

**JUAN MANUEL MARCOS'S NOVEL „GUNTER'S WINTER“
IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF POST-MODERNISM OF THE XXTH CENTURY**

MYKOLA KHOROSHKOV

IRYNA MELNYCHUK

ELENA PEDCHENKO

Universidad Estatal de Mariupol

Latin American literature has been perceived by many readers up to the present day mostly as an exotic Creole writing of former European colonies. In the best possible case, the reader might be able to name Marcos, Borges or Cortázar recalling the definition of "magical realism". At this point the introspection of the ordinary reader, usually referred to as the "mass" reader, of Latin America literature is actually exhausted while the literary-critical scientific discourse limits itself to mostly sporadic studies of the creativity of the most famous representatives of Latin American literature. These are mainly Nobel laureates such as Gabriel García Márquez, Miguel Angel Asturias, Mario Vargas Llosa, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, whose most important achievements are translated if not in Ukrainian at least in Russian. The above mentioned authors represent the culture of the mostly well-known South American countries – Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, Chile, Mexico. Meanwhile we have really little understanding of, for example, the literature of Paraguay. Among the reasons for this are its geographic location (the country is located inside the continent and is deprived of access to the ocean, which has led to certain isolation even within the continent), the political situation (military dictatorship, political isolation), its cultural remoteness (for the reader, brought up with the Europe-centered literary model, understanding the culture of Paraguay culture as well as that of other Latin American countries requires additional efforts and comments), and, finally, the actual absence of Ukrainian translations.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the publication in Ukrainian of the novel of the well-known Paraguayan scientist, teacher, social activist and writer Juan Manuel Marcos "Gunter's Winter" (the first time published in Spanish in 1987, the Ukrainian translation was published only in 2014) remained without attention both on the part of the readers, and of the critics. The existence of some sporadic publications concerning the Ukrainian translation of this work on the Internet cannot compensate for the absence of a thorough critical review of the text. So, the proposed article is the first attempt for a scientific and critical reading of the novel

"Gunter's Winter" in the context of postmodern culture of the twentieth century, as well as in the context of Spanish-language literature of Latin America.

Both the personal destiny of the author (a political dissident, exile, emigrant) and the history of the literature of whole South America could be extrapolated from the clear juxtaposition of cultures (elements of the indigenous culture of ancient Paraguay strangely integrate into modern Spanish and American cultural world), from the interaction of Latin American poetry with the traditions of European intellectual prose of the twentieth century, from the clear intertextuality, and from the style and narrative experimentation in the novel. Latin American literature has passed through various stages of dynamic development during the last century, from its birth to the mastering of the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism and to creating its own artistic, stylistic and aesthetic profile. This evolution of Latin America literature is customary expressed with the terms "boom" and "post-boom". We note that these terms do not carry any deep semantics, which would define the essence of the artistic phenomenon; but are the definite indicator of the burst of increasing attention to literature and culture of practically very little-known continent on the part of Europe and the United States. The literature of the "boom" era (chronologically, the 60 – 70s of the last century) is exemplified in the work of authors such as Miguel Angel Asturias, Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and others. This is the period of formation of the modern literature of Latin America, the most characteristic features of which are the use of elements of a mythological worldview (the mythology of the indigenous peoples of the continent has become the cornerstone of the outlook and a marker of cultural identity), accumulation of cultural codes of the ancient pre-Columbian epoch with Spanish-Portuguese and even African influences, as well as various forms of religious belief (primitive religious cults are seamlessly integrated into the Catholicism of the Spanish conquerors), the nonlinearity of artistic time, the complication of the plot-compositional construction of works, the use of different narrative models, the lack of clear boundaries between the fantastic and reality, etc. The uniqueness of artistic expression of South America countries is rooted in, so to say, the geography and history of the region. Oksana Dacun's analysis of peculiarities of Latin American literature in general, and of Miguel Angel Asturias's creativity in particular is quite suitable on this occasion: "Latin America is a continent of anachronisms, the territory where the modern coexists with the past, the civilization with practically primitive forms of social organization and way of life" [1, p.3].

