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The hero archetype and the semiotics of liberation struggle in Oles Sanin's film "Dovbush": Between historical allusion and visual narrative

Abstract. The actualisation of the image of the national hero in times of war, under conditions of informational pressure and cultural decolonisation, is one of the key challenges for contemporary Ukrainian visual culture. The aim of this study was to conduct an interdisciplinary analysis of Oles Sanin's film "Dovbush" as a cultural text, in which new models of heroism were shaped through semiotic, aesthetic, and mythological means. Cinema increasingly functions as an instrument in the formation of collective identity, where the figure of the hero acquired significance not only as an artistic image, but also as an archetypal marker of historical transformation. The article traced, how the film's visual language created a complex system of signs and symbols, in particular: the hero's body, blood, earth, the cross, water, and the Carpathian landscape were presented not merely as elements of artistic composition, but as bearers of traumatic experience, collective memory, and ritual structures. The Carpathian space in the film appeared not as a picturesque backdrop, but as a sacred chronotope, shaping the spiritual topography of the narrative and acting as an active participant in the hero's ritual transformation. It was revealed that the film's structure followed the ritual logic of initiation: betrayal, flight, dedication, sacrifice, death, and resurrection, forming a sacred formula of the narrative of resistance. The image of Oleksa Dovbush emerged as an archetypal figure of the leader, integrating the motifs of avenger, martyr, and cultural mediator between the trauma of the past and the nation-building perspective of the present. The study also included a comparative analysis of the film with other examples of Ukrainian historical cinema, which made it possible to discern a shared patterned model in the formation of the visual narrative of national resistance. Particular attention was paid to the figure of the woman in the film as the bearer of sacred knowledge and collective intuition. The film's public reception confirmed its status as a national screen myth. The practical value of the research lies in the proposed model of film analysis as a ritual narrative, which may be applied in the fields of cultural studies, film analysis, memory studies, and the study of national identity in wartime conditions

Keywords: national myth; ritual narrative; visual language; Ukrainian cinema; cultural memory; spatial symbolism; postcolonial discourse

INTRODUCTION

In the context of full-scale war and active decolonisation, the formation of the image of a national hero in Ukrainian cinema becomes a leading tool of visual influence on the politics of memory and cultural identity. The image of the hero in the visual space emerges as a key means of

symbolic construction of national identity, acquiring functions not only of historical representation, but also of ritual coding of collective memory within the postcolonial context. That is why the analysis of the latest representations of archetypes, in particular in the 2023 film "Dovbush" by

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director Oles Sanin, is necessary both from the point of view of cultural memory and from the perspective of semiotics, ritualistics and the postcolonial approach.

