

National identity and resistance in Mykola Akhbash's original and translated Rumeika-language poetry

YULIIA LABETSKA – MARIIA NIKOLCHENKO

DOI: 10.31577/WLS.2025.17.3.8

© Institute of World Literature

Slovak Academy of Sciences

© Yuliia Labetska,

Mariia Nikolchenko 2025

Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

National identity and resistance in Mykola Akhbash's original and translated Rumeika-language poetry

Mykola Akhbash. Ukrainian literature of resistance. Literature in minority language. Rumeika. Identity.

The work of the Ukrainian poet Mykola Akhbash, who writes in Rumeika, exemplifies resistance literature of a national minority in response to Russia's full-scale invasion. His poems reflect author's deep concern for the fate of Mariupol, initial confusion followed by resilience, and an appeal to the transcendent. These form the thematic core of his wartime verse. The author employs a range of perspectives, yet his values remain rooted in both the Ukrainian nation and the Azov Greek community. Writing in Rumeika and using ethno-cultural symbols, translating Ukrainian classics, and employing Ukrainian transcription, Akhbash articulates the identity and historical legacy of the North Azovian Greeks within a broader Ukrainian context.

Yuliia Labetska
Department of Greek Philology
Mariupol State University
Ukraine
y.labetska@mu.edu.ua
ORCID: 0000-0002-9202-7731

Mariia Nikolchenko
Department of Ukrainian Philology
Mariupol State University
Ukraine
m.nikolchenko@mu.edu.ua
ORCID: 0000-0002-6325-1259

UKRAINIAN LITERARY DISCOURSE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

The Russo-Ukrainian War, which began in 2014, has served as a powerful catalyst for the emergence of numerous artistic reflections in Ukrainian literature. Russia's violent invasion of Ukrainian territory on February 24, 2022 marked a significant turning point in the life of the Ukrainian state, dividing it into a "before" and "after". The war has led to destroyed cities, shattered lives, and thousands of dead and wounded. In the contemporary Ukrainian literary landscape, a phenomenon known as war literature has emerged, that is also seen as resistance literature. It reflects the experiences and observations of those who have lived through the war, including writers, soldiers, police officers, volunteers, medics, journalists, and ordinary civilians, whose works contain authentic testimonies about the brutality of war and its tragic aftermath. Trauma caused by the loss of loved ones, homes, and forced displacement drives authors to transform their pain, grief, and anger into powerful narratives that challenge oppression, expose injustices, and inspire resilience.

The Russo-Ukrainian War literature has sparked a wave of studies on this literary phenomenon. Notable works by Larysa Horbolic (2016), Olena Bondareva (2022), Mykola Zhulynskyi (2024), Mykola Ivanov (2015), Bohdan Pastukh (2016), Yaroslav Polishchuk (2016), Maryna Riabchenko (2019),¹ and others explore the specific features of war and resistance literature. Analyzing literature created since the beginning of the war, Mykola Zhulynskyi emphasizes that "Ukrainian literature, especially poetry, has embodied the full spectrum of people's anger and resistance in a variety of genres. It turns out, that in times of the greatest trials, poetry turns to the spiritual foundations of the nation"² (2024, 3). During the war, the use of biblical motifs, images of Ukrainian prophetic figures, and references to past liberation struggles became especially prominent. This highlights the need for Ukrainians to interpret contemporary events within the context of their long-standing fight for independence. Thus, turning to spiritual foundations not only helps preserve identity in difficult times but also makes literature a powerful instrument for its reinforcement.

Ukraine is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Europe. The Azov Greeks are a national minority numbering around 100,000 people, making them the third-largest ethnic group in the Donetsk region. They have predominantly resided in compact communities on the northeastern coast of the Sea of Azov since their relocation from Crimea at the end of the 18th century, ordered by Empress Catherine II. Linguistically, the Azov Greeks are divided into two groups: one part speaks Rumeika, a variety closely related to Modern Greek, while the other speaks a Turkic variety. The assertion of Ukrainian national identity during wartime also influences the self-awareness of ethnic minorities, particularly the Azov Greeks. This process can be seen from several perspectives: the shared experience of war, the role of culture and language in preserving identity, the interaction between Ukrainian and Azov Greek identities, and the process of decolonization.

