

## I. RESEARCH ARTICLES

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METAPHORS OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS  
IN THE SOVIET IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ON CULTURE  
IN THE YEARS 1953–1957:  
THE CASE OF THE *PRAVDA* NEWSPAPER\*

**Abstract.** Metaphors of light and darkness belong to the most salient ways of introducing and maintaining the Manichean division into US and THEM in many kinds of discourse, including the Soviet ideological discourse on culture in the period of de-Stalinisation. The present study investigates around 400 articles on cultural matters published in the years 1953–1957 in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, characterised by a confrontational stance connected with the political and cultural turning point of the period. It deals with the metaphors of light and darkness as these were used in the Soviet cultural propaganda of that period. The study reveals that the metaphors were used as a means of controlling the country's cultural life and that their application was no different from former patterns employed already in Ruthenian writings. They were harnessed to express the categories crucial to the authors: the central management of culture, the leading role of certain individuals and circles in creating culture, the superiority of OUR culture over THEIRS, etc. By referring to archetypical notions the author made sure that the propagandist tricks were effective.

**KEY WORDS:** culture of USSR; de-Stalinisation; newspeak; ideological discourse; light; darkness

Stalin's death in 1953 made the world, in particular the USSR, ask a crucial question: what next? In the Soviet society hopes for change were raised, articles on cultural issues began to be written in line with the end of de-

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Stalinisation. Artists hoped for more possibilities for creative developments outside the framework of the Stalinist paradigm. Relatively soon, opinions and publications began to appear that could be considered as a threat from the perspective of the orthodox followers of the Socialist Realist doctrine, such as Vladimir Pomerantsev's famous essay *On sincerity in literature*.<sup>1</sup> The reaction of Soviet authorities and their delegates to the so-called "ideological front", made up of both institutions and individuals, was swift. These can be considered pre-emptive actions: immediately after Stalin's death, cultural propaganda began to intensify the topics of social cohesion (*сплоченность*) and war (Zemszał 2015a, 2015c). New leaders initially tried to keep a tight reign on the state, including its cultural life, which was nevertheless gradually escaping central control. For several years the representatives of the official culture worked to hammer out a uniform stance on the challenges of the post-Stalinist reality. At that time individual artistic associations (of writers, painters, composers) organised all-union conventions, during which official recommendations of the authorities were issued as ultimate directives for those artists who wished to remain in the official circulation. The last of these conventions was the All-Union Convention of the Soviet Composers in the spring of 1957. This date seems to mark most distinctly the end of the period during which the cultural line of the Soviet Communist Party was established and communicated to the artistic circles after Stalin's death.

This span of several years is regarded mostly as the time when the rising wave of "political thaw"<sup>2</sup> was being held back. Stalinist cultural activists, such as Alexander Fadeyev or Alexey Surkov, defended their positions, although they did make slight concessions. This led, perforce, to a more confrontational style of official Soviet discourse on culture, which directly translated into a new version of the US/THEM dichotomy.<sup>3</sup> This was so because a new THEY appeared: the supporters of liberating the cultural life in the Soviet Union. Certainly, the sharp division into US and THEM had never been abandoned in the Soviet discursive practice (including cultural discourse). Nonetheless, in view of new threats (as perceived by the authorities), this division ceased to be a mere ritual distinction and regained its peculiar power of regulating the cultural life in the USSR. This meant that while continuous condemnation of the modernists or futurists, members of the

<sup>1</sup> In the December issue of the journal *Novy Mir*.

<sup>2</sup> The so-called Khrushchev Thaw.

<sup>3</sup> More on the US/THEM dichotomy in the communist ideological discourse see: Głowiński (1979); Fidelius (1984); Besançon and Urban (1988); Thom (1990); Kupina (1995); Nowak (2002); Vays (2009); Chernova (2013). The concepts of US and THEM are also discussed in *Etnolingwistyka* 19, devoted almost entirely to this matter.

Russian Association of Proletariat Writers, was just a ritualistic practice in the 1940s and early 1950s (these groups had long been inactive at that time), when the grass-roots liberalist aspirations emerged, the division into US and THEM (also within the USSR) once more became particularly relevant. This issue will be analysed here on the basis of selected articles on culture published in the newspaper *Pravda* in the years 1953–1957.

Metaphors of light and darkness belong to the most salient manifestations of the Manichean division (as understood by Françoise Thom, 1990: 7) in the discourse being investigated discourse.<sup>4</sup> It is undoubtedly an archetypal dichotomy that involves concepts present in various cultures and historical periods. The author of the concept of archetypal metaphor (Osborn 2008: 185) chose the metaphors associated with this semantic field as central in a given category. The history of this conception history can be traced back to biblical texts, Plato (Kudlińska-Stepień 2003: 16), to prehistoric times, when on the elementary level people realised that daylight is a necessary condition of their existence, while fire<sup>5</sup> is a force that provides warmth and security at night and protects against darkness as the antithesis of light (Kezina 2008: 99). That is why light and fire were readily sacralised and metaphors associated with them became one of the foundations of mythological thinking. The polar valuation present in the light–darkness pair is considered as one of most salient. Evgeniy S. Belov writes:

Clearly conveying positive and negative associations, images of light and darkness create a simplified dual black-and-white reference. Capable of evoking stable positive and negative associations with the fundamental human drive for survival and development, metaphorical images of light and darkness embody enhanced evaluative judgments whose aim is to elicit a significant evaluative reaction from the audience. (Belov 2010: 15)

These associations are instinctive and automatic. In the words of Elena M. Vol'f, “*light* evidently conveys the ‘+’ sense, and *dark* the ‘-’ sense, where

<sup>4</sup> An outline of the most important manifestations of the categories of US and THEM in the Soviet discourse on culture can be found in Zemszał (2016b).

