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SYMBOLISM IN LITERATURE AS A TOOL FOR RESILIENCE: CULTURAL NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA AND HOPE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Summary. Symbolism in literature during wars and crises preserves national identity, restores psychological balance, and facilitates collective trauma processing. The study explores symbolism in literature as a tool for shaping cultural narratives and addressing collective trauma during wartime. Focusing on Korean poetry during Japanese occupation (1910–1945), the works of Han Yong-un and Kim Sowol are examined as forms of resistance, hope, and resilience. Parallels are drawn to contemporary Ukrainian literary practices amidst ongoing conflict.

The research employs literary analysis, comparative historical approaches, and qualitative interviews. Texts are analyzed through the lens of symbolism, cultural memory, and psychological impact. Data from Korean and Ukrainian literature are examined as cultural phenomena that aid in communal recovery.

The study reveals the unique role of symbolism in literature as a means of resisting cultural assimilation. Its novelty lies in comparing the historical experiences of Korean and Ukrainian literature in contexts of resistance and psychological resilience, focusing on symbolic imagery like the azalea flower in Kim Sowol's poetry.

The poetry of Han Yong-un and Kim Sowol exemplifies how literary works contribute to resistance and recovery. Similarly, modern Ukrainian literature and art foster narratives of hope, resilience, and future restoration. At the same time, literature acts as a bridge between the past and the future, allowing historical memory to be preserved and experience to be passed on to future generations. Symbolism as an artistic technique is a universal means of overcoming crisis, as it appeals to emotions, culture, and collective consciousness, providing aesthetic and spiritual support to society in times of upheaval.

Key words: Korean literature, collective trauma, Han Yong-un, Kim Sowol, poetry, symbolism in literature, cultural narrative.

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СИМВОЛІЗМ У ЛІТЕРАТУРІ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ СТІЙКОСТІ: КУЛЬТУРНІ НАРАТИВИ ТРАВМИ ТА НАДІЇ В ЧАСИ КРИЗИ

Анотація. Символізм у літературі під час воєн та криз виконує функцію збереження національної ідентичності, відновлення психологічної рівноваги та створення платформи для колективного опрацювання травми. Метою статті є дослідити символізм у літературі як інструмент формування культурного наративу та опрацювати наратив колективної травми під час воєнних конфліктів. Робота зосереджена на аналізі текстів корейської поезії часів японської окупації (1910–1945 рр.), де творчість Хан Йонуна та Кім Соволя виступає як форма спротиву, надії та національної стійкості. Паралельно проаналізовано українські літературні практики в умовах сучасної війни.

В основі дослідження – літературознавчий аналіз текстів, порівняльний підхід до історичних контекстів і якісні методи інтерв'ю. Матеріал досліджено через призму символізму, культурної пам'яті та психологічного впливу. Залучено дані з корейської та української літератур, що розглянуті як культурні феномени, здатні сприяти психологічному відновленню спільнот.

Стаття розкриває роль символізму в літературі як інструмента боротьби з асиміляцією національної ідентичності. Її новизна полягає в порівнянні історичного досвіду корейської та української літератур у контексті опору та психологічної стійкості. Особливу увагу приділено функції символічних образів, таких як квітка азалія в поезії Кім Соволя, та їхній здатності підтримувати колективну надію.

Поезія Хан Йонуна і Кім Соволя слугує прикладом того, як художнє слово сприяє опору та відновленню спільнот. Аналогічно, сучасна українська література та мистецтво допомагають формувати наративи надії, витривалості та майбутнього відновлення, слугуючи водночас мостом між минулим і майбутнім, допомагаючи зберігати історичну пам'ять і передавати досвід наступним поколінням. Символізм як художній прийом є універсальним засобом подолання кризи, адже він апелює до емоцій, культури та колективної свідомості, забезпечуючи естетичну й духовну підтримку суспільству в часи потрясінь.

Ключові слова: корейська література, колективна травма, Хан Йонун, Кім Соволь, поезія, символізм у літературі, культурний наратив.