One of the representatives of contemporary resistance literature is Mykola Akhbash (born in 1996) from the small village of Yalta (named after the famous city in Crimea) near the currently-occupied Mariupol. As a student, Akhbash developed

an interest in the history, culture, and language of his ancestors, Crimean Greeks who were relocated to the Azov region in 1778. Since then, he has learned from the elders of his village, who preserved the Rumeika language in their communication, and now he does his best to keep the ancestral language alive. He publishes his works using both the Ukrainian and Greek alphabets, providing literal translations into Ukrainian. This not only allows his followers who do not speak Rumeika to understand the texts but also serves as bilingual educational material. His mission is to preserve and pass on to his contemporaries the historical memory, traditions, and experiences of his ancestors, with language being the most important element, as it embodies the “ethnic code”.

THE EMERGENCE OF RESISTANCE LITERATURE IN THE AZOV GREEK COMMUNITY

The emergence of poetic works in the Azov Greek community that can be classified as resistance literature can be seen as a consequence of socio-cultural processes within the community, driven by external circumstances. The formation of this distinct community in Ukraine occurred under political oppression, both in Crimea and later in the Azov region. Researchers studying the ethnogenesis of the Azov Greeks note that they “are descendants of the ancient inhabitants of Crimea (Taurida), who developed in isolation from their historical homeland under conditions of national, cultural, and religious oppression by the Crimean Tatars” (Yakubova 1999, 11). According to the official narrative accepted in Russian and later Soviet historiography, the relocation from Crimea to the Azov region was portrayed as an act of assistance by the Russian government in the national, cultural, and religious liberation of the Greeks of Taurida (11). However, recent archival data indicate that the situation of the Greeks in Crimea was not dire enough for them to willingly agree to relocation, which was “extremely beneficial for the Russian Empire for economic and political reasons” (Hedo and Aradzhyni 2019, 36). Consequently, significant psychological pressure and economic incentives were applied to the Greeks (37).

During the Soviet era, the Greeks of the Azov region, also known as the Mariupol Greeks, suffered during the so-called “Greek Operation” of 1937–1938: 4,938 individuals were arrested on fabricated charges, 4,237 of whom were executed (Džuha³ 2017, 31). In this way, “economically strong and culturally organized, and therefore ‘dangerous’ and unacceptable for the creation of a homogeneously unified Soviet society, national minorities were liquidated” (Hedo and Gridina 2019, 25). The great cynicism of Soviet leaders lay in the fact that, in their efforts to gain the loyalty of the elite from various ethnic groups, they initially pursued a policy of “indigenization” (from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s), which encouraged the national and cultural development of minorities. However, later, during the mass repressions of 1937–1938, they destroyed the most talented and active members of these communities.

During the period of indigenization, the Rumeika-speaking Azov Greeks laid the foundation for literature in their native language, developed theater and print-

ing, published their own newspapers and magazines, and introduced Greek language studies in schools. However, after the repressions, their voice was silenced for 25 years. It was only after the rehabilitation of the founder of Rumeika literature, Heorhii Kostoprav, in 1962 that national consciousness began to awaken again among the Azov Greek intelligentsia, allowing them to reconnect with the creative achievements of the previous generation.

Since the official Soviet policy of the time did not encourage national cultural expression, the promotion of Rumeika literature at the state level was not possible. Instead, Rumeika writers prepared self-published collections, with twelve produced between 1964 and 1986 (Kutna 2014, 46). The liberalization of society in the late 1980s and Ukraine's subsequent independence in 1991 created conditions that allowed for the publication of Rumeika folklore collections and numerous authored works. Most Rumeika literary works, primarily poetry, were published in the 1990s, but this process slowed in the 2000s. The older generation had published all they had accumulated during the period of prohibition, while the younger generation was not ready to absorb it. For many young people, the Rumeika language had become difficult to understand, and interest shifted towards learning Modern Greek, the language of their ancestral homeland. Currently, Rumeika is considered an endangered language (Chernukhin 2018) and is used only in limited contexts. Following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, much of the area where the Greeks of the Azov region live compactly is under occupation, making the situation with the language critical.

