

SACRED MOTIFS OF MYROSLAV YASINSKYI'S CREATIVE WORK

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the sacred motifs of Myroslav Yasynskyi's work in the context of revealing the plot, compositional, and colouristic features of painting; trace the presentation of storylines, their interpretation in modern author's painting. *The research methodology* is based on the use of empirical research methods — observation, comparison, and interview, thanks to which the material was collected and worked through. The biographical and chronological methods were used to reveal the presented issues (study of life and creative path); the historical method was applied to determine the role of socio-cultural circumstances of the time in the formation and development of the artist's personality; the analytical, structural and logical methods were used to understand the special features of the artist's activities. *Results.* The study presents aspects of the use of sacred motifs in the modern pictorial interpretation of Myroslav Yasynskyi. At the same time, the illustrative material is systematised and the main works based on sacred motifs are highlighted. Based on the analysis, it is shown that the artist modernised the manner of presenting sacred subjects — thanks to his individual style, he offered a non-canonical image, while preserving the original content of the work. This interpretation is consistent with naïve images in icon painting. It is noted that against the background of modern artistic trends, Myroslav Yasynskyi develops his own creation concept, combining the signs of folk primitive art and the author's pictorial interpretation. *The scientific novelty* of the article lies in a comprehensive study aimed at revealing the latest aspects of Myroslav Yasynskyi's creative work. The article is the first attempt to analyse the artist's work as an original phenomenon formed on the basis of folk traditions of icon painting and at the same time embodied in the scheme of the postmodern painting. The practical significance of the research is to analyse the works that can be used as a material that fills the gaps in art studies criticism regarding the contemporary art of the city of Kolomyia. The artist's creative activity is still insufficiently covered and requires proper attention from the scientific community. Given this, it is possible to assert the novelty of the proposed topic, which will become a valuable addition to the art studies criticism of the postmodern art of Prykarpattia.

Keywords: painting; sacred art; image; plot; technique; work

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary art of the city of Kolomyia attracts our attention by the originality of the processes of forming visual expressiveness in the works of such artists as Yuliia Tsapurak, Nomedra Ciurlionyte, Vasyl Andrushko, Oleh Loburak, Myroslav Yasynskyi, and others. The artistic individuality of Myroslav Yasynskyi was most clearly manifested in painting, works based on sacred motifs deserve special attention. The artist's stylistic manner of presenting

images requires a thorough analysis and attention of art studies researchers to the unique phenomenon of modern regional art of Kolomyia as a whole.

The Kolomyia Art Centre is famous for its traditions of decorative and applied art, and nowadays more and more artists pay attention to fine art, which becomes the basis for creation. There is an interpretation of the folk tradition in pictorial plots that are developed in a contemporary postmodern manner. These processes were most clearly manifested in the work of Myroslav Yasynskyi, an artist who combines

tradition and innovation in works on sacred themes. Speaking about Myroslav Yasynskyi, Volodymyr Lukan notes that the artist "... is known for the modernist stylisation of the folk heritage of the Hutsul and Pokuttia regions (folk primitivism, icon painting) and sacred, although not canonical works created on its basis" (Lukan, 2009, p. 68). For Myroslav Yasynskyi, sacred art, which is most often observed in churches in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, inspires and becomes the basis of creation. The author's works show a noticeable modernisation of the image of well-known biblical subjects. Not adhering to the canons of either professional or folk icon painting, the artist creates the author's ideology of reproduction, adapts and converts transformational changes into a plot. Therefore, the work of Myroslav Yasynskyi should be considered in the context of postmodern changes that took place at the turn of the century.

RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS ANALYSIS

The development of folk arts and crafts of the Hutsul and Pokuttia regions is studied by many authors, including our contemporary Mykhailo Hnatiuk (2018), who considers in his works the formation of traditions, the emergence of schools and the work of famous masters. Mykhailo Hnatiuk (2018) also focuses on the chronology of the development of scientific research on folk art of the Hutsul and Pokuttia regions from the beginning of the 19th century, which was studied by O. Kolberg, V. Shukhevych, A. Budzan, Yu. Hoshko, I. Hurhula, Ya. Zapasko, Yu. Lashchuk, M. Mozdyr, O. Nykorak, M. Stankevich, R. Chuhai, M. Selivachov, H. Stelmashchuk, R. Shmahalo.

