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TO THE QUESTION OF LITERARY INFLUENCES ON VASYL' STUS' POETIC CREATIVITY

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This article is aimed at studying the intertextual connections of Vasyl' Stus, a key figure for contemporary cultural identity, with great Ukrainian poets and writers. It has been confirmed that among those literary men, whom Stus considered important in his formation as a poet, Taras Shevchenko aroused his interest in a «privileged» way. At the same time, it has been assumed that literary influence might not be the main argument in choosing themes and images. It has been proved that a detailed study of the possible influence upon Stus would help better understand his way of thinking and his poetry.

Key words: V. Stus; T. Shevchenko; poetic heritage; prison poetry; literary influence.

ДО ПИТАННЯ ЛІТЕРАТУРНИХ ВПЛИВІВ НА ПОЕТИЧНУ ТВОРЧИСТЬ ВАСИЛЯ СТУСА

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У статті розглянуто творчість видатного українського поета Василя Стуса. Метою роботи визначено аналіз літературних впливів на поетичні тексти Стуса та співвіднесення їх із творчою індивідуальністю поета. Наголошено, що зацікавлення митця творчістю інших авторів свідчить лише про спільність творчого бачення, проте не завжди позначається на його поетичному доробку.

Доведено, що самодостатній письменницький талант Стуса рідко піддавався зовнішнім впливам: лише деякі з них творчо переосмислювалися поетом і частково інтегрувалися в його творчість. Згадано про відлуння в поезії Стуса «голосів» М. Рильського, Є. Маланюка, В. Шевчука, П. Тичини, М. Зерова, Є. Плужника та ін., проте найвідчутнішим серед них є «голос» Т. Шевченка. Вплив Кобзаря на творчу манеру Стуса пояснено ставленням до Шевченка як до найвищого авторитету в житті та літературі. Підкреслено спорідненість духовних світів обох поетів, тотожність їхньої вдачі та світобачення, але не тотожність поетичної структури. Світоглядна схожість певною мірою визначила художньо-стильову близькість митців: у композиційному вирішенні низки творів простежено філософічність, тяжіння до драматизації, алегоричності, персоніфікації. Наголошено на використанні схожих образів (матері, волі, смерті, України). Зауважено використання Стусом рис притаманної Шевченкові романтичної іронії. Розглянуто мовностильові запозичення з «Кобзаря» (емоційна напруга, нагромадження епітетів, синонімів), але разом з тим доведено органічність їхнього влєтєння у структуру творів. Зроблено висновок, що, не зважаючи на окремі тематичні та структурні перегуки між текстами, вплив Т. Шевченка на В. Стуса слід вважати в основному світоглядним. Попри літературні зацікавлення, що межують з можливістю впливу, Стус ніколи не зраджував власному творчому «Я», крізь призму якого відбувалася взаємодія з поетичними текстами великого Кобзаря.

***Ключові слова.** В. Стус; Т. Шевченко; поетична творчість; тюрємна поезія; літературні впливи.*

The problem setting. Vasyl' Stus is a Ukrainian poet whose works «... elevate him to the ranks of the most talented writers, not merely in Ukrainian literature, but in world literature» (Zyla, 1986). His poetry is a blend of philosophy layered over each theme that he developed. But revealing this unique approach, Stus' poetry simultaneously demonstrates features, common to the works of other incarcerated writers: themes (love and hatred, life and death, immortality of poetry), poetic images (prison walls, near death, death as a lover), psychological attitude to temporality (implacability of time, the burden of the present, time measurement). Comparing Stus with other incarcerated poets, the following feature comes to the fore – «the intellectual nature of his poetry, which results in his endeavours to ascertain deeper layers of meaning» (Burianyk, 1997, p. 119).