MYKOLA AKHBASH AS A POET AND LANGUAGE ACTIVIST FOR THE MARIUPOL GREEK COMMUNITY

Mykola Akhbash studied law and now works as a police officer. He left Mariupol before the occupation and spent a year serving on the frontline in Avdiivka, where he was wounded. After surgery and rehabilitation, he resumed his service while continuing to write poems in Rumeika. His most productive creative period was in the spring of 2022, during the tragic events in his hometown of Mariupol: airstrikes, destruction of homes, and thousands of civilian deaths. Akhbash wrote poems at night, unable to sleep – Avdiivka was never quiet, with shelling hitting both residents' homes and the police station. Akhbash deeply feels the tragedy of the war in Ukraine, and mourns for his native village Yalta, which cannot return to due to the Russian occupation. He sees Ukraine as his homeland, which he has vowed to defend, like tens of thousands of Ukrainian citizens from different ethnic backgrounds.

Akhbash primarily shares his original and self-translated works and his translations of the poems by other Ukrainian poets through social media platforms, such as Facebook and Telegram. In addition to poetry, he posts about local history, introducing his followers to various elements of the everyday life and rituals of the Azov Greeks. He creates thematic vocabulary lists in Rumeika and expresses his views on the self-identification of the Azov Greeks, their ethnogenesis, cultural orientations, and ideological beliefs. The name of his Telegram channel, "FOS",⁴ which means

“light” in Rumeika, is symbolic. The author sees himself as an educator; an attentive observer might liken him to the mythological Prometheus, bringing light to others.

Akhbash’s first poems in Rumeika were published starting in 2018 in the newspaper *Elliny Ukrainy* (The Greeks of Ukraine). In an interview with a Mariupol news site, he explains:

Gradually, I began to understand that this is part of my people and thus a part of me. However, even researching it was difficult, as much of our cultural heritage was gradually disappearing with the oldest bearers of the culture. Each subsequent generation had less knowledge of the ancestral language and culture. [...] I only began writing in Rumeika, the language of my family, at the age of 22. In school, I studied Modern Greek, which is grammatically similar to Rumeika, so I already had an understanding of how it works. (Anonymous 2024)

Assuming an ideological and educational role, and considering the political controversies surrounding the use of the Russian language in Ukraine, Akhbash proposed replacing the tradition established since the 1970s of using Russian characters to write in Rumeika (Beleckij 1969) with writing practices in the Ukrainian alphabet. Since 2022, he and other language activists have actively used the Ukrainian alphabet in their publications. Additionally, Akhbash compiled and recorded a poetic Rumeika video alphabet, which was presented in Kyiv in 2023 and can be found on YouTube (Rumeku hlosa::Rumeiska mova::Roumean 2023).

According to Ivana Hostová, “when a text is translated from a small language into a dominant language, the source text changes its status – it becomes more important, sometimes even canonical” (Bassnett et al. 2022, 12). For Akhbash, Ukrainian is the dominant language, reflecting its elevated status in Donetsk Oblast – a region that had long been predominantly Russian-speaking – especially after the outbreak of hostilities in 2014 and the proclamation of the Donetsk People’s Republic. Figures like Akhbash are driving changes in the region’s linguistic landscape. In an interview he points out, “I feel a certain responsibility for what I do, so I will continue my work. I believe that we will return to our native Azov and once again revive and develop Greek culture. Because I cannot imagine it without Ukrainian Mariupol” (Donetska 2022).

The poems “Da yirísúm” (We will be back) and “Pirmién mas” (Keep waiting for us) were written in April 2022, after the first humanitarian convoys began evacuating people from Mariupol, weakened by hunger, cold, and the horrors they had endured. People outside the city began to grasp the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe, while inside, fighting continued with artillery shelling and airstrikes. These poems are imbued with a deep sense of anxiety for the fate of Mariupol, which was among the first cities targeted by the invaders. The refrain “We will be back, we will surely be back” is repeated like a mantra. This collective “we” represents inhabitants forced to leave their hometown. As Mariupol was being ravaged by the invaders, the poet, speaking on behalf of its residents, pleads with the city to hold on and wait for liberation: “We beg you, darling: [...] Hold on!.. Take care!.. Keep waiting for us!..” (“Siéna parakálhum, kardúla: [...] Na vastáks!.. Na filáks!.. Pirmién mas!..”, Akhbash 2022). In both poems, the city is personified.

