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Summary of the doctoral thesis written under the supervision
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***The images of the Other in contemporary literature
of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland***

The subject of the doctoral dissertation is the issue of otherness recorded in Polish and Ukrainian literature created after 1991. The choice of the topic was based on the assumption that the new political conditions that emerged after Poland and Ukraine regained independence entailed the need to diagnose the relationship between the two communities. In turn, the conviction of the literature's entanglement in other discourses (historical, political or cultural), accompanying the considerations contained in the work, allowed us to look at the works of Polish and Ukrainian writers published in recent decades in their connection with the changes taking place in Europe after the fall of communism, and therefore, to perceive them as a record of neighborly relations.

The notions of borderland and otherness became the primary interpretive keys in the analyses of selected literary works. In the perspective adopted in the dissertation, I define the term of borderland in a broad sense, i.e. as a symbolic space where two or more cultures meet. Therefore, the concept of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland contained in the title applies not only to the areas near the state border, but is also related to all kinds of contacts between representatives of two nations. In this approach, otherness is understood as an inseparable and necessary component of borderland. Reflections on this issue, expressed in the language of literary works, start from the assumption that at borderlands, a contact with the Other is inevitable and causes, on the one hand, a sense of danger, and on the other hand, opens up to the existence of another person (nation, culture). The choice of one of these options determines whether the Other is claimed as "one's own" or is included in the domain of "strangeness". This results in the main research thesis of the

dissertation: otherness is contextual in nature, while borderland is a dynamic situation, always perceived in relation to changing reality.

Both primary categories, which are the starting point for literary analyses, are also supplemented with specific entries – space, memory and identity – that organize the selection of works to be described and the structure of the dissertation. These three terms also become basic analytical tools that enable the achievement of the particular goals of the work: description of literary ways of constructing “otherness” in reference to the category of historical myth (including the Habsburg myth and the borderland myth), collective memory, and national identity; analysis of the literary functionality of the category of urban space as a memory-forming factor; examining literary images of borderland and otherness from the memory perspective, primarily in relation to the memory of the Volhynia massacre of 1943 as an event having a significant impact on the contemporary shape of Polish-Ukrainian relations; description of the destructive side of borderlands on the example of works that conceptualize the problem of identity crisis under the influence of contact with the Other. Additionally – in the conclusions – I refer to several works recording the most contemporary metamorphosis of borderland and otherness that are taking place as a result of the Russian attack on Ukraine in February 2022.

The structure of the work reflects the implementation of the research goals set. The considerations have been presented in ten chapters, grouped into four thematic parts. In the two chapters of the part I, I present various concepts of borderland and otherness, and specify, for the purposes of the dissertation, the meaning of these categories. I also compare the concept of borderland with the category of the Eastern Borderlands [Kresy Wschodnie], indicating the greater usefulness of the former in the analysis of literary images of Polish-Ukrainian relations. In addition, I present a long tradition of depicting these contacts in both national literatures.

In chapters three and four, which make up the part II of the work, I consider the issue of otherness on the example of literary works referring to a specific place, which is Lviv. The choice of this particular city was motivated, firstly, by its geographical location that allows it to be considered the embodiment of a borderland in the most traditional territorial sense. Secondly, the multifaceted history of Lviv was also important, giving it a special place in both Polish and Ukrainian national memory. I describe literary representations of the city on the example of two most popular images: the city-utopia and the city as a battlefield.

The part III, consisting of three chapters, is devoted to the analysis of literary ways of working through historical memory. As a reference point, I choose the Volhynia events

of 1943 as the most controversial and problematic issue in the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue. I analyze works that reveal various strategies of depicting the memory of these events: both those that completely negate the version of the Others, and those that are more open to it.

In the part IV, in three subsequent chapters, I present literary works that conceptualize the phenomenon of new borderlands, which are not related to a specific space or historical event, but created as a result of various political processes, including globalization. The analyzed works are a record of various – more or less successful – ways of working through clichés and national stereotypes prevailing in Polish and Ukrainian societies, and diagnose problems with self-identification of people uprooted from their homely world and with their re-rooting in the world of Others.

The ending of the thesis includes conclusions formulated in the course of analyses of selected literary works, and is also a reflection on the works created over the last year, recording the socio-political changes that have taken place since the outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian war. This final analysis is also a look at literature as an integral part of our experience of reality.

The work is closed with a list of abbreviations and a bibliography. In the attached annex, I present the results of two online surveys I conducted, which diagnose the current state of knowledge about the Volhynia massacre in Ukrainian society.

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