Problem statement. Periods of war and crisis significantly impact individual and collective mental health, threatening cultural identity and continuity. Literature often emerges as a medium for expressing and processing collective trauma, fostering resilience, and preserving national heritage. The problem lies in understanding how symbolism in literature acts as a tool to shape cultural narratives, restore psychological balance, and resist cultural assimilation during such crises. The symbolic imagery in Korean poetry during the Japanese occupation (1910–1945) and its parallels in contemporary Ukrainian literature offer a lens to explore this phenomenon.

Relevance. In times of social and political upheaval, literature becomes a repository of cultural memory and an instrument for collective healing. The study of symbolic representation in Korean and Ukrainian literature reveals how cultures under duress use artistic expression to

foster resilience and hope. By examining the works of Han Yong-un and Kim Sowol, this research sheds light on the universal role of literary symbolism as a means of psychological and cultural survival. The insights gained are relevant to understanding how literature can continue to play a transformative role in other societies facing crises, offering both historical perspective and practical implications for cultural preservation and mental health recovery.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. Research on the role of literature during crises emphasizes its dual function: as a historical record and a therapeutic tool. Studies on Korean literature during the Japanese occupation highlight the symbolic use of nature and personal loss as metaphors for national identity and resilience. Recent analyses of Han Yong-un's *The Silence of the Beloved* focus on its layered symbolism, ranging from love and

homeland to spiritual devotion. Similarly, Kim Sowol's *Azalea Flower* has been explored for its evocation of enduring beauty amidst despair. Contemporary Ukrainian literary practices have also been analyzed for their use of cultural and symbolic imagery to address ongoing conflict. However, comparative studies that connect the historical and cultural contexts of these literatures remain scarce, making this research a significant contribution.

Research Objective. This study aims to investigate how symbolism in literature functions as a tool for resilience by shaping cultural narratives of trauma and hope during periods of crisis. It seeks to explore the historical and psychological dimensions of symbolic imagery in Korean and Ukrainian literature, identifying parallels that reveal literature's universal capacity to preserve cultural identity and foster emotional recovery, in particular:

1) To analyze the symbolic imagery in the works of Han Yong-un and Kim Sowol as reflections of resistance and resilience during the Japanese occupation.

2) To explore the psychological impact of literary symbolism in fostering collective mental health recovery.

3) To draw parallels between the use of symbolism in historical Korean literature and contemporary Ukrainian literary practices amidst ongoing conflict.

4) To examine the role of literature in preserving cultural identity and memory during times of national crisis.

5) To highlight the universality of literary symbolism as a means of addressing trauma and inspiring hope in diverse cultural contexts.

Data. Literature has long served as a medium for expressing and processing collective trauma, offering pathways to recovery and resilience for communities facing crises. This is particularly evident in Korean literature during the Japanese occupation (1910–1945), where poetry became a powerful tool for resisting oppression and fostering hope. The works of poets like Han Yongun and Kim Sowol stand as testaments to how cultural narratives can help sustain a nation's spirit and contribute to mental health recovery.

Han Yong-un and Kim Sowol are two poets whose works reflect the resilience of

the Korean people during one of the darkest periods in their history. Han Yong-un's poetry, especially his collection "The Silence of Love", uses deeply symbolic and emotional language to express not only personal but national suffering. His poetry, rooted in Buddhist philosophy, speaks of love, freedom, and the inevitability of change, providing a sense of spiritual solace and hope. In a society where the collective identity was being systematically erased, his words became a quiet yet powerful form of resistance, encouraging his people to endure through faith in the future.

Similarly, Kim Sowol's poetry, particularly his famous work "Azaleas", also weaves themes of resilience and continuity. His poetic style, influenced by traditional Korean folk songs, draws on nature's beauty as a symbol of hope amidst suffering. The azalea flower, symbolizing the endurance of love and life despite hardship, became an emblem of the Korean spirit. His ability to evoke the beauty of the natural world, even in times of great personal and collective sorrow, provided comfort and a sense of ongoing life that was essential to maintaining psychological resilience.

Kim Sowol was largely raised on classical literature. He primarily wrote about nature, fleeting love, loneliness, and the search for one's place in the world. Most of his works feature a traditionally melancholic theme, with repetitive phrases giving them a resemblance to folk songs. In the collection «Azalea Flower», there were also cheerful «free verses», but they did not resonate with readers, whereas his sad traditional poems gained immense popularity and success.

