

**IMAGES OF PRE-CHRISTIAN UKRAINIAN  
MYTHOLOGY IN THE NOVEL “MAVKA’S DIARY” BY  
DARA KORNIY**

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At the present stage of cultural and historical society development there is a tendency to actualize the spiritual values embodied in traditional culture and tested over time, to implement their formative influence on the individual, self-awareness, cultural evolution in general.

Among the national spiritual values we can single out a bright and unique phenomenon – mythology – a kind of artistic and ideological system that represents the nature of the ethnos relationships with the outside world at different stages of its historical development.

The importance of knowledge of mythology for modern man lies in the core values of national culture. Since the spiritual principles of life, moral and aesthetic code, productive experience of ritual activities related to work, family life of the people were combined and embodied in artistic images, language system and the genre definition of folklore.

In the struggle against the so-called “paganism”, and later with everything Ukrainian, priceless monuments of art of the ancient pagan world were destroyed. That is why Ukrainian folk tales, parables, legends, retellings, folk customs, rituals, orders, spells, songs, games are of great interest to researchers.

However, until recently, this topic remained out of the attention of scientists. Modern analysis of “higher” mythology – the pantheon of Slavic deities – and the “lower” mythology (demonology) began only in the mid-60 of the twentieth century,

when a “mythological” concept was formed, i.e. the study of beliefs and superstitions were reduced to a single system of myth-religious ideas.

The term “mythopoeics” is quite controversial in modern literary studies due to its vague definition. O. Kobzar explains this by saying “the concept combines two different creative processes: myth-reception and myth-making. By myth-reception we mean the process of artistic reading and perception of the myth, its further rethinking and development. Myth-making is the process of producing new myths (Kobzar, 2010)”.

The author whose work has become a prominent phenomenon in the modern literary process, including fantasy, is Dara Korniy. Addressing the beliefs of our pagan ancestors, Dara Korniy teaches the reader the difficult science of life in rich emotional language, filled with both high vocabulary and youth slang. Dara Korniy’s novels are distinguished by a unique style in which Ukrainian mythology is harmoniously intertwined with the present reality.

The novel “Mavka’s Diary” is distinctive and creative, and the themes raised by the author in the work are extremely important. The basis of the novel “Mavka’s Diary” is Ukrainian mythology and folklore. The projection of a radically changed model of the relations of folklore-mythological beings on the relations of modern man and woman is the main method of mythopoeic depiction of the events, described in the book.

Dara Korniy used many creatures from Slavic pre-Christian folklore in her work “Mavka’s Diary”. For example, the author calls the main character of the book – Magdalena – Mavka. Despite the fact that mavkas look like girls, they have neither body nor soul, but the writer denies in Mavka’s words: “People say that I have no soul. But is that true? I know how to love, but do you know how to love? To use the body does not mean to have a soul in it (Korniy, 2016)”.

Mavka as an image of “lower” mythology is gradually and consistently transformed in Dara Korniy’s novel into the embodiment of “higher” mythology. Thus, the figure of Magda combines the features of paganism (Mavka) and Christianity (angel) – and such a symbolic oxymoron enhances the peculiar vibration of the heroine’s image in this work.

The antagonists of Mavka-Magda are the Chugaister-men. In Ukrainian mythology, Chugaister is a cheerful, upbeat, overgrown with black or white fur goblin of the woods with blue eyes. He dances, sings and hunts for mavkas. In Dara Korniy’s novel, Chugaister is a man who “breaks the wings” of his wife, despises her, betrays her, in a word, makes her destitute. That’s why Mavka is taking revenge on them.

According to folk beliefs, Chugaister is friendly to people, talks to them, warms himself by the fire. Having met a living soul in the forest, Chugaister does not harm them, only politely invites them to dance, playing the flute. However, the writer refutes this statement: “Now I know very well what is happening to the Mavkas, who are seduced by Chugaister. He kills her soul. And the world, pater, is abound with Chugaisters, and they destroy everyone, not only Mavkas (Korniy, 2016)”.

In the first Mavka’s tale we meet such mythical characters as a werewolf and two goddesses: Fate and Death.

Fate is a goddess who determines the purpose of man. At birth, she endows infants with all virtues, prophesies their future. She knows everything that had been, is being and will be with everyone. Fate determines what every human soul needs to learn when it returns to Earth once again. Dara Korniy portrays her rather just like a performer of the higher will of the great Weaver: “The destiny of each person stretches after them with an invisible thread, and it is not man who weaves that thread, and Fate does not always bring out that thread. Fate only properly serves the great Weaver... (Korniy, 2016)”. So, as we can see, in the novel “Mavka’s Diary” there is an even higher instance above Fate – the great Weaver, that divides one mythological image into two: Fate and Weaver.

Death in mythology – is the goddess of Nav’ (underworld), dark night, nightmares, ghosts, diseases (plague). The Slavs also have other names: Marena, Morena, Morzhana. Western Slavs call her Marzhana or Martsana. This name of Mara is related to such words as: “plague”, “darkness”, “vision”, “phantom”, “cloud”, and “freeze”. Thus, in pre-Christian mythology, Death is unequivocally an evil figure, but in the novel it is neutral, neither evil nor good: “She was only fulfilling her purpose and, it seems, did not regret that she was left without a harvest this time (Korniy, 2016)”. Thus, the image of Death used by Dara Korniy is not clearly negative, as it is depicted in Slavic pre-Christian myths that have survived to the present day. Death is not a complete interruption of life as such, it is only a transition to another life, to a new Beginning, as after the winter, which takes with it all the obsolete, a new spring always comes. This is exactly the image of Death in Dara Korniy’s novel “Mavka’s Diary”.

As we can see, the real people in Dara Korniy’s novel have both allomorphic and isomorphic features within appearance and character with mythological creatures: a mavka, a chugayster, Fate, Death. This confirms once again that Ukrainian mythology has deep roots, which do nourish and will nourish all future generations.

Dara Korniy’s attempt to introduce into national literature an artistic interpretation of a new image from the corpus of Ukrainian “lower mythology” contains many original solutions designed to convey the national color and can be considered another successful step in building Ukrainian literature's own myth-making tradition of the new era.

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