In addition to traditional decorative and applied arts, the issues of fine arts of the Hutsul and Pokuttia regions are considered by researchers V. Lukan (2009) (icon on glass) and O. Shpak (2017) (painting on glass).

In the context of analysing the issues of tradition in the work of western Ukrainian artists, I. Maksymliuk (2018) mentions the graphic work of the artist, in which the basis of formalistic search is the painting of Kosiv and Kolomyia tiles. Bibliographic information and illustrations of works for the period 1990–2005 can be found in the catalogue Myroslav Yasynskyi. Painting. The opening paragraph was written by Nina Velihotska (2005), PhD in Art Studies, who notes: "... elongated disembodied figures and faces are in obvious contradiction with human anatomy, but in art, the rules are created by the artist himself". The collection of works includes painting on canvas and wood, as well as painting on glass; the latter is characterised by the author's technique (the image is applied to

two panes of glass and looks spatial and voluminous). There are also reviews of Myroslav Yasynskyi's artist-friends about the author and his work. Partial information about the author, illustrations of his works, and exhibition activities can be found on the Internet.

The purpose of the article is to study the sacred motifs of Myroslav Yasynskyi's work, a contemporary Kolomyia artist, in the context of revealing the plot, compositional and colouristic features of painting; trace the presentation of storylines, their interpretation in modern author's painting.

The research methodology is based on the use of empirical research methods, in particular observation, comparison, and interview, thanks to which the material was collected and processed. The biographical and chronological methods were used to reveal the presented issues (study of life and creative path); the historical method was applied to determine the role of socio-cultural circumstances of the time in the formation and development of the artist's personality; the analytical, structural and logical methods were used to understand the special features of the artist's activities.

Research materials. It would not be possible to carry out the research without studying and working on sources related to the topic, namely information that partially covers the development of fine arts in Kolomyia. Catalogues and newspaper articles about Myroslav Yasynskyi explored by the author of the research show the need to analyse the artist's creative heritage, which has not been studied by modern researchers. At the same time, there is a need for recording and attribution of the artist's creative work.

RESULTS

In the contemporary art space of Kolomyia, the figure of Myroslav Yasynskyi stands out. Shape, line, colour are the components of his artistic compositions. The artist's works are surprisingly lively, dynamic, passionate, and artistic. The figurative and plastic language of his works is based on genetic memory and subconscious creative impulses.

The talented artist was born on the 14th of February, 1956 in the village of Kovalivka in Kolomyia, Ivano-Frankivsk region. He graduated from the woodworking department of the Kosiv Technical School of Folk Arts and Crafts (1975), studied at the Lviv State Institute of Applied and Decorative Arts (1977–1982). In Kolomyia, he worked as an artist at the art and decoration plant of the Ministry of Culture (1982–1988), a monumental artist of the Art Fund of the USSR (since 1988). A member of the Union of Artists of Ukraine and the Union of Folk Craftsmen of Ukraine since 1984, Myroslav Yasynskyi is also

a teacher at the Faculty of Design of the Kolomyia Institute and the Fine Arts Department of the Kolomyia Pedagogical College.

It is worth noting that Myroslav Yasynskyi's work is a significant phenomenon in the socio-cultural space of the Ivano-Frankivsk region. In 2012, the artist became a laureate of the Yaroslav Lukavetskyi Prize in the category "Fine Arts". The award was established in 2002 with the aim of popularising the best works of art, architecture, and design, increasing their role in the spiritual revival and aesthetic education (Velihotska, 2005).

M. Yasynskyi's first solo exhibition in Europe took place in 2005 in Berlin and was a great success. His works were demonstrated in Australia, Canada, Italy, Poland, France, Romania, Lithuania, and Latvia. There is also a large collection of the artist's works in the USA.

The majestic life of the saints has always attracted the attention of many artists who immersed themselves and empathised in a special way, visualising on canvases significant events for the history of mankind. Myroslav Yasynskyi also delves into the subject of Christ's sufferings.