Thus, the term "magical realism", which has been attached to the literature of the era of "boom", surprisingly accurately describes its poetics, aesthetics, stylistic options, and, what is most important, the desire to reconstruct, to assert an own identity. It expresses, in fact, the search for special Latin American cultural identity, which has been created on the basis of a synthesis of myths, legends, history, and the culture of the indigenous peoples of pre-Columbian America to the present. In

the end, the literature of the "boom" has managed to perform a powerful cultural mission – it has become a way of presenting Latin American art of the word as part of the civilized world, its proper legitimization. The American researcher Donald Leslie Shaw has been among the first critics who clearly grounded this function in his book "The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction": "...the Boom had come to be a power-system legitimizing certain kinds of writing (and reading)..." [2, p.173].

The period since the 1980s, usually described as the second wave of the popularity of Latin American literature ("post-boom"), is associated with the names of José Donoso (Chile, referred to the period of "boom" as well), Manuel Puig (Argentina), Severo Sarduy (Cuba), Isabel Allende (Chile), Luisa Valenzuela (Argentina), Antonio Skármeta (Chile), Rosario Ferre (Puerto Rico), Juan Manuel Marcos (Paraguay). Despite the differences in individual stylistic manner these writers have in common a kind of return to the aesthetics and poetics of realism (this line was quite accurately defined by another Argentinean novelist Mempo Giardinelli as: "return to "realismo poetico" and to colloquialism" [2, p. 10]). In addition, the literature of the "post-boom" has recorded in itself the experience of political emigration (both internal and external, which was connected with the military dictatorships in many countries of South America and the persecution of dissidents), and therefore the spirit of pessimism, despair, pointed experience of being, aloofness from society, the rejection of any ideology (which, incidentally, is typical of the postmodern era) and at the same time a metaphysical optimism, love for life in all its manifestations. The life and career of Juan Manuel Marcos illustrates well the fundamental principles of the prose of this period. Having suffered from political persecution and imprisonment (1973 – 1987), the author was forced to leave his motherland, which influenced the formation of his attitudes and beliefs and was embodied in the novel "Gunter's Winter". The novel can hardly be called autobiographical (actually, the author did not aim to write an autobiography), but it is easy to recognize in the plot the personal existential experience of the writer, worried for the fate of his country and the destiny of a man, who has been left alone by the system.

The literary space of the novel is extremely broad: a collective outlook and a sense of loneliness, myth-thinking and high intellectualism, despair on the verge of hopelessness and historical optimism paradoxically coexist in it.

The author writes in a relaxed manner, building a chaotic composition of the novel, marked by the arbitrary alternation and combination of temporal and spatial planes. It is safe to say that the chaotic composition of the artistic structure of the novel is similar to South American society – deformed, nervous, and immature. The plot interactions in the novel are greatly weakened, thus the novel splits into more or less independent pictures-episodes, among which we can find the lyric, epic, documentary, philosophical layers. Such multi-stylistics and accumulation of artistic fabric of the work is aimed to reflect the multiculturalism and multiple aspects of life in Paraguay during the XIX–XX centuries. The fact that the philosophical task of the novelist is providing a reflection on the past, the present and the future

of Paraguay turns out to be obvious. The formation of a complex multi-semantic textual field occurs primarily thanks to the interaction of intellectual and cultural achievements. Literary interaction of cultural achievements is an individual intellectual activity of the author and the reader. It is often figuratively organized and operates on objects, images, ideas, styles, thoughts that compose the cultural heritage of players and are clearly reproduced in their imagination. The game is carried out within certain limits of time and space, of the cultural-historical era, genre, and the content of literary work.

In the process of the literary reflexive game with cultural heritage the mechanism of reflecting the original artwork from one cultural environment to another is activated. In the text the author and the reader code and decode spiritual and ideological determinants of philosophical and aesthetic doctrines of a particular literary trend or creative method. As a result of reflexive modeling of cultural heritage, a constant feature of certain source material, which causes associative and symbolic image in the reader's mind, is being moved to a new level of semantic development.

A kind of reflexive game can also be observed within the content, form, composition, system of images, ways of presenting artistic material, and expressive means. The plurality of mirror reflections can be noticed in the combination of multiple images in one figure and provides a multi-layered textual organization.

This game can be seen on an onomastic level when through the onym (a personal name of a character of the work) a reference to Federico García Lorca's poetic world takes place.