Writing at a time when the desire to restore national unity inspired creative efforts to revive abstract concepts like the «spirit of Korea», Kim Sowol incorporated this into his works, appealing to the Korean people's consciousness through vivid imagery. *Azalea Flower*, a poem that evokes the flower blooming across Korea in early spring, is a prime example of this approach.

When you leave
tired of me,
without saying anything, I shall gently let
you go

From Yaksan in Nyongbyon,
I shall pluck an armful of azaleas

and scatter them on the path down which
you go

As you make your way, step by step,
upon the scattered flowers lain before you,
Please tread gently as you go

When you leave
tired of me
Even in death shall no tears flow,
(Rose)

The style and artistic techniques in his poetry draw from traditional folk rhythms and a vocabulary deeply familiar to everyday people. Kim Sowol has been hailed as the poet embodying the Korean spirit, with his poetry encompassing a romantic yearning and a cosmic compassion. His poem describes the sorrow brought about by lost love, where the anguish of loss becomes the basis for intense passion. The sorrow before parting and the sadness of separation intensify the absence of love, creating an elevated emotion when combined with themes of homelessness and overall despair. Without a home to retreat to or distance himself from the past, the speaker cries out desperately to his beloved; this complete lack of control over events gives a strong lyrical impulse for emotional expression. The depth of this impulse matches the speaker's sense of loss and pain: the wider the chasm revealing the romantic ideal of love and the stark reality of its absence, the tighter the knots that bind a lover's heart. This paradox in poetry transforms absence and loss into the very essence of romantic love's allure.

The primary theme of three obstacles – loss of home, blocked paths, and the absence of a beloved—provides an artistic device that separates the speaker from the object of his desires and emphasizes his utter isolation. Poet Kim Sowol elevates the anger of loss and the loneliness of an individual into a new poetic direction. An outstanding example is «Mountain Flowers». At first glance, the poem appears to be a light sketch of a landscape, where representative elements of nature – mountains, flowers, and birds – exist in harmonious unity. However, in the second stanza («on the mountain / mountain / blooming flowers / so far away, so far away»), the line «so far away» introduces sudden and unfamiliar tension, adding a spatial dimension that fragments the scene,

which until then seemed whole. The flowers do not integrate into the landscape; their separation from the surroundings suggests that they bloom far from the speaker. For these lonely flowers, the poetic speaker feels a tender sorrow, hinting at his own acquaintance with the inner contours of solitude. «Mountain Flowers» illuminates the possibility of cosmic compassion and expands lyrical resonance based on the speaker's personal experience of loss.

Han Yongun's poetry contains numerous references to the «beloved» (님, or equivalent concepts). However, it is important to note that in this context, «beloved» does not necessarily denote a new «self» for the poet. The word «beloved» is used in a more general context, carrying a contrasting meaning (Andrianov, 2019, p. 125). In Kim Sowol's poems, 님 seems to be dead, or beyond rescue. This is why his poems are often filled with sadness and eastern colors. There is a sense of despair in his poetry when he says that a dear friend cannot return, though he acknowledges a faint hope of waiting.

Han Yongun interprets the theme of «beloved» (님) as a symbol of homeland, nation, or a higher being, and he believes in the eternal existence of this symbol even in difficult times. This faith in the return of the «beloved» keeps his poetry from descending into endless despair; instead, it expresses the power of love that moves him as he waits for the return. This difference in approach may stem from each poet's unique perception of reality and historical events. Han seeks to convey hope and belief in the possibility of rebirth and independence, even during challenging historical moments. In contrast, another poet like Kim Sowol sees the symbol «님» as representing loss and incomprehension, which is expressed through hopelessness and despair. These interpretive differences surrounding the symbol «님» reflect the poets' varying approaches to understanding their national history, offering insight into their creative contexts and individual worldviews.