<sup>5</sup> Two ways of perceiving fire should be distinguished here, each relating to a different aspects of it: fire as a source of light and fire as a source of heat and energy. The concept of FIRE was used in the Soviet propaganda not only because fire was perceived as a source of light but also, or even predominantly, because it was associated, through the high temperatures that it connotes, with involvement, strong emotionality (cf. e.g. “And the secret of this love is that in all the writings of the writer, Tolstoy’s love for the people burns with a hot, inextinguishable flame, in which the writer saw the main driving force of history”; *Pravda, Slava*), or endurance (through association with the tempering property of fire used in smithery, cf. e.g. “The Soviet Tajik literature, conceived in the flames of the Great October Socialist Revolution, began to develop under the direct influence of the Russian classical and modern Soviet literature”; *Pravda, Uldzhabayev*). In fact, the concept of FIRE in the Soviet propaganda calls for a separate study.

*dark* becomes almost a synonym for *evil*” (Vol’f 1988: 54). Anna Grzegorzcyk, in turn, concludes:

Darkness preceding the act of creation (Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Judeo-Christian traditions) is a symbol of chaos, disorder, disarray, wilderness, and lawlessness. It is a symbol of night, death, and ignorance, a ‘reverse side of life’. As such, it is perceived in terms of evil, hypocrisy, fear, misfortune, and sin. Light following darkness (*post tenebras lux*) is the creation of the world, the condition for life, the source of vision and cognition; as a symbol of the day it is viewed in terms of goodness, beauty, truth, happiness, and redemption. (Grzegorzcyk 1994: 89)

Additionally, there is the Slavic pagan tradition. An interesting analysis of this came from Alexander Potebnya, already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “If we did not know that the deities of fire and light occupied an important place in the pagan beliefs of the Slavs, we could see this from the abundance of words that are derived from images of fire and light” (Potebnya 2000: 9). The notions of light and darkness encode valuation in an unambiguous manner and they often occur in axiologically loaded collocations (cf. the Russian *светлый ум* ‘bright mind, *темные мысли* ‘dark thoughts’, etc.). Potebnya associated lexemes such as *хорош* ‘good’ or *красивый* ‘beautiful’ with the semantics of light (Potebnya 2000: 25). In his analysis, he referred to the pre-Christian period in the history of the Slavs. Boris Uspensky, in turn, paid attention to the argumentation based on the opposition of light and darkness in an anonymous document related to the establishment of the autocephaly of the church in Ruthenia: “Enough of the abominations of Greek Orthodoxy: instead of a life-giving light it plunges into darkness!” (Uspensky 1996: 388).<sup>6</sup> Valuation based on these notions became the essential element of worldview created by the Soviet propaganda. Petr Chervinskiy even suggest a degree of Sovietisation of these concepts, mentioning such characteristic newspeak phrases as *светоч партии* ‘torch of the party’, *светоч коммунизма* ‘torch of communism’, *поднять факел социализма* ‘raise the torch of socialism’, *факел революции* ‘torch of revolution’, *светлый луч* ‘light beam’, *наши маяки* ‘our lighthouses’ (Chervinskiy 2011: 25). Although the semantics associated with the notions of light and darkness was indeed one of the most important in the Soviet discourse (Chervinskiy’s list could be significantly extended), it is doubtful that even such a powerful discourse would be able to appropriate this semantic field. One should rather talk about a masterly use of the archetype for the Soviet propaganda’s own purposes.<sup>7</sup> Consider,

<sup>6</sup> *Увы ссединения мерзости греческому православию: како убо вместо света животного мрака тмы вменяется!*

<sup>7</sup> For example, I consider a very skilful use of religious lexis, theoretically “hostile” to the Communist ideology, to be a manifestation of this mastery (see Zemszał 2015b).

for example, a fragment of the 15<sup>th</sup>-c. religious polemic cited by Uspensky with the following quote from *Pravda*:

(1) **Like light resists darkness**, the war fate of our literature resists the fate of the bourgeois literature's priests of "pure art". (*Pravda, Doklad Surkova*)<sup>8</sup>

This type of highly salient opposition is used in crisis situations. The opposition of light and darkness is, in fact, among the few that occur in linguistic constructions indicating a direct conflict, as in the abovementioned example. The degree of markedness of both of its elements implies that it is an absolute opposition, a conflict of the ultimate values. Here is the second stanza of one of the most important songs from the Second World War period, *Священная война* [Holy War] by Alexander Alexandrov and Vasily Lebedev-Kumach:

Like two different poles;  
In all we are hostile:  
For **light** and peace we are fighting,  
They – for the kingdom of **darkness**.<sup>9</sup>

To fight against the dark automatically means to take the side of light (i.e. of good), as in (2) and (3):

(2) Only the blind do not see in Whitman a mighty, life-affirming poet. His work, in all its spirit, resists the forces of darkness, predation and aggression. (*Pravda, Mendelson*)<sup>10</sup>

(3) We need art that elevates man to independent creativity, reinforces in him the communist perception of life, the sense of his duty to intervene in this life, to assert and develop the beautiful, to overturn and destroy the dark and ugly. (*Pravda, Zavadskiy*)<sup>11</sup>

The semantics of light and darkness and related semantic fields were permanent elements of the Soviet ideological discourse from its inception,<sup>12</sup> also in the Stalinist period. The Soviet nation was to live as if "under the sun

<sup>8</sup> *Военная судьба нашей литературы, как свет мраку, противопоставит судьбе жрецов «чистого искусства» буржуазной литературы.*

<sup>9</sup> *Как два различных полюса;*

*Во всем враждебны мы:*

*За свет и мир мы боремся,*

*Они – за царство тьмы.*

<sup>10</sup> *Только слепые не видят в Уитмене могучего, жизнеутверждающего поэта. Его творчество по всему своему духу противопоставит силам мрака, хищничества и агрессии.*

<sup>11</sup> *Нам нужно искусство, поднимающее человека к самостоятельному творчеству, укрепляющее в нем коммунистическое восприятие жизни, ощущение своей обязанности вмешаться в эту жизнь, чтобы утверждать и развивать прекрасное, опровергать и уничтожать темное и безобразное.*

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the title of one of the first Bolshevik newspapers: *Iskra* 'Spark'.

of the Stalinist constitution” (*под солнцем сталинской конституции*). Stalin himself was referred to as the the Sun, a torch (*свечоч*), or a guiding star (*путеводная звезда*) (cf. Zemszał 2016). Cf. also a fragment of the Soviet anthem of 1943:

Through the thunderstorms the sun of freedom shone to us,  
And Lenin lit up for us a great path.<sup>13</sup>

The popularity of solar symbolism in the Stalinist period was related to the potential of this metaphor, which evokes associations with the central position of the sun or other sources of light (*костер* ‘bonfire, *очаг* ‘hearth’), around which other celestial bodies or people cluster. The centralism of the Stalinist regime found an ideal form of expression in the sun metaphor, cf.:

(4) On the side of the Soviet artists there is life itself, history itself, because all their creativity is turned to life, to the nation, **to the sun**. (*Pravda, Vsesoyuznyy*)<sup>14</sup>

While the works by the Soviet artists turn towards the sun, i.e. light and life, the works by the other artists turn towards darkness and away from life:

(5) Hollywood cinema uses the so-called “eternal” themes of personal relationships in order to take the viewer away from the real content of life into the stuffy **darkness** of psychopathology, for all kinds of slander against human dignity. (*Pravda, Papava*)<sup>15</sup>

The common motif of the sun as the source of life and all energy is used in the following comparison:

(6) It [Soviet literature] is as pure as water, necessary as bread, generous and extravagant **as the sun**. (*Pravda, Dhafri*)<sup>16</sup>

The metaphor of light, on which all the Soviet artists were to focus their attention, became a useful instrument of the socialist-realist propaganda. Concepts related to light could thus serve as a tool of consolidation of the USSR’s artistic circles, e.g.:

<sup>13</sup> *Сквозь грозы сияло нам солнце свободы,  
И Ленин великий нам путь озарил.*

<sup>14</sup> *На стороне советских художников сама жизнь, сама история, потому что к жизни, к народу, к солнцу обращено все их творчество.*

<sup>15</sup> *Растленный кинематограф Голливуда использует так называемые «вечные» темы личных отношений для того, чтобы увести зрителя от реального содержания жизни в душный **мрак** психопатологии, для всяческой клеветы на человеческое достоинство.*

<sup>16</sup> *Она чиста, как вода, необходима как хлеб, и щедра и расточительна, как солнце.*

(7) How brightly the **flame of the light of social realism** will **burn and flare up**, if the Union of Soviet Artists of the USSR succeeds in **joining all the creative forces** of our fine arts. (*Pravda, Vysokoe*)<sup>17</sup>

We are thus dealing with mutual dependence: the power of the “flame” of social realism depends on the unity of the Soviet artists.