Contemporary research has confirmed the growing role of cinema in transmitting national values and forming a new canon of heroism. V. Griza *et al.* (2023) noted a shift in emphasis from the traditional historical hero to the multidimensional figure of the avenger hero, who functions as a symbol of resistance. M. Sachleben (2024) analysed trends in post-Maidan period films, emphasising the new emotional density of screen myths. T. Zhurzhenko (2022) examined cinema as a component of memory politics, particularly in the processes of derussification and decommunisation. The author also detailed the relationship between cinema and the legislative construction of historical memory in Ukraine. The study by D. Khlevniuk & B. Noordenbos (2024) highlighted the temporality and tension between the past and the future in the visual culture of memory. Visual media have become a field for visualising trauma and recovery, which was particularly evident in the work of B. Shumylovych (2023), who analysed digital visuality and graphic narratives as a form of resistance. A separate layer of contemporary research concerned the mobilising role of Ukrainian cinema in wartime. E. Olzacka (2023) analysed cinema as an instrument of cultural mobilisation and solidarity that contributed to the formation of national unity in times of crisis. P. Castello Branco & M. Lihus (2023) emphasised the construction of identity through screen images that combined the narrative of trauma with the narrative of resilience. In the works of S. Marchenko (2023), the emphasis was on documentary cinema, but his observations on the formation of new genre strategies can also be applied to feature films, in particular in connection with “Dovbush”. These approaches emphasised that Ukrainian cinema functions not only as an artistic, but also as a sociocultural act, in which visual myth acquired direct political action. Archaic symbolism, as noted by S. Binbin *et al.* (2022), retained its power in cinematic images, especially, when it came to cultural memory associated with folklore, the body, and the land. In the work of M. Demydenko (2022), interest in the themes of archetypes, mythological heroes, body narratives and cultural memory in Ukrainian films was consistently traced, with the author emphasising the interpretation of cinematic language as a carrier of symbolic meaning. M. Demydenko & N. Markhaichuk (2024) examined chronotope, body, sacred geography, and intertextuality as key parameters of national visual historiography. Despite active public reception, no comprehensive cultural analysis of the film “Dovbush” has been carried out. The reviews available in the media (in particular, in *Ukrainska Pravda*, on *Suspilne*, and in *Plomyn* magazine) focused mainly on the genre and entertainment aspects of the film, ignoring its semiotic, folkloric, and postcolonial potential. In this regard, there was a need for a cultural reading of the film, in which it appeared not simply as historical action, but as a visual manifesto of an era of resistance. The semiotic

aspects of the film “Dovbush” and its ritual structure remain understudied in contemporary cultural discourse.

The aim of the study was to comprehensively identify the archetypes, ritual structures, and visual-semiotic mechanisms in the film “Dovbush” that shaped the contemporary model of the national hero in Ukraine’s cultural memory. The objective was to identify the semiotic mechanisms of constructing a visual narrative of resistance, the ritual logic of character development, and a comparative analysis with similar national film practices. The scientific novelty lay in the proposed interpretation of the film as a ritual text with a clear symbolic structure that fit into the contemporary postcolonial, hermeneutic, and cultural discourse.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Within the scope of the study, the film “Dovbush” (directed by Oles Sanin, 2023) was examined as a complex cultural text that combined elements of historical epic, national myth, folkloric visuality, and ritual cinema. The source material was the full version of the film, which was analysed as a single semiotic object, taking into account not only the plot, but also the visual language, cinematographic decisions, the symbolic meaning of space, colour, body, ritual, costume and chronotope. The research was based on a comprehensive interdisciplinary methodology, within which semiotic, hermeneutic, mythocritical, ritualistic, intertextual, and comparative approaches were applied.

Semiotic analysis made it possible to identify the key visual codes of the film: blood, earth, stones, the cross, weapons, and the hero’s body as structuring elements that function in the film as signs of collective memory. It was analysed how these signs work within the visual series, acquiring sacred or ritual significance depending on the context. The hermeneutic method made it possible to interpret the complex multi-level structure of the narrative, in particular the transformation of the hero, his physicality, suffering and sacrifice as elements of a ritual act. Particular attention was paid to the moments of initiation, isolation, betrayal, death, and rebirth as symbolic milestones of the mythological cycle. A mythocritical approach was applied to the analysis of the archetypes represented in the film: the avenging hero, the traitor, the guide, the sacrificial mother, and the enemy as the forces of evil. These archetypes were viewed as instruments of collective imagination, referring both to folklore and to the modern image of a defender in wartime. Ritualistic analysis made it possible to comprehend the structure of the film as a visual ritual, where each scene appeared as part of a transition: from chaos to sacred order, from namelessness to a heroic name. The plot was divided into phases corresponding to the logic of initiation: the hero leaves his familiar world, undergoes trials, suffers losses, and emerges transformed into a new role – a symbol of national resistance. Intertextual analysis allowed to identify visual and plot parallels with other cultural texts, from folklore to Ukrainian historical cinema, and to contemporary media images