In the work *Motifs of the Old Cross (Crucifixion)* made on canvas using the oil technique, we see many symbols and the first one is the Crucifixion. The artist does not adhere to the canons of traditional icon painting, he focuses on modern polystylistic art, which has absorbed many signs of modernism (transformation of the image from full-scale to simplified symbolic forms, originality of compositions and colour, etc.). In our country, in Western Ukraine in particular, the Crucifixion is included in the "Passion of Christ"— it is "... large-sized monumental works with the Crucifix in the central part, around which scenes-kleima depicting passions are grouped" (Makoida, 2013, p. 33). The author moves away from large-scale canvases and creates his own *Crucifixion* on a 50x70 cm plane. At the heart of the composition is the form-symbol of the cross, to which the executioners nailed Jesus. It is conditionally placed in the centre and goes beyond the boundaries of the composition, continuing, so to speak, to infinity that feeling of inevitable loss in the earthly life of the Son of God. The somewhat indistinct and ruined line of the silhouette brings it to the background, merging with the background. The main character (the figure of Jesus) is sufficiently expressed in a light tone, no anatomy is observed, and there is an outline, reduced to a simplified interpretation, geometrically similar shape. At first glance, it may seem that the artist deliberately primitivises the image, but it is precisely to this degree of transformation that he feels it. The artist recites a kind of harmony, rejecting the beauty of the human body, its volume even at the time of death, and instead, with a sharp and contradic-

tory image, he concretises the tragedy of the moment, tension, and sadness. The limbs of Christ (arms) are stretched out to the upper edges of the canvas, raised up by the author, they symbolise all-encompassing love for his offenders, as if Jesus covers the world with them, affirming the truth of faith-hope-love. The author adheres to the iconography in terms of the inclination of the head of Jesus — the head is tilted to the right and crowned with a wreath of thorns. The deformed proportions of the torso (small in mass and insufficiently elongated) are compensated by oblong outlines of the legs bent at the knees and with the feet superimposed on each other.

The work *To Calvary* is similar in plot and colour — the suffering Jesus carries the cross, thus paving the way of salvation for all mankind. The composition consists of two figures — the Saviour and the Angel. The silent scene is conveyed by the artist with a special expressiveness of emotions that dominate the faces. The sadness and pain of Jesus confuse the Angel who accompanies him to the place of execution. A white handkerchief in the hands of a divine being is a sign of support and help, and he hands it to Christ with special trepidation — bowing his head, he seems to cling to the Saviour. Between the two characters, there is a white background, a kind of emptiness, a symbolic image of eternity, where the Son of God is heading. The half-length image of Christ is located on the left side of the composition and attracts attention with rich colour tones of red and blue hues. The traditional colour scheme of the face and hands is ochre-brown, so the artist sanctifies the face with a glow, a golden reflection of God's presence in the Only Begotten Son, who is about to give his life for the salvation of mankind. Myroslav Yasynskyi fully felt this theme — the trembling of textural paint layers, the unstable dynamics of forms and even their partial destruction convey the tragedy of the plot. The artist works on the edge, feeling the slightest movements of forms; he pours out a stream of colours of light and delicate blue-purple shades the transparent incorruptibility of the Angel and the slightly blurred, half-bodied silhouette of the Saviour.

Myroslav Yasynskyi refers to the theme "Jesus in sorrow", borrowed from folk painting. Although the author's works are the latest interpretations of religious events, they are still based on "relevant canons, plots, and symbols (for Christians, this is the cross, Crucifixion, Christ, sheep, olive branch, grape bunch, images of the Saints, etc.), then it is their depiction in works of fine art that gives reason to attribute the latter to the sacred" (Tshorka, 2016, p. 116). The source of Myroslav Yasynskyi's work is ancient iconography — he masters it with modern stylistic solutions and approaches and offers the viewer to look at the already

historically known image in a completely different way. Here Jesus Christ in a crown of thorns sits in sadness, the figure of the Saviour is subjected to textural stylisation and shows vague natural features, the body is simplified, the shapes of the arms and legs are elongated, the silhouette of the face is pointed, emotionless. In the other half of the composition, at the top, on a piece of checkered fabric (collage), the Holy Spirit is present in the form of a dove, from which faint yellowish rays emanate. The background of the work is made of scraps of fabric, which indicate the fragmentary nature of human life, that is, that the Saviour was on the earth for a short period of time, but by his example showed sacrifice and love for the whole world. Jesus is sorrowful because the heavy burden of human sins weighs on him, he is saddened by troubles and pain. The artist emphasises the character with a tonally light barely noticeable relief (a thick layer of paint is applied) with textural marks from the palette knife. Neutral shades of reddish-purple-dim background are in harmony with the ochre tonal gradations of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In this work, the artist does not attach importance to traditional beauty, he tries to reveal it through emotionality and the author's vision of the sacred plot.