In the poetry of Han Yongun, a prominent Korean poet, the concept-symbol «chung» (충) holds a special place and deep meaning. This term, which can be translated as «devotion,» «loyalty,» or «faithfulness,» reflects a key concept in Han Yongun's work and in Korean culture as a whole. In his poetry, «chung» serves as a symbol

of dedication to one's homeland, history, culture, and society. The poet skillfully intertwines this idea with aesthetic and philosophical elements, viewing «chung» as an essential aspect of Korean dignity and self-awareness.

The concept-symbol «chung» is most often expressed through images of nature, the homeland, and heritage. The poet emphasizes the importance of loyalty and self-belief, even in difficult historical circumstances. Devotion, or «chung», can be seen as a duty to past generations and a call to preserve and support Korean identity.

Overall, the concept-symbol «chung» in Han Yongun's poetry reflects not only deep patriotism but also an expression of national dignity and the fate of the Korean people. This idea has influenced many other Korean poets and writers and continues to be relevant in modern Korean literature. Han Yongun's poetry is filled with wisdom and love, intended for those who feel the pain of losing national independence. His poems express civic engagement and convey a resolute will to revive the «beloved», symbolizing the destiny of the Korean nation during Japanese colonization. In particular, his poetry collection «The Silence of the Beloved» (님의 침묵, 1926) demonstrates profound thoughts rooted in Buddhist principles.

Han Yongun's poems express hope for the restoration of Korean national identity and the defense of freedom, forming an essential part of Korean literary heritage. His work combines a love for the homeland with wisdom and spiritual depth, making his poetry still relevant today.

In 1926, Han Yongun published a poem titled «The Silence of the Beloved», which established him as a recognized literary master, although he was primarily known as a social activist. This poem became part of the poetry collection of the same name, notable for its style and wealth of metaphors, which were rare in traditional Korean poetry (Andrianov, 2019, p. 107–108). The poem was innovative in style, including profound subtext and multiple meanings of the central concept of the «beloved». This allowed for various levels of perception and understanding by readers interested in exploring the complex nuances of this concept.

«...Just as we dread parting when we meet, we believe that we'll meet again when we part.

Oh, my love has gone. But, I didn't send her away.

The song of love, overcome by its own melody, wraps itself around the silence of love.»
(Rose)

The expression of thoughts in this poem differs from typical expressions and language structures used in Koreans' daily speech. The poet employs rhyme and descriptions but also uses hidden metaphors and various expressions, which gives the poetry a melody and a multifaceted role. The expressions used in this poetic work unfold naturally; however, the meaning often significantly diverges from the literal sense of the words. The author also employs a unique artistic style to imbue phrases with emotional, patriotic, and spiritual meaning. Due to government censorship restrictions, the poet uses paradoxical phrases and highly metaphorical expressions, requiring careful attention to the essence of these crafted paradoxes.

In the first line of the poem, «The beloved has gone, oh, the beloved has gone, you whom I so dearly loved,» the poet speaks of a beloved who has departed. While there are different interpretations of who this «beloved» represents, considering the author's life journey and his active stance on social issues, it can be interpreted as a symbol of the lost, independent «homeland,» that is, Korea. The poem's final lines reinforce this interpretation: «Oh, you are gone, but I have not let you go. / The song of love that has lost its melody wraps around everything, turning it into love for you, my silent beloved.» Here, the poet declares, «you are gone, but I have not let you go,» underscoring his patriotic commitment to remain loyal to his homeland.

However, it is challenging to directly link the term «you» to a specific historical context or general state of the nation. Considering that Yongun became a Buddhist monk, he may have also intended «you» to signify Buddha or even a greater symbol – absolute being. This variety of possible interpretations enriches the understanding of this poetry, using metaphorical lines to convey spiritual and patriotic feelings.

The phrase «you are gone» separates the poet from the beloved, emphasizing that they are no longer together, indicating a state of deep sorrow and despair experienced by the speaker.

However, as the poem's ideas develop, the poet overcomes his grief and expresses a vow of eternal love.