of defenders. In this way, the film was read as a cultural matrix that synthesised previous experiences of visual myth. A comparative analysis was carried out by comparing it with other historical films: “Krutyy” 1918 (directed by O. Shaparev), “Black Raven” (directed by T. Tkachenko), and “The Guide” (directed by O. Sanin). It was established that the film “Dovbush” demonstrated a qualitatively new model of heroisation, not as a representation of the past, but as a projection of the contemporary experience of war, where the hero appeared not only as a historical character, but as an archetype of victim and avenger.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The film “Dovbush” (directed by Oles Sanin, 2023) was not just a historical reconstruction, but a multi-layered cultural text that used visual language and symbolism to create an archetype of a chosen hero undergoing an initiation rite in the context of national resistance. The central figure of Oleksa Dovbush was presented not as a flawless avenger, but as a personality, who experiences trauma, loss, internal conflict, and transformation (Griza *et al.*, 2023). His path resonated with the classic model of the “heroic journey” (Campbell, 2004), but in the film, this path was transformed in accordance with the rhythm of the modern narrative. Already in the first scenes (Fig. 1), the hero appeared as a leader and defender of the oppressed: in the scene with the bandit attack, Dovbush was presented as majestic, similar to a folk avenger like Robin Hood, and in the dinner scene with his brothers, as the central figure, compositionally inscribed in a visual reference to “The Last Supper”. These images were important for research because they symbolise the two poles of the heroic archetype: the warrior-defender and the sacred leader of the community. It was this duality that determined the dynamics of his further initiation throughout the film.



Figure 1. Initial images of the leader Oleksa Dovbush
Note: a – scene of an attack with a knife; b – “The Last Supper” with his brothers-in-arms in the mountains
Source: Dovbush (2023)

The frames symbolised the warrior and sacred functions of the hero as a guide of the community. The hero’s image was both corporeal and emotional: the body was wounded yet alive; blood and scars not only display physical pain, but become themes of memory and symbols of sacrifice. In the scene, where the hero, bent and injured, barely crawls to a stream to wash away the traces of battle, the camera slowly closes in – not to elicit the viewer’s pity, but to allow the body to be read as a bearer of historical experience. In this same episode, Marichka appeared beside Dovbush, helping the exhausted and bloodied hero (Fig. 2). Marichka’s presence not only accentuates Dovbush’s corporeality and mortality, but also symbolised the feminine principle as the bearer of memory and intuition, supporting the hero at the moment of transition between life and death. The importance of this frame for the study lied in its visualisation of the concept of “postmemory” (Hirsch, 2012), where the traumatised body became a communicative form of memory, and the female figure functions as a symbolic bridge between past and future.



Figure 2. Frame of the scene the wounded Dovbush and Marichka as a symbol of the combination of physical sacrifice and female support

Source: Dovbush (2023)

The frame emphasised the heroes as bearers of national trauma and the female figure as the keeper of memory. The key plot dynamic was the conflict between the brothers Oleksa and Ivan. Ivan embodied the archetype of the shadow – the choice of betrayal, power, and bribery. In contrast, Oleksa was the bearer of sacrificial meaning. However, Sanin does not show betrayal as a banal evil: the camera lingers on Ivan’s face, conveying his inner conflict and division. In the scene of their direct confrontation (Fig. 3), close-ups of the two brothers’ faces capture the maximum tension: Oleksa and Ivan’s gazes meet like a mirror reflection of light and shadow, the choice between dignity and conformity. Thus, the shadow here was not only an antagonist, but also a mirror of the hero, and therefore their conflict took on a deeply symbolic character. A similar dichotomy can be seen in the film “Cyborgs” (directed by Akhtem Seitablaev), where the opposition between characters with different worldviews defined the moral boundary between cynicism and ethical resistance (Cyborgs: Heroes Never Die, 2017). In this film, as in “Dovbush”, the conflict was brought to the level of a symbolic choice: to remain within the bounds of personal pragmatism or to become part of the collective myth of struggle.