Gunter's niece's name is Soledad Montoya – just like name of the beauty-Gypsy from "Ballad of the Black Pain"; here we can notice an interesting word-play: "Soledad" in Spanish means not only a woman's name but the word "longing", "loneliness". Black melancholy is the image of Gypsy-woman who lost her love. In his childhood Lorca had heard the legend of the Gypsy Soledad Montoya, who had died after a separation as if was a disease. Here, however, the myth takes on a new meaning: Soledad Montoya represents Andalusia's melancholy, pain, and sorrow almost on the cosmic level. She becomes the second "self" of the lyric hero, his own sense of loneliness and abandonment.

The image of Soledad's friend Veronica Sarriá-Quiroga is associated with the heroine of another work of "Gypsy Ballads". The poem "Somnambulist Ballad" tells about a dead girl and about the love for her of two men who died: *Green, as I love you, greenly. / The Green wind, the branches and green. // The dark ship on the sea / and the horse on the mountain. // With her waist that's made of shadow / dreaming on the veranda high, // green the flesh, and the green tresses, / with eyes of frozen silver.* The green color here represents the quintessence of loss, lost love, which is inevitably drowning in the past.

Thus, the novel is thoroughly penetrated by Lorca's discourse of love and death, in fact love-in-death. Lorca's love is a natural force, unmanaged and beyond human

understanding: neither falling in love nor falling out of love depend on human will. We are all equal in our suffering because of love. Garcia Lorca said: "In every other country death is an ending. It appears and they close the curtains. Not in Spain. In Spain they open them. Many Spaniards live indoors till the day they die and are carried into the sun. [...] but a country where what is most important of all finds its ultimate metallic value in death" [4, p. 11].

The love of Soledad and Veronica is bound in space, where rules and not freedom matter: it is criminal, exiled and humiliated, but eternal and invincible in the poems of the young poetess. Soledad's death is just her beginning, which is testified by the phantasmagoric scene at the end of the work, where Soledad is presented as an Indian seer and the chief of the ka'aiguá-guaraní tribe: "You shall not allow a sorceress to live! comes the Governor's discordant squawk" [3, p. 194]. In her life-in-death, she embodies the indomitable desire for Freedom of her people, indestructible freedom of those who went in search of the Land-without-Evil, those who died for their country in the campaigns against tyranny.

The existential discourse of the work is formed through numerous allusions to works of J.-P. Sartre, A. Camus, C. Pavese, etc. Man is depicted as being burdened by his own existence, a bearer of inner loneliness and fear of reality. Life is meaningless, social activity is barren, and morality is weak. There is no God in the world, no ideals, only existence, destiny, to which men stoically and unquestioningly obey. Existence is a problem that must be accepted because the human mind is unable to cope with the hostility of being: every human is doomed to absolute loneliness; no one is able to share his existence. The fact of having proclaimed the absurdity of human existence is also a characteristic one, as existentialism for the first time openly includes "death" as an argument for the doom of men and their supposed exclusiveness.

And so in a constant race, trial to grasp, to hold, to realize the meaning of own existence is Eliza Gunter. The underlined eroticism, irrepressible life energy, sharp mind and freedom do not save Eliza from emptiness: flashing cities, apartments, lovers turns into an endless series, a vicious circle. With the help of reflexive modeling the author opens the semantic area of Jean-Paul Sartre's novel "Nausea". Similarly to Antoine Roquentin Eliza falls under the power of nausea. Nausea in Sartre's novel is a solid metaphor for the fear and loneliness of existence, it is the search for own "self" and for some essence in life, the overcoming of self-loathing. In the same way as Antoine Roquentin explores the life of ugly "Don Juan" Marquis de Rollebon from the era of Marie-Antoinette, Eliza suddenly becomes interested in the life of the Irish prostitute Eliza Lynch, the mistress of Francisco Solano López (here, another reflection can be observed: Eliza has Irish roots, her full name is Eliza Lynch Gunter). Through the onyms of Francisco Solano López and Eusebio Ayala a reference to the historical past of Paraguay takes place, namely its biggest and most bloody wars Paraguayan and Chaco. The dictator López was the commander-in-chief during the Paraguayan war in which the country suffered

many victims and lost half of its territory. Eusebio Ayala was the liberal President, who led the country during the Chaco war and returned to his nation the territory the size of California, and died, in spite of all, in exile.

