

Marta Watral

Summary of doctoral dissertation  
Paradigms of awakening in Lemko literature. Constructs, realizations,  
perspectives

In dissertation I have attempted to analyze the awakening paradigms in Lemko literature. As originally conceived, I wanted to focus primarily on how the most famous texts of the great Lemko awakeners influenced and affect their readers, and by what mechanisms one learns to be a Lemko from them. However, in the course of my research, especially that on the literary activity of the 19th-century writer Vladimir Khylak (Chylak), I collected considerable source material proving that the literary processes, the results of which I have called awakening paradigms, largely go beyond the actions of specific prominent individuals and are based on how their texts are used by readers, primarily professional, activists who uphold the narrative that is used as a nation-building foundation. In reconstructing this process, I have tried first to mark the sources of theses, phrases, and comments that survive and influence the national identity / Lemkiness of subsequent generations. I took as key the external context, played out only to a certain extent and to a certain degree by the will of the awakeners themselves. What was important to me was the arbitrariness of this context – the awakeners are spoken of, written about, used as patrons of cultural events, but their texts function only in their most identity-forming fragments. A narrative is compiled from them, which is designed to simultaneously solidify hearts and protect them from total disintegration by strongly influencing patriotic feelings and the associated responsibility for the continuance of the community, often reinforcing the sense of guilt when one chooses a different path. Not every awakening word has this power, but properly reinforced and composed with current identity needs, it becomes a performative act. Hence, permanent updating is an integral part of awakening paradigms. It is this actualization, which I tried to capture and reproduce from the texts I took as a source base, that is the organizing process of the analysis in dissertation.

From the above assumptions emerges a key thesis: the awakener is created, transformed, used, constructed so that it fulfills the functions assigned to it, necessary at a given historical and identity-forming moment. Creation is a conscious, purposeful act, and subject to internal regulations (which stem from the specifics of the history and experience of the Lemko ethnos), as well as external ones (which keep tabs on the language/culture and possibilities and delineate the possible/necessary and impossible areas in identity and national processes). As such, the act

requires a clear and stable foundation, based primarily on texts. The fact that modern Lemkos benefit from the ideological background clarified by Vladimir Khylak (Chylak), a 19th-century writer, could only exist thanks to textual traces, which were not so much left by the writer himself, but were the result of the conscious actions of his "patrons" of the time. The researcher Helena Duć-Fajfer worked on these textual traces, which were secured by these individuals, and included Vladimir Khylak (Chylak) as "an outstanding creative individual on the Lemko scale" in the canon of Lemko writers.

Petro Trochanovsky / Murianka also relies on them in constructing his monumental model of modern Lemko identity. For this reason, I have decided to include his awakening project as complementary to the 19th-century prototype set by Khylak (Chylak). Trochanowski is at the same time another of Chylak-awakener creators (through activities popularizing his work, and creating and managing the narrative about him), as well as an awakener in the original sense defined in the first half of the 19th century. I assume that in this dual role, the paradigm of awakening created by Petr Trochanovsky is unique on the scale of Lemko and, more broadly, Rusyn literature. It is the only one that covers virtually all spheres of Lemko life that can be created and actualized through word/text, from education in the native language (a primer for learning the Lemko language) to marking the space that is the indigenous homeland of the Lemkos (a monograph on the village of Binczarowa, where the writer's family lived before the displacements). Among the awakening duties that Petro Trochanovsky has assumed are taking care of the great Lemko writers, promoting their work, inscribing it in the canon of Lemko literature (e.g., through translations into the modern standard of the Lemko language), and the most important of all – keeping an eye on the narrative. Hence, a particularly important form of the writer's literary expression are polemics, which aim to translate, clarify, and supplement the Lemko context where it is omitted or distorted. The process manifested by the emergence of such textual traces I try to translate into the Lemko context and, using the example of Petro Trochanovsky's awakening model, mark the unspoken and unspeakable places, allowing us to better understand the frustration underlying contemporary radical identity projects.

By definition, the paradigms of awakening are not an abstracted from the cultural and social context and a hermetic literary phenomenon, although they could also be successfully interpreted as such, especially in literary studies work. However, I have assumed to use my more than a decade of experience working in the field of Lemko studies and Lemkones (understood as a constantly evolving ethnic identity) to present the practical aspect of the presented models and show how exactly their performative power is realized. Lemko literature as a minority literature, more clearly than national literatures, shaped and firmly grounded on

compatible and complementary identity pillars, is the essence and main transmitter of Lemkones. Hence, the work or mission of the Lemko activist is largely based on caring for, recalling, processing, preserving, cataloging literature. Awakener and awakening constitute one of the forms of active activity specific to the Rusyn / Lemko ethnos directed at the text and its identity-forming power.

From these analyses also arose the intuitions contained in the last part of the work about the current state of Lemko literature, influenced by the great awakening narratives and its possible sequels. Considerations on this topic were provoked by the question, *Do the Lemkos have a homeland beyond Lemkovyna?* which is a question about whether a further updating of the paradigm (e.g., the space in which the Lemkos live after the displacements) or its literary reevaluation is possible.