The central position of the source of light, typical of the category of US, is opposed to a sinister agreement among the members of the category of THEM (enemies):

(8) We must actively expose the coalition of the forces of **darkness**. (*Pravda, Rech*)<sup>18</sup>

The light, which is a goal to which both the Soviet and foreign creators of culture are supposed to aspire, the light that marks the centre around which people are supposed to gather, is conceptualised as the sun or a lighthouse (*маяк*<sup>19</sup>), as in the following examples:

(9) We know from where the **sun** of real culture is shining, – Japanese journalists told me at one of the many meetings. (*Pravda, Kudrevatych*)<sup>20</sup>

(10) Soviet literature – he declares [Li Gi Yen, of North Korea] – as a **bright lighthouse**, illuminates the path of modern Korean literature. (*Pravda, Vtoroy*)<sup>21</sup>

(11) Progressive literature is now in the life of nations not only a **lighthouse** that **illuminates** the way forward, but also a mighty organizing force. (*Pravda, Doklad Tikhonova*)<sup>22</sup>

This also applies to the historical patterns accepted in the official cultural policy of the USSR:

(12) Their [artists'] creativity is dear because it put the Russian national art on a high pedestal of the state system, becoming a **lighthouse** for the progressive art movement. (*Pravda, Yuon*)<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Как же ярко будет гореть и разгораться светлое пламя социалистического реализма, если Союз советских художников СССР на деле сумеет слить воедино все творческие силы нашего изобразительного искусства.

<sup>18</sup> Мы должны активней разоблачать коалицию сил тьмы.

<sup>19</sup> Consider the name of Vladimir Mayakovsky, probably the most distinguished poet in the USSR, whose name links up with this theme through phonetic associations (in Russian, *маяк/тауак* means ‘lighthouse’). This undoubtedly coincidental convergence was extremely fortunate for the Soviet cultural propaganda.

<sup>20</sup> Мы знаем, откуда светит нам солнце настоящей культуры, – говорили мне японские журналисты на одной из многочисленных встреч.

<sup>21</sup> Советская литература – заявляет он – как яркий маяк, освещает путь современной корейской литературе.

<sup>22</sup> Прогрессивная литература в настоящее время является в жизни народов не только маяком, освещающим путь вперед, но и могучей организующей силой.

<sup>23</sup> Их [передвижников] творчество дорого тем, что оно поставило русское национальное искусство на высокий пьедестал гражданственности, ставшей маяком для поступательного движения искусства.

The lighthouse metaphor is a kind of associative-connotative blend whose persuasive potential is difficult to overestimate. In addition to the semantics of light, it also connotes the dangers of sea travel. The lighthouse here is identified with salvation, which means that the surroundings (the “bourgeois culture”) pose a threat. The image of the lighthouse as a symbol of rescue and salvation is so strongly entrenched in culture that its connotations were activated also with examples from outside the immediate Soviet context. Consider some examples of literary use:

(13) Through the looming **darkness** of the Catholic reaction, this small community, which just miraculously managed to preserve its independence and freedom of the Gospel, shone to the Protestants as a **salutary lighthouse**. (B. D. Porozovskaya, *Zhan Kal'vin* (1898), NKRY)<sup>24</sup>

(14) All these fleeting attachments turned pale before a deep and sincere love, which, starting in those same young years and passing through several phases, became stronger and became a **bright lighthouse** in the poet's life, to which he always resorted during a difficult struggle, among worldly and spiritual storms. (P. A. Viskovaty [Viskovatov], *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo M. Y. Lermontova* (1891), NKRY)<sup>25</sup>

For Alexander Druzhinin this collocation was self-evident and apparently even vulgar already in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century:

(15) But the **salutary lighthouse** (what a vulgar cliché) for me evokes three ideas in which I see everything that is the highest in the world: the idea of good, truth, and love. (A. V. Druzhinin, *Dnevnik* (1845), NKRY)<sup>26</sup>

The lighthouse also marks the direction one should go in, and thereby evokes an unambiguous association with the leading role of social-realist art and literature in world culture. Below is an example of how Lenin exploited the metaphor of the lighthouse:

(16) But it is also necessary for the leaders of the revolutionary parties to set their tasks broader and bolder at such a time, so that their slogans always go ahead of the revolutionary activity of the masses, being a **lighthouse** for it, showing in all its grandeur and in all its charm our democratic and socialist ideal, showing the closest, most direct way

<sup>24</sup> Сквозь надвигавшийся **мрак** католической реакции эта маленькая община, точно чудом успевавшая сохранить свою независимость и свободу Евангелия, светила протестантам как **спасительный маяк**.

<sup>25</sup> Все эти мимолетные привязанности побледнели перед глубокой и искренней любовью, которая, начавшись в эти же молодые годы и пройдя через несколько фазисов, укрепилась и стала в жизни поэта **светлым маяком**, к которому он всегда прибегал во время тяжелой борьбы, среди житейских и душевных бурь.