The poem “Kív ti Mariúpol” (Kyiv and Mariupol, April 2022) presents a touching and emotional dialogue between a wise old man (Kyiv) and his granddaughter (Mariupol). This perspective allows the events in Mariupol to be seen in the context of Ukrainian history, comparing the invasion by the eastern neighbor to the Mongol-Tatar and Nazi invasions. The grandfather comforts his granddaughter with visions of a peaceful “paradise-like” life that will be possible after Ukrainians and Greeks return. Until then, everything happening is just a deep sleep.

In “Lialí” (Tulip, April 2022), Akhbash gives a red tulip a voice and knowledge of the truth. The poem’s protagonist, whose mixed feelings are stirred by the sight of a red flower amidst a burned village, reflects on the objective reality of war, where weapons and rage are necessary. However, the sight of this flower unsettles him, prompting a dialogue with it. The tulip, possessing ancient wisdom, explains that only the body dies, while the soul is eternal, offering true solace. This knowledge transforms even the possibility of death from an enemy bullet into a liberation of the soul from its earthly body, reuniting it with God. The poet poetically reinterprets the phrase “Heroes do not die!” (first used during the farewell to the “Heavenly Hundred”⁵ on Maidan and now continuing to honor fallen defenders of Ukraine), emphasizing eternal remembrance for the defenders of their homeland.

In “Piniéshuk t pikrútsik tsigárka” (I smoke a bitter cigarette, December 2022), Akhbash describes a gloomy landscape to convey the concentrated and anxious mood of the protagonist, who watches the enemy’s advance. The cigarette, a traditional solace for soldiers, reflects the bitterness of the hero’s emotions. The events – the invasion by the “brotherly” neighboring state – resemble an absurd theater, with clouds forming a black curtain. The gusts of wind are likened to the sound of a bell tolling in warning, but that same wind also serves as a voice from heaven, reminding of an ancient truth: “Aftós akh t spathí vríshyt t thánat-t, / Tys míia siukón tu spathí-t!” (Rumeika for biblical “for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” [Matthew 26:52]).

In Mykola Akhbash’s poetry, nature serves as a powerful means of representing the emotions and feelings experienced by the lyrical protagonist. In “Katakhníia” (Fog, December 2022), written in the tenth month of the war, fog symbolizes despair and doubt. The lyrical hero observes the dense fog through the window, comparing it to a wave, a white fur coat, or a cloud that obscures the truth from him. The questions what is good and what is evil, reminiscent of the existential questions posed by Giorgos Seferis’ character in the poem “Helen”, when he doubts the boundary between truth and falsehood. However, the poem concludes with the hero’s determination to find his own inner light and to be a beacon for others. In “Vrushý” (Rain, February 2023), the anticipation of rain creates a symbolic image of cleansing the land from evil. The protagonist, exhausted by waiting, calls upon the heavens to purify the earth, embodying his hope for the triumph of good over evil.

In the poem “Thiélma” (Desire, December 2022), the poet addresses Saint Basil, a traditional figure in New Year carols within the culture of the Azov Greeks,⁶

with a single wish: for the weapons to fall silent and for peace to come. The simplicity and sincerity of this plea reflect the hero's deep longing for peace.

Akhbash's poetry often delves into ethnocultural themes. In the poem "Chulí Kharón" (Steppe Charon, January 2023), he reimagines the figure of Charon from ancient Greek mythology, adapting him to the local context of the Azov steppes. In this version, Charon travels not by river but across the steppe, using a cart pulled by an ox instead of a boat. This imagery resonates with the history of the deportation of Greeks from Crimea in the 18th century and the ritual sacrifices of oxen during local festivals. The poem is rich in symbols of ancestry, historical memory, and tradition, making it particularly poignant during wartime, as Charon becomes the ferryman for the souls of fallen soldiers.