Figure 3. Close-up frame of the confrontation between the brothers (Oleksa and Ivan)

Source: Dovbush (2023)

This frame symbolised the archetypal conflict between the hero and his shadow, where the choice between dignity and conformity takes shape. The ritual structure of the film manifested itself in the repetition of the initial plot phases: escape, initiation, death, rebirth. In the scene, where Dovbush touches the ground before the battle, the gesture has a ritual meaning: the ground was not a backdrop, but a subject that accepts the sacrifice (Binbin *et al.*, 2022). Water in the film functions ambivalently: it purified and at the same time separated the living from the dead, becoming a boundary between worlds. The cross, in turn, was presented not as a religious detail, but as a code of national mourning, a visualisation of a shared experience of loss. These motifs were particularly clearly articulated in the frame with Dovbush near the cross, where the sacred space took on the meaning of a collective altar, and in the flashback frames of the ritual, in which the boy was buried under a rose, coins were placed on his eyes, and then he comes back to life (Fig. 4). This episode recreated the archaic motifs of funeral and initiation rites: the coins symbolise payment for the passage to the afterlife, and the boy's rebirth symbolises purification and the continuation of life. Thus, the ritual in the film functions not only as an individual event, but as a collective formula of national initiation, in which death opens the way for a new generation. According to V.W. Turner (1969), this scene demonstrated a liminal state – an intermediate space between death and rebirth, where the hero and the viewer experience a shared transformation. These frames symbolised the sacred dimension of his struggle and collective memory as a sacrificial altar, visualising the transition to the afterlife according to archaic tradition. It showed the burial site, the boy's body in the ground, and a woman performing a ritual symbolising death and subsequent rebirth. The space in the film functions not as a background decoration, but as an active player in the myth, shaping the spiritual topography of the narrative. In this logic, space acted not as a backdrop, but as a full-fledged participant in the ritual that transforms both the hero and the viewer, in which the hero was born and undergoes initiation. They were not depicted as a picturesque landscape, but as living matter: dark, damp, chthonic. In the night scenes, the forest sounds: the camera was silent to let the space speak. This was an element of the viewer's deep immersion in the space of initiation. In the escape scene, when the hero

moves along a night forest path, only the sounds of breathing, the crackling of branches and the rustling of grass can be heard (Khlevniuk & Noordenbos, 2024). This was how the transition to the hero's inner world was formed: the scene became a cinematic visualisation of loneliness, fear, and the need to make a choice (Sachleben, 2024). In this, the film echoed Sanin's "Mamai", where the landscape also became a condition for the hero's metaphysical journey.



Figure 4. Ritual symbols in the film

Note: a – Dovbush on the mountain near the cross; b – close-up of a boy with coins on his eyes; c – general view of the ritual

Source: Dovbush (2023)

The female characters in the film function as spiritual guides. The heroine Marichka appeared on the border between sleep and reality, between life and death. Marichka's role in the film was to embody the image of memory and love, reminding the hero of his origins and supporting him in moments of inner crisis. Her appearance was accompanied by a slow rhythm, darkness, and warm light. The camera seems to "glide" over her image, capturing not her physical presence, but her aura. Particularly revealing was the flashback scene (Fig. 5), where Marichka appeared in a wedding dress, as if from another time. This flashback transformed her image into a symbol of lost opportunity, a memory of love, and at the same time a sacred sign that returned the hero to his essence. Marichka was the voice of traumatic memory, the one thing that prevented the hero from forgetting, who he is. It was the woman in the film, who marked the boundary between the past and the future, between the physical and the prophetic. Thus, the female characters in the film do not simply accompany the protagonist, but actively shape the

mythology of the film, embodying the functions of memory transmission, initiation, prophecy, and sacred connection between generations. This interpretation of women corresponded to the observations of B. Shumylovych (2023), who seen the female figure in the visual culture of war as a bridge between collective memory and moral intuition.