At present the study of literary influences upon Vasyl' Stus is still in its infancy. The scholarly treatment of his creative activity is limited to a few articles in «Stus as Text» (the collection focuses on the methodology of approaching poet's work) and some papers by Petro Savchak, Mykhailyna Kotsiubyn's'ka, Bohdan Rubchak, Mykhailo Kheifetz and Yuriy Shevelov discussing poet's legacy. Special attention should be paid to a scientific study by Dmytro Stus, which presents the chronology of Stus' works, and

Doctor's thesis by Natalia Burianyk «Incarceration and Death: The Poetry of Vasyl' Stus» etc. Some scientists explain the current state of research «by the poet's relatively recent death and lack of a completed academic edition of his works» (Burianyk, 1997, p. 260). But in our view, Stus' death as a political prisoner may be considered as one of the main impediments to studying him as a poet. As to literary influences upon Vasyl' Stus – they haven't yet been subjected to systematic analysis. So the novelty of our research is in the fact that examining Stus' works in the context of identifying the influences of other poets on his treatment of literary themes and images has been undertaken for the first time.

The aim of the article is to examine Stus' poetry in the context of literary influences of those writers whom he considered important in his formation as a poet. Consequently, the name of Taras Shevchenko is evoked in our analysis.

The presentation of the main material. Contemporary Ukrainian culture «is unthinkable without the presence of Vasyl' Stus in its literary canon, its historical background and more generally in its collective thought» (Syrko, 2020, p. 92). Stus' own short introduction to «Zymovi dereva», entitled «Dvoie sliv chytachevi» («A Couple of Words to the Reader») gives a slight glimpse into his mindset and personality. The collection reflects poet's ideas on the nature of creativity, identifies his favourite writers and presents the literary influences upon him (as upon every poet, great and minor). The concept of Ukraine shares some common features with Jevhen Malaniuk's (we do not know whether these are coincidences or imitations). The euphonic organization reveals a familiarity with Borys Pasternak. Mykola Zerov's intonations are in evidence in the poem «The Dandelions Emit Their Scent» («Pakhtiat' kul'baby») and, to a lesser extent, in «What Will I Be Ble to Tell You About» («Pro shcho tobi ja zmozhu povisty»). Vasyl' Stus translated Rilke, and there has been talk of an influence of the German poet upon the Ukrainian. Mychailo Kheifets says that «of the European poets, Vasyl knew his beloved Rilke from cover to cover» (Kheifets, 1981, p. 115). Marco Carynnyk writes that Stus «intensively translated» Rilke, and continues to seek similarities to Rilke in Stus' original works. He sees a similarity to Rilke in the fact that «both poets seek to represent emotions and conditions of mankind in the process of their becoming and not in their completion» (Carynnyk, 1985, p. 7). Literary allusions also link Vasyl' Stus to Mykola Bazhan, Mykola Vinhranovsky, Hryhorij Skovoroda and Johann Wolfgang Goethe. His poetry echoed the work of such predecessors as Pavlo Tychyna, Yevhen Pluzhnyk, Pavlo Fylypovych and Andry Malyshko. Dr. Marko Pavlyshyn, a famous literary scholar, treated such influence as a topos of praise: «influence

brought Stus into the proximity of dignified figures from the European (and Ukrainian) poetic canon and metonymically enabled him to share their aura» (Pavlyshyn, 2010, p. 589).

There are a lot of hypothesis about literary influences of these and other writers on Vasyl' Stus. Some of them are reliable, the others aren't well-reasoned. The scholarship on Stus fails to grasp the breadth of his knowledge of native and foreign literature. And one of the most neglected aspects – is the role of other literary men in his artistic development. A detailed study of the possible influence he might have had on his work will help better understand his literary genealogy, his way of thinking and his poetic work.