<sup>26</sup> Но **спасительным маяком** (что за пошлая вычитанная фраза) возвышаются для меня три идеи, в которых я вижу все, что есть самого высокого на свете: идея добра, правды и любви.



to a complete, unconditional, decisive victory. (V.I. Lenin, *Dve taktiki sotsyal-demokratii v demokraticheskoy revolyutsii* (1905), NKRY)<sup>27</sup>

Lenin's recommendations concerning culture also evoked the imagery of light, e.g.:

(17) The Leninist principle of the party spirit of artistic festivities became the **guiding star** for all figures of Ukrainian culture. (*Pravda, Novicheko*)<sup>28</sup>

The beginning of "the new", i.e. US, was presented as a sunrise:

(18) But the **sun** of a truly human culture was only beginning to rise. (*Pravda, Ryurikov* 1953)<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes a less vivid expression, such as *источник света* 'source of light', was used:

(19) We must always remember the special position that our literature now occupies among other literatures in the world, being a **source of light**, life-affirming ideas, a battlefield energy for working people abroad, a source of creative experience for leading progressive writers of foreign countries. (*Pravda, Doklad Surkova*)<sup>30</sup>

It is worth noting the difference between the uses which accentuate the importance of the Soviet or "progressive" literature from the perspective of its direct representatives, i.e. the USSR cultural activists, and the uses which function as acts of accession to this community from the outside. The latter were used by foreign authors, especially ones from outside the so-called "people's democracies" block.

The light which for the Soviet cultural propaganda was emitted by the Soviet "progressive" culture, should have a beneficial influence on those within its sphere of influence. In the following example, there is a combination of the notion of light with "organic metaphors", with the intention to intensify the pragmatic effect:

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<sup>27</sup> Но надо, чтобы и руководители революционных партий шире и смелее ставили свои задачи в такое время, чтобы их лозунги шли всегда впереди революционной самостоятельности массы, служа маяком для нее, показывая во всем его величии и во всей его прелесть наш демократический и социалистический идеал, показывая самый близкий, самый прямой путь к полной, безусловной, решительной победе.

<sup>28</sup> Ленинский принцип партийности художественного торжества стал **путеводной звездой** для всех деятелей украинской культуры.

<sup>29</sup> Но **солнце** подлинно человеческой культуры только встало.

<sup>30</sup> Мы всегда должны помнить о том особом положении, которое занимает ныне наша литература среди других литератур мира, являясь **источником света**, жизнеутверждающих идей, боевой энергии для трудящихся за рубежом, источником творческого опыта для передовых прогрессивных писателей зарубежных стран.

(20) The influence of Russian and all Soviet literature is similar to **sunlight**, which kills germs harmful to the spiritual organism of our nation and pours vital forces into its muscles. (*Pravda, Vtoroy*)<sup>31</sup>

The light fills the “forces of darkness” with fear – in (21) the forces are identified with American culture:

(21) They **are afraid of clear daylight**, afraid of the truth: “I don’t want realism. I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. . . Don’t turn the light on!” – screams Blanche, the heroine of the play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and her hysterical scream could be displayed on the banner of Broadway drama. (*Pravda, Elistartova*)<sup>32</sup>

The task of the Soviet literature (and artistic expression in general) was in this view the transmission of the light of truth,<sup>33</sup> e.g.:

(22) No intrigues of the enemies of mankind, no spitefulness of the reactionary press, are able to conceal from the people of goodwill this voice of truth, this **light of truth that is carried** by the books of the Soviet writers. (*Pravda, Literatura*)<sup>34</sup>

Institutions whose aim was to popularise Soviet literature were referred to as *очаги* ‘hearths’:

<sup>31</sup> *Влияние русской и всей советской литературы похоже на солнечный свет, который убивает вредные для духовного организма нашего народа микробы и вливает жизненные силы в его мышцы.*

<sup>32</sup> *Они боятся ясного дневного света, боятся правды: «Я не хочу реализма! Я хочу магии, Да, да, магии! Я ее стараюсь дать людям. Я представляю им вещи не такими, как они есть. . . Не зажигай света!» – так кричит Бланш, героиня пьесы «Трамвай, именуемый желанием», и этот истерический вопль мог бы быть написан на знамени бродвейской драматургии.*

<sup>33</sup> Consider the following example, whose author tries to characterise the completely “inverted” system of values prevalent in “bourgeois” culture. Here too the important role is played by the associations of light with truth on the one hand, and darkness with falsehood on the other: . . . *когда-то, в двадцатых годах, А. Мариенгоф выпустил грязную книжонку под названием «Роман без вранья», представляющую собою «исповедь» некоего «шизофренического поколения» – декадентской «золотой» молодежи, снобов и «денди», считавших «враньем» все честное, простое и светлое в жизни, а «правдой» и «искренностью» – все темное и грязное. [. . . once, in the twenties, A. Mariengof published a dirty little book called *The Romance Without Lies*, which is a “confession” of a “schizophrenic generation”, decadent “golden” youth, snobs and “dandies” who viewed “lying” as that which is honest, simple and bright, while “truth” and “sincerity” as that which is dark and dirty.] (*Pravda, Ermilov*)*

<sup>34</sup> *Никакие происки врагов человечества, никакие злобствования реакционной печати не в силах скрыть от людей доброй воли этот голос правды, этот свет истины, что несут в себе книги советских писателей.* Note, however, the symptomatic use of the word *истина* ‘truth’, which evokes associations with objectivity and scientific inquiry (*научная истина*) (Chernikov 1999: 164; Zhavoronkova 2015: 49).