The search for artistic, stylistic, and compositional features leads to the appearance of unique images in the author's work. Myroslav Yasynskiy is in the process of developing creative art of the 21st century and just like the outstanding M. Boichuk, passed the stage in which "elements of imagery of modernism penetrate into the artist's work in the form of a peculiar folk aesthetics and special stylisation" (Beniak, 2017, p. 103). The knowledge of iconography of the plot of the Intercession is based on the frontal image of the Holy Mother of God in a mandola (almond-shaped) and two angels on both sides (profile image), who together with Mary hold an omophorion. The composition of the artist's *The Intercession* contains a transformed figure of the Mother of God, which almost completely fills the rectangular format, and even part of the crown and nimbus go beyond the boundaries. In the space to her right, the head of one of the Angels is depicted, and the others are drawn in the lower corner and linearly silhouetted from the yellow-red clothes of Mary. The asymmetric arrangement of the figure with a hyper-enlarged scale is blurred in the rectangular shape of the canvas, body parts (hand) disappear due to the lack of space for their image, and a certain impression of the dynamics of the mass, which is about to begin its movement, is created. A distinctive feature of the transfer of the faces of the Mother of God and the Angels is the half reproduction of facial features with a large eye and a long nose. The artist seems to reject one side of

human qualities and suggests combining everything into a unified system of uniformity, accessibility of perception of sacred images. There are no beautiful and gentle features in Mary's face, the transformation leads to coarsening, unrecognisability of female features. Reducing the technical presentation of volumes to a certain minimalism, the priority becomes a contour that is not drawn in accordance with the aesthetics of full-scale forms, but on the contrary describes pseudo-forms with "sloppy" movements. Angels, like twins, are placed in duplicate with one pair of hands for two. The colour scheme is ringing, the artist works mostly with clean, rich shades and occasionally introduces a dark tone to emphasise the artificial shadow. The task of reproducing the omophorion is interestingly solved - instead of a light fabric, a diagonal rectangle of an embroidered towel is used, which is located from edge to edge of the canvas in the lower part. Sometimes it intersects and disappears into the folds of Mary's clothes, Myroslav Yasynskiy does not specify it but introduces it as an attribute of the image. Technically, the composition is made with large textured strokes, where the expressive rhythm of thickly applied paint is clearly distinguished. By sculpting the image this way, the artist experiments with visualisation methods and achieves not so much the specifics of the plot, but a certain suggestion about it.

Elongated disembodied figures and faces are in obvious contradiction with human anatomy. Myroslav Yasynskiy's rules live in full harmony with his symbolic and spiritual worldview. The birth and development of the original closed-open form can be traced in his work. The line is sometimes clear, as if "cut through", sometimes "picturesque", and the colour spot is mobile, changing, and active. In the opposition or mutual understanding of these forces — colour and line — his own style is emerged.

The artist's painting goes beyond flatness, its existence comes in works made on wood. The natural texture, the unconventional compositions of the format leads to the appearance of a diptych *Ancient*, which contains sacred motifs. Wooden plates are well-thought-out compositional schemes with a field-frame and a space that contains images in certain geometric or arbitrary shapes. In other words, the space is not filled with the plot completely, only fragmentarily. The very name of the diptych *Ancient* indicates a topic that worries humanity, namely spirituality. One composition contains a triangle with a relief image of an angel on the background of a landscape, the other is quadrangular, and the author places the architecture of the temple on it. These two compositions are complemented by amorphous clouds, the sun and the earth planes. It should be noted that the silhouette of the plates is interrupted in the upper corners by the

rupture of the plane of the pseudo-frame and the addition of pin-shaped wooden forms at the corners. The drawing is created on the principle of folk painting with non-observance of the correct image conveying, with a certain distortion of the main forms and naivety in the transfer of plots.

