup>. Associations with the end of the world and the "farthest island" result from the peripheral location of the incorporated territories from their border nature. The researcher interprets occidental Warmian and Masurian works precisely through the prism of the borderland. Furthermore, Hanna Gosk and Małgorzata Mikołajczak<sup>17</sup> describe settlement anti-arcadia as a non-place. It is a term derived from the anthropological concept by Marc Augé<sup>18</sup>. Gosk also analyzes selected interpretative cases: it is a novel *Wrastanie* [Ingrown] by Eugeniusz Pauksza and collections of stories by Henryk Wor-

<sup>11</sup> N. Frye, *Archetypy literatury*, trans. A. Bejska, [in:] *Współczesna teoria badań literackich za granicą*, ed. H. Markiewicz, vol. 2, Warszawa 1976, p. 318.

<sup>12</sup> J. Abramowska, *Topos i niektóre miejsca wspólne badań literackich*, [in:] *Problemy teorii literatury*, series no. 3, ed. H. Markiewicz, Wrocław 1988, p. 142.

<sup>13</sup> See M. Mikołajczak, *Czarcia kraina. O lubuskim kontr-mieście tożsamościowym*, [in:] *(P)o zabarach, (p)o wojnie, (p)o PRL. Polski dyskurs postzależnościowy dawniej i dziś*, ed. H. Gosk, E. Kraskowska, Kraków 2013.

<sup>14</sup> M. Mikołajczak, *Nie-miejsce pod arkadyjskim szyldem*, „Teksty Drugie” 2013, no 3, p. 255.

<sup>15</sup> A. Zielińska, *Miejsca niechciane*, „Lamus” 2011, no 1, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> J. Szydłowska, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>17</sup> See M. Mikołajczak, *Nie-miejsce...*; H. Gosk, *Nie-mieszkańcy nie-miejsca. O powojennym osadzeniu się „gdzies” ludzie „skądś”*, [in:] *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. H. Gosk, Kraków 2012.

<sup>18</sup> M. Augé, *Nie-miejsce. Wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności*, trans. R. Chymkowski, Warszawa 2010.

cell: *Najtrudniejszy język świata* [*The most difficult language in the world*] and *Parafianie* [*Parishioners*]. The researcher states for Augé that:

[...] non-place, unlike places that have gained their shape due to the population of their incumbents, is associated with moving entities, various types of nomads, including migrants, and its elements turn out to be objects of knowledge sometimes requiring instructions for use and for understanding<sup>19</sup>.

Instructions for understanding the new territories were given to the settlers by using, for example, slogans such as the Piast lands or recovered lands, but the post-German space for the settlers was undiscovered, unknown, and “devoid of map and guide”<sup>20</sup>. Gosk extends the initial concept of non-places, adding non-residents to it, that is, “people in a suspended stadium, already deprived of their former place and not yet grown into new ones, which in the meantime are non-place for them”. Therefore, the Regained Territories are “no man’s space”<sup>21</sup>, which has no recognizable meanings and symbolic identity.

We should note that the validity of joining the former eastern borders of the Third Reich to Poland was not officially recognized in the international forum until 1990 (signing of the Polish-German border treaty). Thus, for decades, the areas of the western Polish-German border were a space with unstable legal and territorial status. This condition caused a sense of temporariness, uncertainty, and instability among the settlers, which Paukšta called in his novel *Wrastanie* “suitcase moods”<sup>22</sup>. Arrival to the Western Lands for many people meant disappointment because the reality did not correspond to the vision of a happy place that promised the leadership of the Polish People’s Republic: “The reality that some settlers found upon arrival had to be all the more shocking because its not only did not fulfill the propaganda-hoped hopes for a better and easier life, but often represented their complete opposite”<sup>23</sup>.

