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Ukrainian model of thinking in Taras Shevchenko's story "Naimychka"

Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the thinking model in the story "Naimychka". It is emphasized on the strong Ukrainian national features of this model and their representation in the ideological and thematic spectrum, the system of images, numerous Ukrainianisms in the Russian language of the work, the description of folk customs, traditions, rites, travel notes introduced into the text. Each factor is analyzed in this paper. It is highlighted the Ukrainian perception of life by the heroes of the story, their expressed national mentality.

Keywords: Taras Shevchenko, Russian-language works, story, "Naimychka", model of thinking, travel notes.

Taras Shevchenko's prose is an important material for a multifaceted study of the artist's phenomenon, his worldview and artistic and aesthetic views. The prose includes short stories and diaries, written in Russian. The use of the Russian language testified to the writer's desire to be recognized by Russian-speaking readers. However, the writer's prose represents a purely Ukrainian national model of thinking, reproduced in another language, prevailing in the territory of the Russian Empire. Taras Shevchenko's Russian-language prose is a little-studied material. Its modern scientific interpretation discovers the new understanding the author's phenomenon.

Taras Shevchenko's creation of the stories is directly related to his biographical milestones. During 1852–1853 years T. Shevchenko

was writing his first three stories. It is unknown how he worked from 1850 to the end of 1854. After all, in April 1850 the writer was arrested for the second time after the denunciation of Nikolai Isayev. He was sent to the Novopetrovsk fortification. Only due to the good attitude of the fortress commanders Anton Mayevskiy and Iraklii Uskov, the ban on “writing and drawing” was relaxed. The artist had the opportunity to create new works. From May 28 to September 6-7, T. Shevchenko was in the Karatau expedition, where he could not write. He may have violated the emperor’s ban. Evidence that the artist tried to hide his creative activity was the dating of his stories “(The) Naimychka” (English: “The Bidy” or “The Handmaid”) and “(The) Varnak” (English: “The Branded Convict”) as 1845 year. However, the most obvious is that these works were written in exile.

In the context of Ukrainian and Russian literature, Taras Shevchenko’s prose was irrelevant any role because it was not published during the author’s lifetime. However, its analysis gives attempts to speak about the integration and inclusion of the author’s prose works in the contemporary artistic context. In addition to this, it is interesting to present the Ukrainian model of thinking through the Russian language. According to O. Boron,

“Shevchenko’s prose is not marked by artistic perfection in general, but it is of interest to the national content, national color, true reproduction of the worldview inherent in Ukrainians, which affected the choice of plot situations... ..”¹ (The quotes are in my English translation. – Rui Fan).

The Ukrainian model of thinking, presented in works in Russian, shows Shevchenko’s devotion to the authentic national worldview and his desire to convey its specificity to the Russian-speaking reader. The author’s prose texts are marked by significant influences of Russian and Western European prose. Basically, all of Shevchenko’s stories have such features as amorphousness and presentation of episodes in chronological order. In addition to this, in many stories,

¹ O. Boron, *Poet i yoho proza: heneza, sematyka i retseptsiia Shevchenkovoï tvorchosti*, Krytyka, Kyiv 2015, s. 76.

there are images of narrators, in particular in the works of 'Varnak', 'The Captain's Mistress', 'The Artist' and others. The writer often turns to the epistolary form and travel notes. Over time, he creates heroes, through the characters of which he comprehends such issue as the essence of education. Even in the stories, there are the writer's views on the social ideal. O. Boron emphasizes the "nonlinear evolution of the prose, which can be traced to the evolution from the story 'Naimychka' written on the plot of the same name to the multifaceted and compositionally integral stories 'The Artist' and 'The Walk with Pleasure and Not without Morality'².

The important feature of T. Shevchenko's stories is that the author encourages the reader to think about allegories, allusions, reminiscences, which are important in the works. Shevchenko's stories are characterized by the influences of romanticism. Basically, Shevchenko's prose works are syncretic. They combine different styles and genres. Their characters are often autobiographical, as in the Romantics. They express the thoughts and feelings of the author, "sometimes performing an autopsychotherapeutic function"³. There is also a tendency to enlightenment realism in Shevchenko's stories. The works are characterized by such features as didactic and instructive nature, the opposition of positive and negative characters. The enlightening genesis is Shevchenko's experiment, realized in the stories 'The Twins', 'The Unfortunate', less expressed in the story 'The Musician'⁴. (The Russian names of these stories are 'Bliznietsy', 'Niestschastnyi' and 'Muzykant'). T. Shevchenko comprehends the influence of the family environment, education, and personal development in this work. In Shevchenko's stories, some researchers notice the influence of Biedermeier, who was in transition from realism to romanticism. According to V. Smilyanska, there were sentimental-romantic and realistic styles were synthesized in Shevchenko's stories⁵. In fact, the

² Ibidem, s. 77.

³ Ibidem, s. 78.

⁴ Ibidem, s. 79.