Under Japanese rule, Korea endured much pain and suffering. Yet this period also brought significant changes in literature and poetry, as Koreans came under the influence of foreign literature. Persecution, censorship, and the people's desire for independence motivated Han Yongun to create a new, metaphorical form of poetry. His use of polysemous words and profound subtext allows readers to interpret the image of the «beloved» in multiple ways, viewing it as a symbol of many realities. In this context, the romantic aspect may embody a loved one, the patriotic undertone expresses longing for homeland and independence, while the biographical layer, based on the monk-poet's life, might indicate Buddha or something extraordinary and deeply spiritual. This layered structure gives the poem great depth and leaves room for readers' imagination.

These poets, through their profound use of symbolism and emotional depth, offered their nation a way to process trauma while holding onto hope. Their poetry acted as a cultural narrative that acknowledged suffering but also emphasized the possibility of recovery. In the context of mental health, these stories served as coping mechanisms, reminding people of the beauty in existence and the potential for a brighter future.

Drawing parallels to other societies in conflict or crisis, literature continues to play a vital role in processing trauma and fostering resilience. For example, in contemporary Ukraine, literature and the arts have become tools for both documenting the present and imagining a hopeful future despite ongoing war. Like Korean poetry during occupation, these cultural expressions serve as a collective means of survival and emotional recovery.

In conclusion, literature's role in collective mental health recovery is undeniable. By providing narratives of resilience and hope, poets like Han Yong-un and Kim Sowol contributed to the psychological strength of the Korean people during a time of national crisis. Their works remind us of the power of storytelling to heal not only individuals but entire communities, offering solace, beauty, and the possibility of renewal even in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Symbolism in literature transcends cultural and temporal boundaries, serving as a universal mechanism for fostering resilience and hope. Through the works of Han Yong-un, Kim Sowol, and contemporary Ukrainian authors, it becomes evident that symbolic imagery not only reflects collective trauma but also provides a means of emotional recovery and cultural preservation during crises.

Literature acts as a repository of cultural memory, preserving national identity in the face of oppression and assimilation. Korean poetry during the Japanese occupation and Ukrainian literary expressions amidst ongoing conflict demonstrate how symbolic narratives enable communities to resist cultural erasure and maintain their heritage.

The psychological role of symbolism in literature is profound, offering individuals and communities a means to process grief, endure hardships, and envision a hopeful future. The azalea in Kim Sowol's poetry and the "beloved" in Han Yong-un's work illustrate how such symbols can encapsulate complex emotions, providing solace and fostering psychological strength.

The parallels between Korean and Ukrainian literature reveal the shared human experience of using artistic expression to navigate trauma. Despite differing historical contexts, both cultures demonstrate how symbolism in literature serves as a bridge between past and future, helping societies recover while maintaining continuity.

The findings underscore the enduring relevance of literature as a tool for resilience in contemporary crises. As evidenced by Ukraine's current use of literature and art, symbolic narratives continue to play a vital role in documenting experiences, inspiring hope, and shaping a collective vision for recovery and restoration.

Symbolism in literature not only aids in enduring crises but also serves as a catalyst for societal change. By encapsulating resistance, hope, and the possibility of rebirth, literary symbols inspire collective action and a commitment to cultural and national rejuvenation.

Through the preservation of symbolic narratives, literature ensures that the lessons and experiences of one generation are passed on to the next. Works like *The Silence of the Beloved* and *Azalea Flower* demonstrate how literature con-

nects the past with the future, allowing cultural and historical memories to endure and inspire.

Finally, the study highlights the universal power of art and literature as tools for healing. Symbolism in literature bridges cultural and linguistic divides, offering humanity a shared means of addressing trauma, fostering resilience, and envisioning collective hope in times of crisis.

Future research on symbolism in literature as a tool for resilience can delve deeper into several key areas. First, exploring how symbolic imagery evolves in real-time during crises could provide insights into the dynamic role of literature in shaping cultural narratives. Comparative studies of literary symbolism in other regions experiencing conflict, such as the

Middle East or Africa, could reveal broader patterns and cultural nuances in using literature for resilience. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches combining literary analysis with psychology, sociology, and neuroscience could further elucidate how symbolic narratives impact individual and collective mental health. Finally, investigating the role of digital media and contemporary platforms in disseminating and reinterpreting symbolic literature may shed light on how modern technology influences cultural preservation and emotional recovery. Such research would deepen our understanding of literature's transformative power and its continued relevance in addressing the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

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