Gosk focuses on non-place as an area without a “manual”, while Mikołajczak considers its non-relational and non-identity character as the most important feature of non-place in the context of settlement narratives. In addition, Augé writes about such features of non-place: “If a place can be defined as identity, relational and historical, then a space that cannot be defined as identity, neither relational nor historical, defines non-place”<sup>24</sup>. Given such characteristics of non-place, the literary Arcadia of the Regained Territories can be considered a product of a root strategy. As such, it will

<sup>19</sup> H. Gosk, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 195.

<sup>22</sup> E. Paukšta, *Wrastanie*, Poznań 1986, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> B. Halicka, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>24</sup> M. Augé, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

be just a mask, under which a makeshift and transitive space exists. "Arcadia was to act as a spiritual prosthesis, and at the same time relieve the wounding analyst, perform a root role [...] and create the illusion of being in a space full of happiness"<sup>25</sup>.

Fatalistically interpreted space causes problems with the identity of settlers, such as the novel *Babie lato* [*Summertime*] by Halina Auderska (the book is a continuation of the earlier *Ptasi gościniec* [*Bird Road*]). According to Bogusław Bakula, Auderska's work should be included in the veteran-repatriation trend: the author's dialogue is inscribed in the didactic thesis on the importance of post-war changes guaranteed by the Soviet Union. At the same time, it ignores the martyrdom experience of Poles deported to the East<sup>26</sup>. However, despite such a didactic (ideological) profile, elements of the counter-myth can also be seen in *Babie Lato*. The curse of the new land is revealed in many statements by the first-person narrator, Szymon Drozd. Foreignness of the Regained Territories evokes negative emotions – fear and the desire to escape motivated by it: "[...] I felt nothing, only stink and fear. And they thought one thing: how to get away from there? Why don't we, damn it, to these German wrecks, to German equipment"<sup>27</sup>. Auderska redefines the motifs present in the Western Lands literature. For instance, the Odra River was exhibited in the settlement literature mainly as a border river recognized as a strategic point for the defense of the country, as a new western bulwark, and in turn the motif of land as a fertile arable field, had the symbolic meaning of the host mother (for example, in the novel *Ziemia* [*The Land*] by Jan Brzoza<sup>28</sup>). Meanwhile, these motives in *Babie lato* acquire negative qualities and are marked by death and decay. Odra River is "a mortuary, river cemetery. Arable fields are also cemeteries: "Why do I need wheat fields on which tanks grow and all ironwork, for rye grew out of corpses?"<sup>29</sup>. Settlement "arcadia" is essentially "soil contaminated with blood"<sup>30</sup>, destroyed by war, in chaos, and unfavorable to adaptation processes. Moreover, the presence of the traces of displaced Germans, which increased the feeling of strangeness, did not help settling, and Polish settlers had to live among German landscapes, furniture, and everyday objects. Karolina Kuszyk in a report on the German material heritage in the Western Territories writes that the settlers "were subject to reification, moved from place to place as an item"<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> M. Mikołajczak, *Nie-miejsce pod arkadyjskim szyldem...*, p. 255.

<sup>26</sup> B. Bakula, *Między wygnaniem a kolonizacją. O kilku odmianach polskiej powieści migracyjnej w XX wieku (na skromnym tle porównawczym)*, [in:] *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. H. Gosk, Kraków 2012, p. 184.

<sup>27</sup> H. Auderska, *Babie lato*, Warszawa 1976, p. 256.

<sup>28</sup> J. Brzoza, *Ziemia*, Katowice 1981.

<sup>29</sup> H. Auderska, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 316.

<sup>31</sup> K. Kuszyk, *Poniemieckie*, Wołowiec 2019, p. 128.

In Auderska's novels, only the second generation of settlers – the children of main character Szymon Drozd – is able to settle on the border. This land is a place of struggle and pain for pioneers. Anti-arcadia was not a negation of the foundation story of the Recovered Territories, but on the contrary – one of its elements, facilitating adaptation, and this is because anti-arcadia could articulate an authentic migration experience: not only with accompanying hope, but also fear, uncertainty, temporariness, feeling lost in a foreign space.