The poem "Dos-m t sher-s" (Give me your hand, May 2023) tells the story of a romantic dream of a nighttime walk along the seashore that the lyrical hero longs to share with a loved one. The sea, to which the poet feels a deep connection, symbolizes dreaminess and detachment, as this journey occurs only in dreams, not in reality. The following excerpt highlights the poem's rich imagery:

Come now, my dear, come walk with me!
Let us go down to the shore.
I will show you this evening's sunset:
How the sun bathes its rays in the sea,
When the shining day comes to its close, And night
Spills its black paint everywhere.⁷

The poem "Simá t Salhýr Yení Salá" (Near Velykyi Yanisol, May 2024) is written from the perspective of a soldier, an ethnic Greek, who perished defending his native village. The lyrical hero lovingly describes the nature of his homeland, which has become his final resting place. The village Velykyi Yanisol (historically known as Salhýr Yení Sala), the Mokri Yaly River, and the Murza burial mound are all topographical references, but the landscape painted by the author broadly represents the Azov steppes:

There, where the slow current of Mokri Yaly
Carries its green blood away,
A steppe-born artery it seems to be,
There, at morning, I was slain –
By the Murza mound I stretched myself,
Upon the trampled emerald carpet.⁸

This excerpt fuses the beauty of the native steppe with the memory of sacrifice. The river Mokri Yaly, described as carrying "green blood", transforms the landscape into a living organism. The image of the Murza mound and the "trampled emerald carpet" conveys both natural beauty and violence, turning the land into a witness of loss and historical trauma. Similar to Rumeika folk songs, where the deceased hero asks birds to deliver news of his death to loved ones, the hero of this poem commands the wind to carry the bitter news back to his native village.

TRANSLATING UKRAINIAN WRITERS INTO RUMEIKA AS RESISTANCE

On his Telegram channel, Akhbash shares his own Rumeika translations of the works of classic Ukrainian poets. These are primarily centered on the writings of Taras Shevchenko and Lesya Ukrainka, whose lives, artistic legacies, and civic engagement have come to symbolize, both in Ukraine and abroad, a deep patriotism and the enduring struggle to affirm and preserve Ukrainian national identity. Each poem is presented in four versions: in Rumeika (using the Yalta-Urzuf dialect) in Ukrainian transliteration, in Greek transliteration, a literal retranslation into Ukrainian (Akhbash's goal is merely educational: the parallel texts may serve as a resource for those interested in studying Rumeika), and alongside the original Ukrainian version. For many works, Akhbash includes audio recordings in which he reads his translations aloud. Notably, while listening to these recordings, one can hear a similar rhythm and melody between the original and translated versions.

During these challenging times, Ukrainian culture serves as a source of inspiration, support, and solace for the poet. Akhbash finds beauty in the Ukrainian word, searching for shared motifs and symbols that help him endure the “dark” times and navigate the trials faced by his contemporaries. The first publication on his Telegram channel, dated April 2022, is a translation of Shevchenko's poem “Reve ta stohne Dnibr shyrokyi...” (“Roaring and Groaning Rolls the Dnipro”,⁹ 1837). The choice of this poem for translation is clear: the turbulent times in the country evoke a sense of unrest in society and a fervent desire to fight against threats, stop the enemy, and liberate the homeland. The mood of anxiety and resistance resonates throughout the poem. Akhbash seeks precise words to convey the mood and preserve the style of the original.

In July 2024, Akhbash translated Shevchenko's poems “Mynaiut dni, mynaiut nochii...” (“From Day to Day, From Night to Night...”,¹⁰ 1845) and “Sadok vyshnevyyi kolo khaty” (“Beside the House, the Cherry's Flowering”, 1847). In the former, the author reflects on his harsh fate and the hardships faced by an oppressed people. The translator effectively conveys the stance of the poet as a fighter who calls on readers to take active steps for the benefit of their people and their country. Rhetorical questions and addresses present a call for resistance and the destruction of chains. In the latter, he praises the beauty of Ukrainian nature and admires the simple, natural rhythm of a hardworking person's life, alternating between labor and rest. Akhbash adheres to the oral poetic style of the work, creating the impression of a folk song.

In April 2022, Akhbash published a translation of Hryhorii Skovoroda's poem “De Libertate”,¹¹ which calls for resistance against enslavement and oppression. The young poet shares Skovoroda's perception of freedom as the most valuable treasure in a person's life, incomparable to any material wealth.