Figure 5. Frame of Marichka's image in the wedding flashback

Source: *Dovbush* (2023)

The frame symbolised the combination of individual memory and collective archetype, where the female figure functioned as a guide between the past and the future. Thus, the results obtained allowed for a deeper understanding of the place of the film *"Dovbush"* (directed by Oles Sanin, 2023) in contemporary Ukrainian cinema and cultural memory. Central to this was the question of the ritual structure and archetypal symbols that organised the film's narrative. As V.W. Turner (1969) emphasised, ritual functions as a mechanism of transition, where the individual and the community pass through liminality to obtain a new status. In *"Dovbush"*, this mechanism was applied not only to the hero, but also to the viewer: the film was structured as an initiation rite in which death and rebirth were not metaphors, but central formulas. Water, earth, blood, and the cross act as semiotic nodes that shape the logic of transition and give events a supra-individual meaning.

In the broader context of cultural memory, *"Dovbush"* came out during a period of intensified derussification and decolonisation of public space. As O. Betlii (2022) noted, the processes of memory politics in Ukraine take place not only at the level of historiography, but also in culture and visual media. A similar idea was developed by A. Wylegała & M. Glowacka-Grajper (2020), who emphasised that collective memory in a postcolonial context functions through symbols that replace official narratives with new forms of historical continuity. In this sense, *"Dovbush"* can be interpreted as a cinematic analogue of such processes: it represented not academic history, but ritualised memory, where the hero became the body of the nation. It was also important to pay attention to the gender aspect of collective memory. B. Törnquist-Plewa & Yu. Yurchuk (2017) noted that visual representations often reinforced new forms of identity through female images as carriers of moral intuition. In *"Dovbush"*, this trend was realised through the character of Marichka: she functioned as the "voice of memory" that supported the hero and at the same time articulates the national continuity between the past and the present.

Modern Ukrainian cinema was increasingly seen as a tool for shaping national identity. O. Bezrucho & N. Stepanenko (2024) argued that screen images become means of constructing an imagined community, where collective traumas and victories were artistically embodied. In this context, *"Dovbush"* was no exception: the film integrated folkloric archetypes, historical traumas, and contemporary political codes into a single system. A similar idea was put forward by P. Castello Branco & M. Lihus (2023), who emphasised that Ukrainian cinema shaped cultural resilience through visual images, combining narratives of trauma and resilience. In *"Dovbush"*, these approaches were synthesised: the archetype of the hero undergoing initiation appeared not only as a folkloric or historical character, but as a contemporary cultural code aimed at mobilising the community. The film also contributed to the language policy of Ukrainian cinema (Demeshchenko, 2023). A. Vidaud (2024) emphasised that language in films was not only a tool for communication, but also a means of marking identity. In the case of *"Dovbush"*, the use of the Ukrainian language and dialectal forms reinforced authenticity and at the same time affirmed the rejection of colonial cultural influence. The symbolic structure of the film correlated with the analysis of V. Zaporozhchenko & M. Ishchenko (2024), who viewed contemporary Ukrainian cinema as a space for the creation of new national myths. Unlike the traditional heroic narrative, *"Dovbush"* not only recreated the historical struggle, but also offered a model of cultural revival, where the hero undergone a rite of passage that became a metaphor for national renewal.