The most oftenly Vasyl' Stus referred to the name of Taras Shevchenko. He does not conceal his dependence on, and indeed, repeatedly emphasizes his indebtedness to the poet, who is «one of the Ukrainian top figures, the one that shines on all the other great Ukrainians who came into the world after him» (Fedurko, 2014, p. 68). Taras Shevchenko aroused his interest in a «privileged» way and paid the particular role in shaping the identity of Stus as a poet. Stus' poems are full of paraphrases of Taras Shevchenko. Shevchenko's programmatic motto: *I am punished, I suffer, but do not repent (Karaius', muchusia... ale ne kaius')* is echoed in Stus': *Wherever I stand, I shall withstand (De ne stojatymu – vystoju)*. Further parallels abound. Shevchenko's: *Even without an axe ... / the headless Cossack shall fall (I bez sokryry ... / kozak bezverkhnyi upade)* in «There Were Wars» («Buvaly voiny») and Stus': *and this kingdom shall end without curses and punishments (i tsarstvo tse – mynet'sia bez kliatv i bez karan')*; Shevchenko's: *Our own land, yet a stranger's rather (na nashii ne svoii zemli)* in «It Is All the Same to Me» («Meni odnakovo») and Stus': *intolerable native foreign motherland (nest-erpna, ridna chuzhyna)* or: *on this fragrant land that is not our own (na tsii pakhkii, a ne svoii zemli)*; Shevchenko's: *Your temples grasped between your hands, / you wonder, why the apostle of truth and learning does not come (Holovu skhopyvshy v ruky, / dyvuieshsia, chomu ne ide / apostol pravdy i nauky)* in «The Day Goes By» («I den' ide) and Stus': *And you still wait. Yet whom do you await? / And what are you on guard for? (A ty vse zhdesh. A zhdesh – koho ty? / A nachuvaieshia – choho?)*; Stus': *small and green – undersized for its age (Male i zelene – nedorostok lit)* and Shevchenko's: *We were tiny, tattered tots (A my mali buly i holi)* in «Young Masters, If Only You Knew» («Jakby vy znaly, panychi»).

Paraphrases may be regarded as a literary influence, but what about direct quotations, whole lines or sentences transported without change from Shevchenko's works? Influence differs from imitation in being subconscious and not descending to direct transference. We can speak of influence when

we read in Stus: *This pockmarked pond, this black autumnal pond (Tsei stav povisplenyi, osinnyi chornyi stav)*. One involuntarily recalls Shevchenko: *І небо невмите, і заспані хвили, / І понад берегом геть-геть, / Неначе п'яний очерет / Без вітру гнеться (Drowsy waves, sky unwashed and dirty. / And on the bank there out beyond / The rushes sway without a wind / As they were drunken)*.

Unmistakable is the similarity of theme (*autumnal black pond / the sea*), the mood, and the two strikingly individual epithets: *the pockmarked (povispleni)* pond and the *unwashed (nevmyte)* sky. But we discover something quite different in the juxtaposition of Stus': *І золотої ї дорогої / нам стане думи на віку (Of that golden and dear meditation / We shall have enough for all time)* with Shevchenko's: *і золотої і дорогої / Мені, щоб знали ви, не жаль / Моєї долі молодої (I pity not this golden and dear / young destiny of mine)*.

This is no longer merely influence, but quotation. Here are other examples, not always so literal, but nevertheless clearly quotational. Stus: *And I catch myself thinking that / I've lived my life without having lived it (Sebe na dumtsi vzhe lovliu, / shche i ne zhyv, a vzhe nazhyvsia)* and Shevchenko: *I do not know / whether I am living or declining (I ne znaiu, / chy ja zhyvu, chy dozhyvaiu)*. Stus: *O destiny, my dear destiny (O dole! Dolen'ko moja!)* and Shevchenko: *O Destiny! My dear Destiny! (O dole! Dolen'ko moia!)* in «Varnak» («The Ex-Prisoner»).

One might also mention parallelisms in certain technical devices. To give but one example: into his description of a sleepless night in his cell, Shevchenko introduces fragments of a Russian-language dialogue between the guards on subjects of the pleasures of a primitive life: *Верчуся, світу дожидаю / А за дверима про своє / Солдатськеє нежитіє / Два часовії розмовляють: / Така ухабиста собою / А менше белой не дарила (I tossed about, and waited for the dawn: / Outside my door, two prison guards conversed / About the ugliness of soldiering.... / The wench was so saucy and she never / rewarded with less than a white banknote)* in «I Could Not Sleep. The Night Was Like a Sea») and in Stus: *...пізнав і волю, / свободу на семи замках, / коли гуртом відпочивали / (как на курорте, еге-ге ж) (...I have learned / the freedom that is kept behind seven locks / when we took our rest together / (just like a health resort, yes dear)*.