On Akhbash's channel, civic poetry dominates, particularly in his translations of Lesya Ukrainka. For example, in his April 2022 translation of Ukrainka's poem “Slovo, chomu ty ne tvrdaia krytsia...” (“Why are my words not like steel...”,¹² 1896), Akhbash addresses the power of words as a mighty weapon in human hands, capable

of punishing oppressors. The two poets use personification, addressing the word as a living being, striving to refine this unique weapon and pass it on to “strong avengers”. Precise rhetorical questions incite action, resistance, and struggle, reinforcing faith in the immortality and power of the word. The translation of Ukrainka’s poem “Skriz plach, i stohin, i rydannia” (“Vain Tears”, 1890) in September 2022 carries powerful symbolic meaning. Both the original author and Akhbash appear to denounce passivity, criticizing those who expect change from others. In today’s context, Akhbash’s translation becomes a call to action, urging everyone to join the struggle against the aggressor, as no one has the moral right to stand aside when their nation’s fate is at stake. In April 2022, Akhbash also translated Ukrainka’s philosophical poem “Contra spem spero!” (1890). This poem conveys a life-affirming mood, expressing hope for a better future and rejecting pessimism. Similarly, Akhbash seeks to believe in goodness and holds out hope for peace and tranquility.

The motifs of hope and longing for his native Ukraine are evident in Akhbash’s translation of Ukrainka’s poem “Nadiia” (“Hope”, 1880). The lyrical hero is far from home, yearning to return, much like thousands of modern refugees displaced by war. They dream of coming home, returning to their land. Akhbash’s translation of the poem “Kinets podorozhi” (“The end of travel”,¹³ 1888) describes the road home, using diminutives to express intimacy. Similar symbolism and motifs can be found in his translations of poems like “Sonechko vstalo, prokynulos yasne” (“The sun has risen, bright and clear”, 1888), “Velykeie misto. Budyntyky vysoki” (“Great city. Tall buildings”, 1888), and “Proshchai Volyn!” (“Farewell, Volyn!”, 1888). In his translations of “Dali, vse dali” (“Further, ever further!”, 1888), “Kraso Ukrainy, Podollia!” (“The beauty of Ukraine, Podollia!”, 1888), and “Bakhchysarai” (1891) that belong to landscape poetry, we see a deep admiration for Ukraine’s landscapes. Akhbash conveys his spiritual identity in the context of space that he depicts both in his original and translated poetry.

TYPES OF NATIONALISM IN MYKOLA AKHBASH’S POETRY

Ukraine’s national identity has been shaped by historical and political dynamics, particularly after the Maidan revolution and Russia’s subsequent actions: “In Ukraine distinct regional identities overlapped with competing views of international identification: with Russia or with Europe. [...] Paradoxically, this resulted in a stronger consensus in the rest of Ukraine for a new, civic national identity outside the Russian sphere of influence” (Rutland 2023, 24). This shift parallels Akhbash’s literary expression, integrating his ethnic heritage into Ukraine’s broader civic identity. His poetry reflects this synthesis, reinforcing unity while celebrating diversity.

Akhbash’s work transcends ethnic expression, intertwining the North Azovian Greek community’s identity with the Ukrainian national struggle. His dual focus – preserving Rumeika as a cultural treasure while embedding it in a common Ukrainian framework – embodies a civic and polyethnic vision of nationalism. By using the Ukrainian alphabet for Rumeika and translating Ukrainian classics, Akhbash bridges ethnic heritage and national belonging, showing the compatibility of diverse cultural traditions within a shared identity. His translations of Shevchenko

and Ukrainka not only preserve their ethos but also reinterpret it through a Greek-Ukrainian lens.

Through these artistic choices, Akhbash presents nationalism as a dynamic and inclusive force. His works show how ethnic diversity enriches Ukraine's cultural fabric, with literature serving as a powerful means to foster unity in diversity.