⁵ V. Smilianska, *Shevchenkoznavchi rozmysly*, Instytut literatury im. T.H. Shevchenka NAN Ukrainy, Kyiv 2005.

artist transferred his principles from poetry to prose, integrating the features of sentimentalism, enlightenment, certain influences of naturalism. It is also important to note about the “stylistic syncretism”⁶ of Shevchenko’s stories. Since T. Shevchenko’s stories were not published during the author’s lifetime, they could not influence the narrative genres of contemporary Ukrainian literature. Instead of this, researchers mostly looked at the story as a source for studying the biography of the writer. The author’s prose works largely reveal the multifaceted creative range of the writer, the peculiarities of his intellect, worldviews and principles of the author’s artistic world. In addition to this, each of Shevchenko’s stories is of interest in terms of the specifics of the ideological and thematic spectrum.

Traditionally, Taras Shevchenko’s stories are divided into two groups. The first group includes stories that were written on the basis of the plots of existing poems of the same name, in particular, ‘The Naimychka’, ‘The Varnak’, ‘The Duchess’ (“Kniahynia” in the original). In these works, we observe the development and detailing of the content of poetic texts. The second group includes stories that are mostly autonomous in their plots and compositions. In particular, they are ‘The Musician’, ‘Unhappy’, ‘The Captain’s Mistress’, ‘The Twins’, ‘Artist’, ‘The Walk...’. In these works, the epistolary form, travel notes, diary, as well as the synthesis of these varieties are decisive. All of them pay special attention to the image of the narrator and giving him one of the central functions.

The story ‘Naimychka’, which belongs to the first group, was written circa 1852-1853. At that time, Taras Shevchenko was in the Novopetrovsk fortification. At the moment, the work is the first known attempt of the artist to write prose. We can observe such features of the author’s prose as detailed description of events and circumstances, the narrator’s assessment of what he says, detailing the story, lyrical nature of descriptions, simple plot, historical excursions, and the role of insert stories. The plot of the story ‘Naimychka’

⁶ O. Boron, *Poet i yoho proza: heneza, sematyka i retseptsiia Shevchenkovoi tvorchosti*, Krytyka, Kyiv 2015, s. 80.

is quite creative. I. Franko wrote about this⁷. There are opinions of scholars, in particular M. Sulyma, about the influence of the Apocrypha or biblical text on this Shevchenko's work. O. Slipushko emphasizes the general integration of the Shevchenko phenomenon into the European worldview context⁸. The artist was completely independent in creating the plot, and "the biblical text or apocryphal story could be the subconscious impulse to the maturation of the artistic plan"⁹. The story 'Naimychka' is a complete work in which the story is consistent and logical. The development of the plot is accompanied by detailed and colorful everyday episodes, details, as well as the author's own considerations, his appeals to the characters and lyrical digressions.

The story 'Naimychka' begins with a story about Lukiia's visit to a village, where she had not been for a long time, the Russian soldiers' lodging there and her past affair with the "Moskal". It is important to describe in detail the consecration of the event of the beginning of Marko's lessons at school. The folk tradition of treats for this occasion is described, detailing folk traditions and customs. The Ukrainian model of thinking, perception by the heroes and the author of this important tradition in a life of the peasantry is particularly reflected. Describing schoolchildren with porridge after they have mastered their first book (Primer) is described. To develop further events and the very conflict of the work, Taras Shevchenko creates the Uhlan's image. It was he who once offended Lukiia, leaving her after she gave birth to his godmother. Now he is looking for another victim, although from time to time he mentions Lukiia and his son. Basically, the image of the Russian Uhlan has clear characteristics. It is based on the artist's personal impressions of the military, whom T. Shevchenko met constantly while staying

⁷ I. Franko, "Naimychka" *T. Shevchenka* [w:] *Zibrannia tvoriv u 50 tomakh*, tom 29, Naukova dumka, Kyiv 1981, s. 447-469.

⁸ O. Slipushko, A. Shapovalova, *Khudozhnia individualnist Tarasa Shevchenka i svitovyi literaturnyi kontekst*, Ch. 1, Logos, Kyiv 2015.

⁹ O. Boron, *Poet i yoho proza: heneza, sematyka i retseptsiiia Shevchenkovoi tvorchosti*, Krytyka, Kyiv 2015, s. 147.

in the prison. This is a purely Ukrainian perception of the Russian hero, based solely on the national model of thinking.

‘Naimychka’ is imbued with deep emotionality and romantic lyricism. This feature is inherited from the poetic texts of the author and is vividly presented in the story. Lyrical digressions in the work are very frequent. They are accompanied by such autobiographical inserts as Shevchenko’s private life – how he traveled with his father-chumak in Ukraine. Autobiographical details are presented in the descriptions of Marko’s travelling, when we see associative echoes and connections. The writer realizes this trait when creating images, in particular the main characters. Thus,

in general, in the character of Yakym, external rudeness and grumbling are combined with kindness, sincere friendliness and trust in people. He directs all his unspent love to his adopted son, but does not spoil him. Thus, Martha and the hireling Lucy together raised a hard-working and intelligent young man who became a reliable support for the family¹⁰.

The author of the description of the inner world of the heroes, their emotions, experiences, worldview attaches great importance.