What there is of Shevchenko in Stus is not an influence and not an imitation. His quotations are not copied from a book. They are part of the spiritual air which surrounds him. To exist in a Shevchenkian climate of spirit and intellect is for Stus not a transposition, but the very style and content of life. There are many reasons for this. Biographical similarities immediately spring

to mind: career prospects and successes, and then a conscience bloodied by injustice. In his research work «Poetyka vidpovidal'nosti i vidpovidal'nist' krytyky: dekanonizatsia tvorchoi osobystosti i tvorchosti Vasyliia Stusa» Petro Savchak mentioned the following: «both poets wrote under conditions of national and political oppression; they opposed the policy of Russification in Ukraine and spent a significant part of their creative life in prison or exile; both died when they were 47 years of age and were reinterred in Ukraine» (Savchak, 1992, p. 84 – 85).

Nor should one forget another circumstance: although the majority of Shevchenko's editions are pruned and accompanied by grossly distorting commentaries, nevertheless he is the sole Ukrainian writer whose poetic heritage is available in a complete collection. Whole works have been expurgated from Franko and Lesia Ukrainka, many writers are under complete prohibition, as is any independent Ukrainian historical scholarship. In these circumstances, the grandeur and profundity of Shevchenko's work, exceptional in themselves, cannot avoid attaining a mystical scope and character. There is mention of a Shevchenko cult in Ukraine. For Stus this is more than a cult. It is almost a fusion of two personalities into one, in which Shevchenko becomes Stus.

Having comprehended this, we can understand that in Stus' creativity even individual words of Taras Shevchenko play their role. Of course, Shevchenko had no monopoly over the use of any particular word, but some characteristic ones are associated with his works and, often, seem to carry in compressed form the whole of the work which they invoke. In the reader's mind, they are liable to unfold into this whole work, as the chrysalis asleep in its cocoon unfolds into a varicolored butterfly.

Stus' images of Ukraine – *sad burial mounds* and *the distant Dnipro (Dnipro dalekyi)* which *threads its splashing into low bases (v nyz'ki basy vsylyiaie khliupit svii)* – imply the whole complex of Shevchenko's cossack romanticism, even though Stus does not even mention the Cossacks. *Nivroku (Touch wood)* used in the poem «And the Skylarks Ring» («I zhaivorony dzvoniat'») leads us straight into the atmosphere of Shevchenko's lines: *Я не нездужаю, нівроку / А щось такеє бачить око, / І серце жде чогось. Болить (I am not ill, touch wood, not I, / But something strikes my inward eye, / And the heart hopes for something. Weeps)*. Or: *Добра не жди / Не жди сподіваної волі (Give no heeding / To hopes of long-awaited freedom)*.

Later these lines blend into the call: *collectively to steel the butt-end of the axe (hromadoiu obukh stalyt')*. And only if we renew these associations we will be able to understand this poem of Stus', which at first glance has nothing in common with these motifs. The *hundreddrivers of grief* in the poem «Sad

and Blue» («Sumni i syni») reveal their full meaning through their reference to Shevchenko's *hundredrivers of tyrants' blood* in the final Last Judgement in «Poslanie»: *Настане суд, заговорять / І Дніпро і гору! / І потече сто-ріками / Кров у синє море / Дітей ваших... (The Day of Judgement is at hand! / The Dnieper will speak across the land; / Hundredrivers will surge in flood / To bear along your children's blood / To the blue sea...)* in the poem «To the Dead, to the Living, and to Those Yet Unborn, My Countrymen All, Who Live in Ukraine and Outside Ukraine, My Friendly Epistle»).