CONCLUSION

The Russian invasion has caused anger, indignation, and confusion among Ukrainians. However, poets have their own coping mechanism, channeling their experiences into creativity through poetic practice. Mykola Akhbash's original Rumeika poetry and translation work exemplifies the emergence of resistance literature within a national minority in Ukraine, responding to the aggressive actions of a neighboring state. This new form of literature can be seen as an outcome of the socio-cultural dynamics within the Azov Greek community, shaped by the impact of external events. The use of Ukrainian alphabet for Rumeika despite the tradition of usage of Russian alphabet is a symbolic step, bringing together the ethnic with the national. In his original poetry Akhbash turns to Rumeika ethno-cultural symbols that reveal the identity of his people, and by translating his Rumeika poems into Ukrainian, he builds bridges with the dominant Ukrainian linguistic and cultural tradition. Similarly, when translating the works of Ukrainian classics into Rumeika, Akhbash reinforces these connections and integrates a Ukrainian national code into Rumeika discourse. By preserving Rumeika while embracing Ukrainian cultural symbols, his literary work demonstrates that national identity in Ukraine is not monolithic, but enriched by its multicultural heritage.

NOTES

- ¹ Transliteration of Ukrainian from Cyrillic alphabet is based on norm of CMU Resolution No. 55 of 27 January, 2010 "On Streamlining the Transliteration of the Ukrainian alphabet in Latin".
- ² Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Ukrainian are by the present authors, the translations from Rumeika are by Y. L.
- ³ Transliteration of Russian from Cyrillic alphabet is based on the norm of ISO 9 transliteration system.
- ⁴ Transliteration of Rumeika from Cyrillic alphabet is based on norm of CMU Resolution No. 55 of January 27, 2010 "On streamlining the transliteration of the Ukrainian alphabet in Latin", while conventional letter combinations дь, ть are regarded as Greek letters δ, θ and are transliterated according to Greek – ISO 843 transliteration system.
- ⁵ On February 2014, over 100 Ukrainians were murdered on the Maidan (Independence Square) in the center of Kyiv. In Ukrainian public discourse, they were called the Heavenly Hundred and stand as an eternal example of courage.
- ⁶ As many Hellenists note, the mentality and culture of the Crimean (Azov) Greeks were shaped by Christianity, which served as a core element of their ethnic identity. However, their worldview also included a blend of beliefs and superstitions, forming a unique culture at the crossroads of Hellenic and Slavic worlds (Yakubova 2010, 197).
- ⁷ "Ády, dzhián-m, adáma-m! / As paiénum atóra st yalo'! / Da sie diks t yilvasílma apópsa: / Týha yílsluz t akhtýds s ta nirá, / Ódy miéra labró koft / Ti níkhta / Tiunón t mávur buiá apadú."

- ⁸ “Atí, pu fiérin t prásiun yéma-t / Arhó Sylákh Yalýtyk riéma, / Damár chulýtyk týha yen, / Atí ho tu birnó skutótha – / Simá t Murzá ubá aplótha / Pas t khularó tilím patmién.”
- ⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Ukrainian classics’ works into English are by Vera Rich.
- ¹⁰ Translated into English by Ethel Lilian Voynich.
- ¹¹ Translated into English by S. P. Scherer.
- ¹² Translated into English by P. Tempest.
- ¹³ The titles of this and further poems of Ukrainka are translated by the present authors.