Although numerous differences exist between the prose of Trziszka and Auderska, both of them tend to mythologize the migration experience. Myth can express the need for rooting, an attempt to find a safe place inhabited by a community with its own identity. The need for the founding story therefore resulted not only from the need to legitimize the post-war territorial shape of the country but also from the desire to overcome post-war and post-migration chaos. The foundation narratives of the Regained Territories were to some extent the results of state propaganda, but they did not arise solely from cultural policy inspiration. They also expressed the psychological need of settlers. Andrzej Zawada, writing about the post-war residents of Wrocław, notes that “[...] the foundation story appeared then as an internal and spontaneous postulate of the inhabitants”<sup>32</sup>. The founder's narrative of the Regained Territories can be treated as both an ideological project and as an expression of the existential, historical and cultural experience of post-war migrants.

The issue of the literary mythology of the Recovered Territories is mentioned in this article. Selected works by Zygmunt Trziszka and Halina Auderska were subjected to a concise analysis, although of course the topic discussed here also applies to texts by other authors (among others Eugeniusz Paukšta, Henryk Worcell, Stanisław Srokowski or Jan Brzoza). Due to the deliberate limitation of the research material, the article is only an introductory sketch. Perhaps, however, it will become a contribution to further, more extensive research.

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<sup>32</sup> A. Zawada, *op. cit.*, p. 32.



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#### ELEMENTS OF THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE REGAINED TERRITORIES IN THE WORKS OF HALINA AUDERSKA AND ZYGMUNT TRZISZKA

##### S u m m a r y

The subject of the article is literature on the Regained Territories – areas annexed to Poland in 1945 as a result of a change in the territorial borders of the country. This literature, created in 1945-1989, was both the result of political demand and an expression of migration experience. Only works of selected authors: Zygmunt Trziszka and Halina Auderska were analyzed. The ways of constructing the mythology of the Regained Territories were pointed out. They include, for example, the use of culture-motifs and topos related to space and travel (e.g. the theme of Odysseus's journey and expedition to the golden fleece in Trziszka's prose), as well as the negative reinterpretation of settlement threads (elements of anti-arcadia in Auderska's novels). Based on the analysis of literary material, the character of narrative about the Recovered Territories was pointed out – its political, foundation, mythological and psychological aspects.

**Keywords:** the Regained Territories, migration, Polish literature, mythology, literary tradition

#### ELEMENTY MITOLOGII TZW. ZIEM ODZYSKANYCH W UTWORACH HALINY AUDERSKIEJ I ZYGMUNTA TRZISZKI

##### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Tematem artykułu jest literatura dotycząca Ziem Odzyskanych – terenów przyłączonych do Polski w 1945 roku w wyniku zmiany granic terytorialnych kraju. Literatura ta, powstająca w latach 1945-1989, była zarówno wynikiem zapotrzebowania politycznego, jak też wyrazem doświadczenia migracyjnego. Analizie poddano tylko utwory wybranych autorów: Zygmunta Trziszki oraz Haliny Auderskiej. Wskazano na sposoby konstruowania mitologii Ziem Odzyskanych. Do nich należy na przykład wykorzystywanie utrwalonych w kulturze motywów i toposów związanych z przestrzenią i podróżą (m.in. mo-

tyw podróży Odyseusza i wyprawy po złote runo w prozie Trziszki), a także negatywna reinterpretacja wątków osadniczych (elementy antyarkadii w powieściach Auderskiej). Na podstawie analizy materiału literackiego wskazano na wieloaspektowość narracji o osadnictwie na Ziemiach Odzyskanych – na ich aspekty polityczne, fundacyjne, mitologiczne oraz psychologiczne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** tzw. Ziemie Odzyskane, literatura osadnicza, mitologia, migracje, tradycja literacka