(23) Today, every village reading-room and every city house of culture are the hearths in which the nation's talents develop. (*Pravda, Papava*)<sup>35</sup>

In this view, the benevolent light serves to dispel the darkness associated with the mendacious propaganda of THEM:

(24) **With the light** of progressive art, the figures of Japanese culture **disperse the dark** of false propaganda designed to sow enmity between the nations of the USSR and Japan. (*Pravda, Kozhin*)<sup>36</sup>

Darkness in (24) is attributed to the world of THEIRS. Sometimes this feature is woven into other binary oppositions, as in the wealth–poverty opposition in (25):

(25) The strength and importance of Soviet literature is great now, when bourgeois literature is in the **twilight of mental poverty**, when it becomes an instrument for the destruction of culture created by the labour and genius of mankind. (*Pravda, Vystuplenye*)<sup>37</sup>

Everything that relates to the category of US is clear, also in the sense of ‘transparent, lucid’:

<sup>35</sup> *Сегодня каждая сельская изба-читальня и каждый городской дом культуры – это очаги, в которых развиваются народные таланты.*

<sup>36</sup> *Светочем прогрессивного искусства деятели японской культуры рассеивают мрак лживой пропаганды, рассчитанной на то, чтобы посеять вражду между народами СССР и Японии.*

<sup>37</sup> *Велики сила и значение советской литературы сейчас, когда буржуазная литература – в сумерках умственной бедности, когда она становится орудием разрушения культуры, созданной трудом и гениями человечества.* The names for “light” and “dark” times of the day are a potential source of metaphorical uses (e.g.: *рассвет литературы социалистического реализма* ‘the dawn of the literature of social realism’). There is one such example in the collected material, although it refers to the socio-political situation, rather than the cultural situation: *В черную фашистскую ночь, длившуюся с 1923 по 1944 год, советская литература воспитывала наш народ, поднимала его на борьбу против душителей культуры, палачей и убийц всего прекрасного в жизни, против эксплуататоров и кровопийц* (In the black fascist night, which lasted from 1923 to 1944, the Soviet literature educated our nation, raised it to fight against the stranglers of culture, the executioners and murderers of everything beautiful in life, against exploiters and bloodsuckers) (*Pravda, Vystuplenye*). This vivid quote shows how difficult it is to distinguish cultural from non-cultural elements: there is a close relation between cultural and socio-political spheres in totalitarian conditions. The relevant elements in the fragment quoted can be divided into two categories: the first category includes terms connected with culture in the strict sense (*душители культуры* ‘the stranglers of culture’). Assuming that there is a relation between culture and what is “beautiful in life”, the “stranglers” affect cultural activity (*палачи и убийцы всего прекрасного в жизни* ‘the executioners and murderers of everything beautiful in life’) – this assumption is dubious however. The second category includes the designations that are unrelated to cultural themes, however sophisticated the interpretation provided is (*эксплуататоры и кровопийцы* ‘exploiters and bloodsuckers’).

(26) He [Lenin] protected the construction of a new culture from the influence of idealists and decadents, from bourgeois influences: the **clarity** of ideological positions is the most important foundation of creative work. (*Pravda, Ryurikov* 1956)<sup>38</sup>

(27) The decisions of the Second Congress of the Polish United Workers Party set forth a broad and **clear** program for the struggle to further elevate culture. (*Pravda, Sokorskiy*)<sup>39</sup>

The term *светлый* 'bright' is even more salient, as it has not been highly conventionalised, e.g.:

(28) Soviet artists are expected to produce works that [...] raise him to fight [...] for the **brightest** and loftiest ideals of our time. (*Pravda, TK KPSS*)<sup>40</sup>

(29) **Bright** geniuses were the torches of humanity in the most torturous dark night. (*Pravda, Rech*)<sup>41</sup>

The opposite side of this dichotomy is portrayed with the adjectives *темный* 'dark' (see example 3, 29 and the quote from Ermilov in footnote 32) and *мрачный* 'dark/gloomy', e.g.:

(30) The American children's literature, represented by the so-called "comic books", introduces the young readers into another world. It introduces them into the world of crimes and **gloomy** horrors, murders, the most rabid hatred of human kind. ([Report], *Pravda*)<sup>42</sup>

In example 29, there is another item related to the semantics of light: *свечоч* 'torch'. Third edition of Ozhegov's *Slovar' russkogo yazyka* (1953)<sup>43</sup> defines two meanings of that item, of which one is archaic: "a big candle, flare", the other qualifies the term as a high-style metaphor used to refer to a person: "the one who brings enlightenment, truth, freedom". Although *свечоч* was used figuratively as early as in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>38</sup> Он ограждал строительство новой культуры от влияний идеалистов и декадентов, от буржуазных влияний: **ясность** идейных позиций – важнейшая основа творческой работы.

<sup>39</sup> В решениях II съезда Польской объединенной рабочей партии намечена широкая и **ясная** программа борьбы за дальнейший подъем культуры.