REFERENCES

- Akhbash, Mykola. 2022 “FOS. Telehram-kanal Mykoly Akhbash.” Telegram. Accessed on July 23, 2024. https://t.me/fws_fws.
- Anonymous. 2024. “Yak mariupolskyi politseiskiy riatiue liudei ta movu.” *0629.com.ua* May 17. Accessed on July 23, 2024. <https://www.0629.com.ua/news/3777776/ak-mariupolskij-policejskij-ratiue-ludej-ta-movu-foto/>.
- Bassnett, Susan, Laurence Venuti, Jan Pedersen, and Ivana Hostová. 2022. “Translation and Creativity in the 21st Century.” *World Literature Studies* 14, 1: 3–17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/WLS.2022.14.1.1>.
- Beleckij, Andrej. 1969. “Grečeskie dialekty ũgo-vostoka Ukrainy i problema ih ŕzyka i pis’mennosti.” *Učenyje zapiski LGU. Seriâ filologičeskikh nauk* 73: 5–15.
- Bondareva, Olena. 2022. “Chym maiut pryrosty filolohichni studii u konteksti rosijskoi ahresii ta ukrainskoho oporu.” *European Humanities Studies: State and Society* 2: 45–60. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38014/ehs-ss.2022.2.02>.
- Chernukhin, Yevhen. 2018. “Movne pytannia’ hrekiv ukrainskoho Nadazovia: obiektyvni, subiektyvni ta inshi sotsiokulturni chynnyky.” *Skhidnyi svit* 4: 89–115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15407/orientw2018.04.089>.
- Donetska, Natalka. 2022. “Pereklad z rumeiskoi: kop z Yalty vidnovliuie kulturu hrekiv-pereselentsiv.” *Hromada. Skhid* August 21. Accessed on August 18, 2024. <https://uagreeks.com/pereklad-z-rumejskoyi-kop-iz-yalty-vidn/>.
- Džuha, Ivan. 2017. “Grečeskaâ operaciâ” NKVD v Ukraine: kniga pamâti mariupol’skih grekov (žertvy grečeskoj operacii NKVD). St. Peterburg: Aleteja.
- Hedo, Anna, and Iryna Gridina. 2019. “Neprypustymi ‘operatsii’ pamiaty: represii proty hrekiv v Ukraini.” *Kyivski istorychni studii* 2, 9: 19–26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28925/2524-0757.2019.2.3>.
- Hedo, Anna V., and Margaryta A. Aradzhyni. 2019. “Politychni prychny pereseleattia hrekiv iz Krymu do Pivnichnoho Pryazovia u 1778 r. (za arkhivnymy materialamy).” *Skhodoznavstvo* 84: 3–54. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15407/skhodoznavstvo2019.84.003>.
- Horbolis, Larysa. 2016. “Chytannia yak samozberezhennia retsyippianta.” *Naukovyi visnyk Mizhnarodnoho humanitarnoho universytetu. Serii: Filolohichna* 24, 1: 126–129.
- Ivanov, Mykola. 2015. “‘Hibrydna viina’: avtorska retseptsiia Oksany Zabuzhko (za materialamy intervju 2014–2015 rr.).” *Obraz. Publitsychni obrii* 3, 18: 17–24.
- Kutna (Labetska), Yuliia. 2014. “Korpus tvoriv rumeiskoi literatury ta folkloru.” *Visnyk Mariupolskoho derzhavnogo universytetu: Serii Filolohii* 11: 44–50.
- Pastukh, Bohdan. 2016. “Metafizyka strazhdannia u ‘Virshakh z viiny’ Borysa Humeniuka.” *Dyvoslovo* 9: 55–58.
- Polishchuk, Yaroslav. 2016. *Reaktyvnyist literatury*. Kyiv: Akademyvdav.
- Riabchenko, Maryna. 2019. “Kombatantska proza v suchasniï ukrainskii literaturi: zhanrovi ta khudozhni osoblyvosti.” *Slovo i chas* 6: 62–72.
- Rumeku hlosa::Rumeiska mova::Roumean. 2023. Rumeiska virshovana abetka. Mykola Akhbash / Roumean Alphabet in Verses. Mykola Akhbash. *Youtube.com* October 2. Accessed on August 26, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHr3Cix5cZA>.

- Rutland, Peter. 2023. "Thirty Years of Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet States." *Nationalities Papers* 51, 1: 14–32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2021.94>.
- Shevchenko, Taras. [1837] n.d. "Reve ta stohne Dnibr shyroky." *Biblioteka virshiv*. Accessed on September 10, 2024. https://library-poems.com/reve-ta-stogne-dnibr-shirokiy/#google_vignette.
- Yakubova, Larysa. 1999. *Mariupolski hreky (etnichna istoriia): 1778 r. – pochatok 30-kh rokiv XX st.* Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy.
- Yakubova, Larysa. 2010. "Hretske selo v hornyli 'bilshovytskoi perekovky' (20-ti pp. XX st.)." *Problemy istorii Ukrainy: fakty, sudzhennia, poshuky* 19: 173–217. http://resource.history.org.ua/publ/pro_2010_19_1_173.
- Zhulynskyi, Mykola. 2024. "Za svobodu vykhodymo pry slovi. Nezalezhnist u polumi viiny." In *Nezalezhnist u polumi viiny: ukrainska literatura sprotyvu*, ed. by Mykola Zhulynskyi, 3–30. Kyiv: NAN Ukrainy, Instytut literatury im. T. H. Shevchenka.