Another important element in the film was the conflict between the brothers Oleksa and Ivan. This motif can be explained by the contrast between the archetypes of the hero and the antihero, which was also analysed by N. Sas (2023). Ivan embodied the archetype of the shadow, the choice of power and betrayal, while Oleksa represented sacrifice and dignity. This contrast goes beyond personal drama and becomes a cultural code symbolising the national dilemma between adaptation and resistance. To better understand the place of the film *"Dovbush"* in Ukrainian cinema, it was worth comparing it with other iconic Ukrainian films. For example, in the film *"The Guide"* (directed by Oles Sanin, 2014), music functions as a conduit for trauma: a blind kobzar and his art became a metaphor for collective memory, which the totalitarian regime was trying to destroy. Thus, music acted as a kind of code for survival, allowing history to be preserved through song. In *"Dovbush"*, the Carpathian space and ritual symbols performed a similar function: they became carriers of memory and myth that cannot be destroyed. *"Cyborgs"* (directed by Akhtem Seitablaiev) presented a modern hero, who created himself through responsibility and moral choices in a war situation (*Cyborgs: Heroes Never Die*, 2017). In this respect, Seitablaiev's film echoed the image of *Dovbush*: his path was also a story of choosing between adaptation and dignity. However, while the heroes in *"Cyborgs"* remained within the confines of modernity, *"Dovbush"* took this conflict to an archetypal

level, transforming an individual biography into a cultural myth. “The Inglorious Serfs” (directed by Roman Perfiliev) works in the genre of postmodern irony, where historical images were deconstructed and intertwined with motifs of mass culture (The Inglorious Serfs, 2020). This film offered a playful model for working with the national past, but at the same time showed that Ukrainian viewers were ready to re-think the heroic canon. In contrast, “Dovbush” returned to the serious, sacred logic of myth, where the past was interpreted not as parody, but as ritual. In the films “Kruty” 1918 (directed by Oleksiy Shaparev) (Kruty 1918, 2019) focused on the sacrifice of youth as a symbol of national awakening, while “Black Raven” (directed by Taras Tkachenko) offered an individualised image of struggle, focused on the figure of a Cossack chieftain (Black Raven, 2019). Both films operated within the paradigm of historical heroism, but remained closer to genre clichés. “Dovbush”, on the other hand, departed from classical reconstruction and created a ritual drama, where history became not an event, but a sacred initiation. An important context was also the comparison of “Dovbush” with documentary filmmaking. S. Marchenko (2023) analysed non-fiction cinema as a form of preserving memory and comprehending trauma. Unlike this genre, Sanin’s film works with artistic and mythological means, but pursues a similar goal: to actualise collective experience and transform it into part of contemporary identity.

The public reception of “Dovbush” showed that viewers were impressed by the film’s spectacular nature, complex staging, and acting. At the same time, critics noted that the discussion was mostly limited to evaluating technical and genre characteristics. Less attention was paid to the ritual structure, symbolism, and archetypal codes of the film. This created space for scientific analysis, as research can show that Sanin’s film not only recreated a historical plot, but also formed a cultural ritual, in which the viewer became a participant in a collective experience. Thus, “Dovbush” can be considered one of the key films of modern Ukrainian cinema, combining elements of historical reconstruction, folkloric archetypes, and postcolonial thinking. The use of the concept of ritual (Turner, 1969) allowed to interpret the film as a drama of transition, where death and rebirth function as a model of cultural transformation. Compared to other Ukrainian films, from “The Guide” to “Cyborgs” and “The Inglorious Serfs”, Sanin’s film represented a synthetic level of visual coding of myth, where the archetype of the hero became the body of history, and history became a ritual on screen. This was what made it an important text in the formation of new national ideas and collective memory.

CONCLUSIONS

The film “Dovbush” was not just a historical action movie or a spectacular film, but a complex ritual text in which aesthetics, myth and symbolism form a multi-layered narrative of national self-affirmation. It was based on a complex ritual, mythological, and semiotic structure, which was realised as a visual scenario of the initiation of the hero and the viewer. The image of Oleksa Dovbush

was presented not simply as a legendary leader, but as a symbolic figure of cultural transformation, combining elements of pain, physicality, sacrifice, and spiritual growth. It was through physical vulnerability, wounds, gestures, and physical suffering that a new type of screen hero was built, personifying the nation in times of loss and struggle.