Through the prism of Soledad's death Gunter and Eliza find the lost meaning of life and their own roots, they find their own "selves". Eliza has a revelation in the Pantheon, where she views the graves of the heroes buried there: "Lopez died at the forefront of his exhausted army, composed after five years of struggle against the most powerful country of mainly children and women, dressed in tigers. *"I perish with my country!* He had cried, just before the coup de grace, and his call seemed still to ring in those mute chill walls of stone" [3, p.183].

The author also gives a kind of onomastic twin to Eliza's husband, the World Bank President Francisco Javier Gunter. This "twin" is General Francisco Javier González, who committed suicide, being unable to bear the shame and guilt before Soledad's family to whom he promised that she would be released unharmed.

The tragedy of Euripides 'Oresteia' is also reflected in the work and has the effect of a double mirror: "Oresteia" – "Flies" by J-P. Sartre (the play that was not staged at the college-leaving party because of the Pro-Communist views of the author) – "Mourning Becomes Electra" by

E. O'Neill (the play which was put on the stage by Toto Azuaga; the main role, the role of Electra-Lavinia plays Veronica). The parts of the "Oresteia" and "Mourning..." correspond as follows:

1. "Agamemnon" – "Return home";
2. "Choephoroi" – "Persecuted";
3. "Eumenidas" – "Obsessed".

The protagonists interpret their roles, wearing authentic Indian masks, so that, in the words of Toto Azuaga they "cease to be themselves but to become themselves." Life stages its play for all the heroes backwards: 1. "Obsessed" (the story of the passionate love of Veronica Sarria-Cirogi and Soledad Sanarbiya Gunter); 2. "Persecuted" (the arrest and torture of her friends); 3. "Return home" (the understanding of the tragedy and greatness of Soledad Montoya's love-in-death, the return of Eliza and Gunter to their lost roots and the way they "cease to be themselves", rejecting their own past, to "become themselves" after returning to their motherland, having had it in a new meaning: "Life in his country was hard but happy. Eliza planted a turquoise lapacho at his gravesite, and stayed south to watch the sprouting of its wings" [3, p.198]).

The masks of jaguars (tigers), given to Toto's actors are not accidental: in such way the ancient myth is interwoven with the national myth of the heavenly Jaguar (or blue tiger). We learn about it for the first time from Azuaga's lecture, read for students of the University of Oklahoma, that introduces the reader to the highly original culture of Tupí-Guaraní.

"That world will be destroyed by fire and a "great celestial jaguar, leaving the Guaraní Indians as sole survivors" – says Toto in his lecture [3, p.6]. If we trace

how and when an image of a Jaguar appears in the novel, it becomes clear to the reader that this deity represents the power and desire for freedom, the land-without-evil, and that the author is positioning this myth as fundamental. Several times the novel refers to the final battle with the Triple Alliance of the Paraguayan army, which consisted mainly of women and children, dressed in costumes of Jaguar. This event, despite the view of historical science, in Juan Manuel Marcos's text is presented as an epic past event. Mask of jaguars become the symbol of self-discovery for students in the final play. The killer of the odious Larraín, dressed as a Jaguar, appears as a heavenly retribution. Soledad is accused because of her ability to turn into a Jaguar, she is considered to be the heir of the ancient knowledge of Guaraní's shamans, that's why her fantastic appearance in the body of the centaur with the head of the Jaguar is seen as the realization of the ancient myth – the overthrow of the odious regime and the possibility of realization of the dream of the land-without-evil.

The image of the history of Paraguay, which we see in Azuaga's lecture, in the memories of the heroes of the novel about the conquest of South America, about the war with the Triple Alliance and about Chaco war and World War II, as well as the image of family and intimate relationships of the characters are united in a common mythologeme of the nation's self-consciousness, its past, present and future.

A special role in this process plays self-citation, which is usually considered as a phenomenon of intertextuality of the work. And so the question arises of whether one can engage oneself in debate or dialogue, is it possible to refer the reader to himself? The novel reveals different manifestations of self-citation. Our attention focuses on quotes from Juan Manuel Marcos's poems. At the beginning of the second part, we read: "Why do the hours bear the color of fall? Who has dealt the cards for this harsh and bitterly long day? My lips do not know what words, kisses, and agonies await them, and yet they sing. Here is my voice, enemy of tyrants, friend of grapes, innocence, and life. These customary words. Use them. Grasp them in your fist" [3, p.57]. These are Soledad's verses written on notebook sheet, but from the commentary, the reader learns that this is an extract from a poem by the author with the symbolic name "My voice". Further on the reader faces again such a technique of appropriation of the text of the author's poems by the hero of the novel. Thus, the right to use simple words, to keep them firmly in hand, can be perceived by the reader in a split value, both as Soledad's call and as the author's permission to use his word, now his voice will be their voice.