The *msta* (*vengeance*) instead of the usual *pomsta* which closes Stus' poem «From a Lifelong Wait» may best be understood in juxtaposition against Shevchenko's *truth-vengeance* (*pravdoi-u-mstoiu*) in «To Hoshea. Chapter XIV» («Osii. Hlava XIV»). The *khrushch* (*cockchafer*) in Stus' poem «Around Me a Graveyard of Souls» («Dovkola mene tsyvyntar dush») has flown there not only out of the personal recollections of the poet, but also out of Shevchenko's idyllic «Cherry Orchard» («Sadok vyshnevyi»). Lethe in Stus' «So Pleasant and So Frightening It Is» («Tak khoroshe i motorosno tak») is the same river of oblivion that flowed through Shevchenko's last poem and testament before his death «Should I Bequeath to You, Poor Dear» («Chy ne pokynut' nam, neboho»). And it means not only death and oblivion. Remember: *Через Лету бездонную / Та каламутную / Переплывем, пере-несем / І Славу святую / Молодую, безвічную (And then set out quietly / On that longest road, / Over Lethe's plumbless depths, / Waters dark and swarthy, / Grant me then thy blessing, friend, / With thy holy glory).*

Special attention should be paid to the frequent use of the image of *death* by both poets. What sets Stus apart from Shevchenko is his philosophical approach to the subject. In her doctor's thesis «Incarceration and Death: The Poetry of Vasyl' Stus» N. Burianyk states: «*Death* seems to provide him with a particular perspective on reality. It is through the prism of *death* that Stus examines his current existence – relations with other people, personal choice, immediate environment, temporality. *Death* becomes a learning tool directed primarily at himself. It compels him to seek within answers and to engage in self-exploration. The result is poetry bordering on philosophy» (Burianyk, 1997, p. 233).

The image of *death* is not less frequently used in the poems, written by Taras Shevchenko. To express the fear of mortality he created a metaphoric image of *a merciless mower*. In his poems Shevchenko reflects a common anxiety of all political prisoners: the fear of dying in *a foreign land*, but not in the *Homeland*, the grief of being forgotten by the native people, etc.: *І мене не мине, / На чужині зотне, / Решоткою задавить. / Хреста ніхто не поставить / І не пом'яне (Me too he will not miss. / He'll tow me down in a far, foreign land, / Behind barred windows he will strangle me... / No*

one will plant a cross above my grave / And no one will remember me!). The concern over dying in a faraway land is also expressed in Stus' poems (it is not surprising as both poets were incarcerated for dissenting ideas). Stus speaks about this in his «Nerozpiznane misto dorohe» (Unrecognized Dear City), «Nichna khmaryna» (Night Cloud) and «Diakuiu, Hospody» (Thank You, O Lord). What makes Stus different though, is that *death* is often a starting point for a philosophical discussion: in «Thank You, O Lord» *death* in prison summons his reflections on life, misfortune, relationship with Ukraine; in «You Are Shadow» the discussion of *death* produces existential contemplations on the subjects of fate, life's mission and the role of a poet.

Conclusions. It is out of the question that there were literary influences on Stus. There also were Stus' own references to those writers whom he considered important in his formation as a poet. But we cannot say that they fully determined his creativity, as he naturally took into account only those areas which were of great interest to him. All the similarities depend on a single shared element – here language, here rhythm, there – mood. None of them poems shows the immense dependence on the work of a poet. They are all reasonably pure Stus in all his independence and originality. As for the moods in Stus' poetry, they were motivated no less by the circumstances of his life than by literary influences. So, we have come to the conclusion that in the poems of Stus known to us, literary influences play a minor role. He has a distinctive face of his own. As to Shevchenko – he was not an influence, he was an identification. While there was a congruence of disposition, faith, firmness, world view, there was no congruence of poetic structure. From rhymes to images, from his composition of the poetic work to its aural instrumentation, Stus is not dependent on Shevchenko or, for that matter, on anyone. Shevchenko is for him like the Ukrainian language. He writes it, he breathes it, he forges and reforges it, as his creative spirit compels him. One cannot imagine Stus outside the Ukrainian language, and one cannot imagine him outside of the Shevchenkian element. At the same time, he is himself, and his verse belongs to none but him.

Perspectives: Multilayered meanings and associations of Vasyl Stus' poetry present numerous challenges to scholars, among them – the possibility of examining the literary influences on Stus. The further studies should focus on finding evidence of unconscious literary influence of T. Shevchenko on V. Stus in other genres, chances of discovering which in future are rather high.

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