<sup>40</sup> От советских художников ждут произведений, которые [...] поднимают его на борьбу [...] за самые **светлые** и высокие идеалы нашего времени.

<sup>41</sup> **Светлые** гении в самую мучительную темную ночь были **свечочами** человечества.

<sup>42</sup> В иной мир вводит юного читателя детская литература США, представленная так называемыми «комиксами». Она вводит в мир преступлений и **мрачных** ужасов, убийств, самого омерзительного человеконенавистничества.

<sup>43</sup> First edition published in 1949.

and its literal uses were taken over by the term *факел* 'torch'<sup>44</sup> (Vinogradov 1999: 624–625), it still evoked the notion of the torch. The following examples from the National Corpus of the Russian Language (NKRY) confirm this:

(31) Now we can write into the album of eastern friends: “The fireproof **torch** is shining. In the name of the beauty of knowledge, in the name of culture, the wall between the West and the East has been obliterated”. (K. Roerich, *Сердце Азии* (1929), NKRY)<sup>45</sup>

(32) It turned out to be so: he ignited theosophy, passed its **torch** to his disciples, went into the catacombs: to lurk and to deepen his yoga. (A. Bely, *Начало века* (1930), NKRY)<sup>46</sup>

The word *светоч* was used to refer not only to people but also to other sources of light, metaphorically understood. While OUR group and OUR actions are related to light, THEIR group appeals to the dark side of the light–dark opposition, and this appeal is certainly intentional, e.g.:

(33) They **pull out the darkest** pages of Dostoevsky’s works in order to slander the revolution and the Russian people. (*Pravda, Velikiy*)<sup>47</sup>

The actions of OUR group result in spreading the light, e.g.:

(34) And we believe that the party, on behalf of the whole nation, will always thank the writers if they do not destroy the strength of their talents, do not corrupt the souls of Soviet people, but **fill them with light**, with the faith in the rightfulness of our ideas, with an unquenchable thirst to fight for communism and to win. (*Pravda, Slovo*)<sup>48</sup>

(35) In this great revolutionary book, which summarized the experience of traversing the path and **illuminated** the road ahead, Gorky created a vivid image of the Russian worker... (*Pravda, Bertse*)<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> In one of the analysed texts the term *факел* is used in the name of a theatre: *Творческие успехи «Красного факела» – свидетельство роста советского театрального искусства*. [The artistic success of the “**Red Torch**” is the evidence of the growth of the Soviet theatre art.] (*Pravda, Ivanov*)

<sup>45</sup> *Теперь же мы можем писать в альбом восточных друзей: «Несгораемый светоч сияет. Во имя красоты знания, во имя культуры стерлась стена между Западом и Востоком».*

<sup>46</sup> *Выходило: зажег теософию, ученикам своим передал ее светоч, ушел в катакомбы: таиться и йогоу свою углублять.*

<sup>47</sup> *Они вытаскивают самые мрачные страницы произведений Достоевского для того, чтобы клеветать на революцию и на русский народ.*

<sup>48</sup> *И мы верим, что партия от имени всего народа всегда скажет и писателям спасибо, если они силой своих талантов будут не разрушать, не растлевать души советских людей, а наполнять их светом, верой в правоту наших идей, неугасимой жаждой бороться за дела коммунизма и победить.*

<sup>49</sup> *В этой великой революционной книге, обобщившей опыт уже пройденного пути и осветившей дорогу вперед, Горький создал яркий образ русского рабочего. Compare рассеивают мрак [disperse the dark] in example (24).*

Surely, there is an asymmetry here because darkness defined as the absence of light does not require any action (in the data analysed here there are no collocations meaning ‘to cause darkness’). Light, on the other hand, should be kindled, brought, etc. Thus, the concept of light can be related to the active–passive opposition.

In the texts examined here a significant quantitative disproportion is noteworthy. The positively marked lexemes and their combinations related to the category of light are numerous: *свет* ‘light’, *солнце* ‘sun’, *гореть* ‘burn’, *пламя* ‘flame’, *маяк* ‘lighthouse’, *путеводная звезда* ‘guiding star’, *источник света* ‘source of light’, *светлый* ‘bright’, *ясность* ‘clarity’, *свеч* ‘torch’, *осветивший* ‘illuminated’, *огонь* ‘fire’. The “dark” side of this dichotomy is represented by only a few items: *мрак* [‘the dark’, *тьма* ‘darkness’, *темный* ‘dark’, *сумерки* ‘dusk’, *мрачный* ‘dark, gloomy’].<sup>50</sup> Such disproportion may have resulted from a certain degree tempering of the discourse in the post-Stalinist period, but this cannot be the main explanation. A much more convincing one has to do with the very nature of the concepts (and phenomena) of light and darkness. Light is something that has an easily identifiable source (*огонь* ‘fire’, *солнце* ‘sun’, *маяк* ‘lighthouse’, *свеч* ‘torch’, *пламя* ‘flame’), whereas the “dark” side of the conceptual pair has not generated concepts of this kind. There is a parallel disproportion in the case of verbs and verbal forms with the meaning ‘cause the appearance of light’ or signifying action (by means) of light or fire: *гореть* ‘burn’,