The Ukrainian model of thinking in the work is also realized by the maximum filling of the Russian-language text with Ukrainian words. They are mostly present in the direct speech of Ukrainian characters. The narrator’s speech is also based on Ukrainian syntax and vocabulary. This feature is inherent in the first stories by T. Shevchenko. In later works, the writer significantly reduces the presence of Ukrainian-language elements in Russian works. He will use this technique only to provide a specific function in a specific context.

In the story ‘Naimychka’, one of the most common themes is the theme of pokrytka (defiled mother). It acquires an interesting and creative interpretation. The story begins with a traditional description of the stories, written in the style of travel notes, “Between the towns Kremenchuk and Romny is Romodanov Way. The origin of

¹⁰ Ibidem, s. 152.

the name is a mystery"¹¹ (The quotes from Shevchenko's prose are in my English translation. – Rui Fan). Then the writer gives the legend about this name. And then the genre of travel notes will be present in the work. T. Shevchenko describes the Ukrainian village with admiration. Apparently, the description was made from the writer's memory, as the work was not written in Ukraine. However, this does not reduce the plausibility, the depth of reflection in the text of Ukrainian emotions, impressions and in general the Ukrainian way of thinking. The image of the girl Lukiia, the daughter of the gray-bearded Vlas, was created in the national style. She is the main character – the handmaid, pokrytka, dishonoured and despised by the Uhlans. The village of Cossack Yakym, where he lives with his wife Martha, is described in the same Ukrainian style. When the baby was left by them, they took him, baptized and named Marko. This married couple adopted the boy because they had no children. That boy was born and given to them by Lukiia, who was once the queen of the village holiday and was dishonoured and despised by the Uhlans. To be close to her son, she was hired as a handmaid for the family. Martha trusted her so much that she gave all the keys, leaving only the key to the chest. The handmaid Lukiia's psychic world is conveyed in the descriptions of her appearance when she holds little Marko in her arms, "Oh, how beautiful she was at that moment, how happy, how wonderful, solemn joy was poured into her whole being!"¹²

The Uhlan cannot forget how awful he once was to Lukiia. Memories about her and the boy brought him to the house, where the girl lived. Arriving there, he found a wasteland. Lukiia's mother was crying and felt ill, and then died of grief. The father began to drink and drank everything. The cornet found the farm, where Lukiia and Marko lived. The opposite of Lukiia's parents is Marko's childhood. The boy grows up happy. Having found the former mistress and

¹¹ T. Shevchenko, *Dramatychni tvory. Povisti* [w:] *Povne zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tomakh*, tom 3, Naukova dumka, Kyiv 1991, s. 42.

¹² *Ibidem*, s. 55.

the son, the cornet brings them money and presents. Even Marko begins to be more friendly to him. The seducer is again trying to evoke feelings in Lukiia. Only the march of the Uhlans prevented that. T. Shevchenko describes the final salvation from the tragic seduction to his heroine, "... you are saved; you are a beautiful angel, you are saved by your son. And your future, though bitter, sad, but not criminal and joyless"¹³. Lukiia teaches her son to cross and asks him to pray for her. Time and years pass peacefully in the village, where Yakym lives. The family is considering whether to send Marko to school. And if Martha is against it because she does not want to leave her son, then Lukiia would not refuse. She understands the benefits of learning, although it is bitter for her to part with it. T. Shevchenko describes Marko's learning, how he grew up as a wonderful and handsome young man, "Sometimes, girls admire Marko Hyrlo"¹⁴. After Martha's death, Lukiia became a full-fledged hostess on the farm. T. Shevchenko describes the psychological state of Yakym after the death of his wife in details.

The description of Marko's return from training is full of joy. Yakym's pilgrimage to Kyiv with his son testifies to Shevchenko's emphasis on the Ukrainian mentality of the heroes, who had the great importance to the worship of Kyiv's shrines. When they returned home, they brought presents for Lukiia. Marko reads the holy books, and Yakym listens to him. These scenes represent respect for education, for books, inherent in Ukrainian society, in particular peasant society. The trade as *chumaks* ("chumakuvannia") was also a national tradition. Yakym sent Marko in order to make him a *chumak*. At that time, Lukiia went to Kyiv to pray for Marko's happy returning. Arriving to the farm, Lukiia fell ill. One night she confessed to Yakym. When Marko came into the house, she called him son and said that his mother. And the end of the story is imbued with the respect and Marko's love for this woman, "When Yakym

¹³ *Ibidem*, s. 75.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, s. 83.

returned to the house, he saw that Marko, crying, kissed the feet of a dead handmaid (naimychka)".

To conclude, in the Russian-language story 'Naimychka' we can observe a purely Ukrainian model of thinking. It is highlighted Ukrainian perception of humiliating the woman, who gave the birth to the bastard. T. Shevchenko integrated autobiographical elements, travel notes, and descriptions of customs and traditions, which also represented the Ukrainian model of thinking. The system of images represents Ukrainian mentality and national ideas. The work comprehends a number of topical issues for the Ukrainian peasant life of that time, in particular the issues of education and military. The story 'Naimychka' is the vital work for studying the specifics of Taras Shevchenko's artistic worldview, reflecting the Ukrainian model of thinking.

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