The film was structured according to the logic of ritual: the plot stages were not just a sequence of events, but components of a cultural formula for the transition from anonymity to a national name. The cinematic structure of “Dovbush” was ritualistic in nature: the plot composition, visual repetitions, bodily gestures, and editing rhythm form a coherent rite of transformation of the hero, which at the same time initiated the viewer into the myth of collective experience. Visual codes function not as scenery, but as active signs that included the viewer in a shared memory. The space of the film functions as a mythologised space of the Carpathians, where each natural element became an initial agent of the ritual: the earth accepted the sacrifice, the water purifies, and the forest and caves became border zones between life and death. It does not illustrate history, but experiences it together with the protagonist, creating a new geography of national memory. Female images function as moral and emotional landmarks; their actions and presence initiate profound transformations in the protagonist and activate the sacred dimension of the narrative.

Thus, the film formed a holistic ritual structure, in which the physical, sacred, national, and personal were combined in a common act of visual resistance. It was not just a visualisation of history, but an initiation through images, an initiation into collective memory. The film “Dovbush” served both as a form of aesthetic gesture and an act of collective initiation: it transformed history into ritual, folklore, and cinematic myth, and the viewer into a participant in the symbolic transformation of the nation. Its cultural significance also lied in the fact that the film combined different levels of symbolism: the physicality of the hero, the archetypes of sacrifice and betrayal, female images as guides, and the space of the Carpathians, which models the geography of national memory, acting as a mediator between the past and the present. This approach opened up a new plane of understanding Ukrainian cinema not as a genre product, but as a visual action aimed at constructing postcolonial identity through the body, space, gesture, and symbol. Prospects for further research lie in a deeper analysis of visual corporeality, ritual structure, and archetypal narratives in contemporary Ukrainian cinema in the context of war.

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**Архетип героя та семіотика визвольної боротьби у фільмі «Довбуш»
Олеся Саніна: між історичною алюзією та візуальним наративом**

Анотація. Актуалізація образу національного героя в умовах воєнного часу, інформаційного тиску та культурної деколонізації є одним із ключових викликів для сучасної української візуальної культури. Метою дослідження стало здійснення міждисциплінарного аналізу фільму «Довбуш» Олеся Саніна як культурного тексту, в якому формувалися нові моделі героїзму через семіотичні, естетичні та міфологічні засоби. Кінематограф дедалі частіше виступав як інструмент формування колективної ідентичності, де постать героя набувала значення не лише художнього образу, а й архетипічного маркера історичної трансформації. У статті було простежено, як візуальна мова фільму створювала складну систему знаків і символів, зокрема: тіло героя, кров, земля, хрест, вода та простір Карпат презентовано не лише як елементи художньої композиції, а як носії травматичного досвіду, колективної пам'яті та обрядових структур. Простір Карпат у фільмі постав не мальовничим тлом, а сакральним хронотопом, що формував духовну топографію оповіді й виступав активним учасником ритуальної трансформації героя. Розкрито, що структура фільму відповідала ритуальній логіці ініціації: зрада, втеча, посвята, жертва, смерть і воскресіння та формувала сакральну формулу наративу спротиву. Образ Олекси Довбуша постав як архетипічна фігура провідника, що інтегрував мотиви месника, мученика та культурного медіатора між травмою минулого і націєтворчою перспективою сучасності. Робота включала компаративний аналіз стрічки з іншими прикладами українського історичного кіно, що дозволило побачити спільну патерновану модель формування візуального наративу національного спротиву. Окремо розглянуто фігуру жінки у фільмі як носія сакрального знання та колективної інтуїції. Публічна рецепція стрічки підтвердила її статус як національного екранного міфу. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у запропонованій моделі аналізу фільму як ритуального наративу, що може бути застосована у сфері культурології, кіноаналізу, memory studies та досліджень національної ідентичності в умовах війни

Ключові слова: національний міф; ритуальний наратив; візуальна мова; українське кіно; культурна пам'ять; символіка простору; постколоніальний дискурс