Ancient returns to the author's work with a triptych depicting the Holy Family. The Mother of God with the child is in the centre, and the saints on the sides are not personified. The levkas relief corresponds to geometric forms, simple, somewhat naive and conveys only a tangential sign of holiness — such as a nimbus. There is stereotyping in the facial features, i.e., duplication and the same pattern of the presentation of volumes — both female and male faces. The light-shadow difference is created due to the rubbing of the paint on the levkas, in places of indentations, the colour tone becomes darker.

The composition *Blessing* is placed in the frame-paneled plane of a wooden square, in which the artist offers a rather interesting drawing placed symmetrically on both sides of the central motif — the head of the Saviour, depicted on the wooden plane. Two hands, with the grace of long fingers, simultaneously support everything earthly and bless the world. Fragmentary drawings with symbolic images of sacred architecture and ancient symbols create a pleasant planar action, which passes in stripes to the frame of the work. Carved details appropriately emphasise the originality of the theme, there is the relief of a cherub — a small Angel towering over the sacred composition. Also, following the example of folk carving, the artist uses the symbols of the "cross", "fish", "sun", "stars", etc. A harmony is found between the shade of the background and the colour of the painting, the light bluish-green-yellow toning stands out from the dark brown texture.

Sacred motifs are often found in other works, and the artist's special love for Angels is noticeable, because they often become the main characters. This is evidenced by such works as: *In the Arms of a White Angel*, *The Sign of an Angel*, *The Soul of His Soul*, *When the Wings are Folded* and others.

It is common for a person to feel the presence of invisible divine beings, and Myroslav Yasynskyi materialises this presence on canvases. The guardianship of an amazing creature is expressed in the work *In the Arms of a White Angel* — two figures facing each other form one whole; a person wrapped tightly in the hands of an angel does not resist, on the contrary — completely trusts him and clings to him. Faces, unfinished figures, hands, wings, as if from another universe, exist in the dimension of infinite love. Orange, yellow, and brown colours are on a bluish-blue background, but the figures are shown with white and

reddish lights. A simple composition perfectly specifies the very moment of union, the merging of the earthly and the heavenly is about to take place. The artist emphasises the ideological symbolism and artistic function of colour, because his angel is "white" — an angel of light, his body and clothing "seem to consist of light" (Udiak, 2011, p. 92). The artist in his work depicts a guardian angel, showing with what tenderness and awe he takes care of a person, and one of the main tasks of the angel is "preserving the life and saving the soul of the ward" (Stanychnov, 2018, p. 265). Therefore, the issue of the existence of this divine being is admired by the artist, he devotes the following works to revealing the existence of the angelic presence in human life.

The action of the next work takes place in the airy silvery weightlessness of the sky — *The Soul of His Soul* — this is a reflection on the eternal search for happiness, the harmony of being with a kindred spirit leads to the manifestation of these beautiful emotions. Two people (a man and a woman) in a half-figured image emerge from the edge of the composition and rise in arc-shaped silhouettes on a cloud. They have grown wings, their heads are fused with a golden texture of strokes, united by a single breath and embrace. The artist offers the viewer to delve into the idyll of love born on earth and raised to heaven. It was the work that was placed on the cover of the book *Heaven* by Volodymyr Kachkan.

Working on the border of the unity of the human and the divine, the artist offers a version of a kind of reincarnation — the state of exaltation, the apogee of human capabilities at any moment can be lost, and then the "wings that have grown behind your back" fold, and a person returns to everyday life. This work is a kind of reminder of the transience of human life, of the illusory hopes for omnipotence. We again see a composition with a disembodied silhouette of a person against the background of a barely noticeable landscape. An anxious emotion pervades the composition, the worldview acquires the flavour of unfulfilled hopes.