The appearance of poems by Juan Manuel Marcos in the text is determined by the status of the characters and corresponds to the course of events. The poem "Schoolgirl" conveys the condition of the college student, her text is included in the text of the novel, when Azuaga meets Soledad Montoya. The story of the ordinary life of a schoolgirl: "Yet her eyes hover serenely toward the window as if considering hypotheses and parallelograms, while the teacher watches unsuspecting. She knows the technique well. The notebook, in its fashion, replaces memory and writes the

exam. But this form of cheating, this art learned in the harsh apprenticeship of school, is not without its difficulties, its risks of zero, or humiliation" [3, p.61], is adjacent to the quote from "Poems about freedom" about the spy-informer, the obligatory character of all dictatorships, which arises as a threat to the sky in her eyes. Too often the author uses self-citation in the third part of the novel: "Elegy to Victor Jara", "Song of victory", "Poem of requests," "Julio Iglesias", "Ancient blood", "Poem about freedom", "Handcuffs", "Distance", "Exile" – this is the sequence in which the poems occur in the text, and some of them even more than once. The events are fully consistent with the themes of the poems: the memories of past victories and the inflexibility of Soledad, Veronica, the hero – Colonel, the hope for the possible liberation of the girls and Soledad's exile. In the novel previously written poems are likely to unite, and a collection "Poems and songs" becomes the text parallel to the novel.

It may be said that the main text reports the events, and the text of the poems reports the condition and reflection, thus, the author combines epic and lyric. A similar technique of text separation was used by Boris Pasternak in his novel "Doctor Zhivago". Yuri Zhivago's collection of poems, given at the end of the novel, is a lyrical reflection of the events, which gives us a glimpse on the inner life of the hero. However, it should be noted that the types of combination of texts in the novel "Doctor Zhivago" and "Gunter's Winter" are absolutely different. If Boris Pasternak chooses the successive writing of epic and lyric text, with some hints in the first part on the existence of the second, Juan Manuel Marcos introduces the texts in parallel, creating a multi-style polyphonic text.

Through the plot-story of the tangled fates of the main characters – Gunter, Eliza, Soledad Montoya, her friend Veronica, Simon Cáceres – Juan Manuel Marcos tries to show the way to fight exclusion and to achieve harmony with oneself and the world. So, love in all its manifestations, love that joins the fates of people and saves from the emptiness of existence turns to be the rescue for the writer. The appeal to love, as an important component of human existence, here is very significant and characteristic. This is, in fact, a characteristic feature of all literature of "post-boom", its transparent motive. One of the prominent representatives of the Latin American literature of the second wave Isabel Allende not accidentally paid attention to the importance of the motive of love in the works of most writers of the "post-boom" period. The writer states: "...despite differences and geographical separation, writers in the Post-Boom stay in touch with each other's work: a return to the love-ideal (as a part of existence) and a greater degree of optimism than before" [2, p. 10]. The novel "Gunter's Winter" is a clear evidence of that.

LITERATURE

- Diakun O. M.** Mythological Discourse of Miguel Angel Asturias's Prose / Olena Diakun – Manuscript. Thesis for a candidate of degree in philology: specialty 10.01.04 – literature of foreign countries. – Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University, Kyiv, 2004.
- Shaw D. L.** The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction / Donakd L. Shaw. – New York, State University of New York Press, 1998. ISBN10: 0-7914-3825-2
- Marcos, Juan Manuel; Gunter's winter / Juan Manuel Marcos.** Transl. by Tracy Karl Lewis. – New York; Washington, D.C./Baltimore; Bern; Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; Brussels; Vienna; Oxford: Lang. ISBN 0-8204-4589-4.
- Lorca G. In Search of Duende / Federico García Lorca.** Transl. by Giovanni Norm Di – New Directions Paperback; 2nd Revised edition – 2010. ISBN 0811218554.