<sup>50</sup> Indirectly (though derivation) related to the “dark” side of the dichotomy, the negatively marked terms *мракобес* ‘obscurantist’ and *мракобесие* ‘obscurantism’ are quite extensively exploited in the data analysed here, as in the following: *Пьеса оказалась настолько грубой и неприкрытой апологией фашистского **мракобесия**, что даже реакционные газеты не решились поддержать ее* [The play turned out to be so crude and undisguised as the apology of fascist **obscurantism** that even the reactionary newspapers did not dare to support it] (*Pravda, Litoshko*); *Так позорно окончилась еще одна наглая попытка американских **мракобесов** изолировать театр в качестве трибуны для пропаганды идей фашизма и войны, для разжигания ненависти к Советскому Союзу, к лагерю мира, прогресса и демократии* [So shamefully ended another blatant attempt by American obscurantists to isolate the theatre as a platform for the propaganda of the ideas of fascism and war, for inciting hatred against the Soviet Union, against the camp of peace, progress and democracy] (*Pravda, Litoshko*); *Мракобесы и душиатели прогресса охотно обращаются к реакционным сторонам в наследии писателя...* [Obscurantists and stranglers of progress willingly turn to the reactionary sides in the writer’s legacy] (*Pravda, Velikiy*). Ozhegov’s *Slovar’ russkogo yazyka* defines *мракобесие* as “views and behaviour of obscurantists”, while the term *мракобес* as “a reactionary, enemy of progress, culture and science”. Both lexemes are marked in the dictionary as used contemptuously (cf. Vinogradov 1999: 322–323). The root *мрак* ‘the dark’ is recognisable in the derivational form *мракобес* (Vinogradov 1999: 323) and can be interpreted as a lexicalised metaphor.

*разгораться* ‘flare up’, *пламенеть* ‘flame’, *осветивший* ‘illuminated’. While the system offers some possibilities of agentive structures within the “dark” side of the opposition (*темнеть* ‘darken’, *смеркать* ‘grow dark’, *тушить* ‘extinguish’, etc.), some lexemes are never used in structures with an agent (which structures are crucial in the US–THEM opposition). Those that could appear in such contexts simply have not been recorded (e.g. *тушить* ‘extinguish’). Nevertheless, even if this type of potential use is taken into account (and if so, it should be done for both sides of the opposition), the disproportion will still be clear. But the significance of the light–darkness opposition in constructing the basic US–THEM dichotomy is not diminished for that reason: it is one of few oppositions that are expressed explicitly through sentence constructions indicating conflict.

Another strong association with the semantics of light is the theme of electricity, important for the Soviet ideological discourse since the Leninist period (it is telling that female names, such as *Эльмира/Elmira* [*электрификация мира* ‘electrification of the world’] or *Электрификация/Elektrifikatsiya* ‘Electrification’ appeared at the time).<sup>51</sup> The association was present in the ideological sub-discourse on culture in the post-war period, e.g. in Kazimierz Brandys’s article in *Pravda*, which alludes to the initial stage of the development of the Soviet state and the implementation of a new political system in Poland. In (36) below, the semantics of light illustrates Poland’s backwardness before the advent of light:

(36) In bourgeois Poland, there were thousands of such villages. They did not have **electric light**, the **light of culture** did not reach them. (*Pravda, Brandys*)<sup>52</sup>

Significantly, Brandys entitled his article *Свет новой жизни* [The light of a new life], focalising everything that was new, i.e. related to communism, in the most essential category of light.

The analysis of this data allows us to conclude that the metaphors of light and darkness were used by the Soviet cultural propaganda as means of persuasion in the so-called “Khrushchev Thaw”. The metaphors appear in 29 out of 399 texts examined.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, there are instances in which the two concepts are directly juxtaposed, producing the effect of a fundamental conflict where one is expected to unequivocally take the side of “light”. This is a highly significant dichotomy, essential for the effectiveness of a pervasive

<sup>51</sup> This is a case of giving a new motivation to the already existing name, a practice that derives from Islamic tradition.

<sup>52</sup> *В буржуазной Польше подобных сел было тысячи. К ним не доходил электрический свет, не доходил и свет культуры.*

<sup>53</sup> On the assumption that the semantic field of FIRE should be analysed, at least to some extent, separately.

discourse. Similarly to other obvious oppositions (e.g. health vs. illness, wealth vs. poverty, cleanliness vs. dirt, etc.), it was supposed to indicate, as clearly as possible, the desired direction of cultural development to the readers, among whom were the prominent figures of USSR's cultural life. The most obvious metaphors played the role of guidelines and as such had to meet two basic conditions: interpretive univocality and maximal dichotomy. In the new context after the death of Stalin, the division into US and THEM, although partially redefined, had to be clearly maintained. The opposition of light vs. darkness was second to none in serving that purpose.

*Translated by Anna Wyrwa*

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