CONCLUSIONS

The article is an attempt to identify and analyse the works of Kolomyia artist Myroslav Yasynskyi, focused on sacred themes. Against the background of the development of the traditional art of the city of Kolomyia, in search of the author's identification, a form of visualisation appears, in which the artist reveals creative dynamics to create the latest form of image visualisation. The artistic features of the works are defined by specific compositions: *Motifs of the Old Cross (Crucifixion)*, *The Passion of Christ*, *To Calvary*, *Jesus in Sorrow*, *The Intercession*, *Ancient*, *In the Arms of*

a White Angel, Sign of an Angel, The Soul of His Soul, When the Wings are Folded and others. When considering the plot, symbolism, and colour, the author's approach to the manner of performance is crystallised. The main feature of the author's works is the transformation of anthropomorphic forms, where elongated proportions and stylisation prevail. The artist creates a single principle of drawing a sacred image, which is reflected in the figures of saints devoid of any signs of anthropomorphic specificity. It should be noted that the artist uses this principle in his other paintings. The lack of professional research on the creative work of Myroslav Yasynskyi gives grounds for analysing the artist's work. The information presented in the study will be useful for identifying an artist whose work is understandable in the postmodern world and will take its proper place in the chronicle of fine art.

Scientific novelty. The practical significance of the research is to analyse the works that can be used as a material that fills the gap in art studies criticism regarding the modern art of the city of Kolomyia. The artist's creative activity, as a unique phenomenon, has not yet been studied and requires proper attention from the professional scientific community. Given this, it is possible to assert the novelty of the proposed topic, which will become a valuable addition to the art studies criticism of the postmodern art of Prykarpattia.

The authors consider the prospect of further work on the given topic in the context of the study of the postmodern art of Prykarpattia in the period of the 1990s – the beginning of the 21st century. It was the period in the art of Prykarpattia that clearly marked the globalist transition to European art in the form of various artistic formats (events, art projects), which makes it possible to outline the stylistic and artistic features of the modern works of the most expressive representatives of this direction. In the context of the manifestations of artistic experiments in the work of contemporary artists, there is a need to understand the cultural and spiritual paradigm, which is a combination of tradition and innovation.

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САКРАЛЬНІ МОТИВИ ТВОРЧОСТІ МИРОСЛАВА ЯСІНСЬКОГО

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Мета статті — дослідити сакральні мотиви творчості Мирослава Ясінського в контексті розкриття сюжетних, композиційних та колористичних особливостей живопису; простежити за подачею сюжетних ліній, їх інтерпретацією в сучасному авторському живописі. *Методологія дослідження* базується на використанні емпіричних методів — спостереження, порівняння та співбесіди, завдяки яким було зібрано та опрацьовано матеріал. Також для розкриття представленої проблематики використано біографічний та хронологічний методи (вивчення життєвого й творчого шляху); історичний (визначення ролі соціокультурних обставин доби у становленні та формуванні особистості художника); аналітичний та структурно-логічний (осмислення специфіки напрямів діяльності митця). *Результати*. У дослідженні наведено аспекти використання сакральних мотивів у сучасній живописній інтерпретації Мирослава Ясінського. Водночас систематизовано ілюстративний матеріал та виділено основні твори за сакральними мотивами. На основі здійсненого аналізу доведено, що митець осучаснив манеру подачі сакральних сюжетів — завдяки індивідуальній стилістиці запропонував неканонічне зображення, зберігаючи водночас початковий зміст твору. Таке трактування суголосне з найвищими образами в ікономалярстві. Зазначено, що на тлі сучасних мистецьких тенденцій Мирослав Ясінський розвиває власну концепцію творення, поєднуючи ознаки мистецтва народного примітиву та авторської живописної інтерпретації. *Наукова новизна* статті полягає в комплексному дослідженні, спрямованому на розкриття новітніх аспектів творчості Мирослава Ясінського, Вперше проаналізовано доробок художника як самобутнє явище, сформоване на ґрунті народних традицій іконопису й водночас втілене в схему постмодерністського живопису. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у проведенні аналізу творів, що може бути використано як матеріал, який заповнює прогалини мистецтвознавчої критики про сучасне мистецтво міста Коломиї. Творча діяльність художника ще недостатньо висвітлена й потребує належної уваги з боку наукового кола. З огляду на це можна підтвердити новизну запропонованої теми, що стане ціннісним доповненням до мистецтвознавчої критики про постмодерністське мистецтво Прикарпаття.

Ключові слова: живопис; сакральне мистецтво; зображення; сюжет; техніка; твір

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