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Taras Ševčenko in the Prose and Poetry of Vasyľ Stus

Vasyľ Stus has often been considered as a reincarnation of Ševčenko in the 20th century. Beyond being great poets, both men devoted themselves to Ukrainian culture and language, suffered repressions from the central power in Saint Petersburg or Moscow, and died at the age of 47. The ‘ševčenkian’ features of Stus’s biography, as well as the ‘ševčenkian’ presence in Stus’s poetic work, led the first scholars of Stus to concentrate their attention on this fundamental issue.

In 1983 Bohdan Rubčak called Ševčenko the spiritual father of Stus and identified in the immensity of their lyrical subjects the main common feature of the two poets and their poetic worlds¹. In his 1986 article Leonid Pljušč wrote: “The fate of every true poet of Ukraine cannot but be intertwined with the fate of Taras Ševčenko. It is not surprising that the main hypotext of *Palimpsesty* is *Kobzar*”². A different point of view was expressed in the same year by Jurij Ševel’ov. In his words “the ‘ševčenkian’ in Stus is not influence or imitation. It is the spiritual air that surrounds him and in which he lives. To be, to exist in Ševčenko’s climate of emotional and intellectual life is for Stus not a borrowed belief, but style and sense of life”³. Ševel’ov even ventured to speak of the fusion of two personalities in a single one and consequently of Stus’s full identification with Ševčenko⁴.

¹ “Та під поверховою мозаїкою впливів, чи то систематичних (як у випадку Пастернака чи Рільке), а чи більш роздрібнених – нуртує творча енергія Стусового двійника або, хоч як не хочеться вживати такої банальности, Стусового духовного батька. [...] Стусове ‘я’, як Шевченкове, колосальне” (Rubčak 1987: 320-321 *passim*).

² “Доля кожного справжнього українського поета України неминуче перетинається з долею Тараса Шевченка. Не дивно, що основним пратекстом ‘Палімпсестів’ Стуса є ‘Кобзар’” (Pljušč 1987: 297).

³ “Шевченківське в Стуса – не вплив і не наслідування, його цитати не з книжки взяті. Це те духовне повітря, що його оточує, що в ньому він живе. Перебувати, існувати в Шевченковому кліматі душевного і розумового життя це для Стуса не навіяння, а стиль і зміст життя” (Ševel’ov 1987: 397).

⁴ “Часом кажуть про Шевченків культ на Україні. В обставинах Стусової біографії, творчого шляху і темпераменту це більше ніж культ. Це майже злиття двох особистостей в одну, коли Шевченкове стає Стусовим” (Ševel’ov 1987: 397).

In the following years the national cult of both Ševčenko and Stus has paved the way for ecstatic depictions of their ideal spiritual encounter in the national pantheon of Ukraine. So, even an experienced scholar like Hryhorij Syvokin' fell into the trap of uncritically praising the alleged martyrological message of both poets' experiences. In his 2001 short article on Stus and Ševčenko, after explicitly acknowledging that he considers them first of all as prophets, Syvokin' wrote:

The topic 'Vasyl' Stus and Ševčenko' achieves a higher level of its interpretation, where the focus is not on the consonance or dissonance of the lyrical voice or of the poem composition, but on the Majesty of fate, faith and trust in which Stus sacredly cherished, without fear of its bad sides⁵.

Such a one-sided approach does not help much grasp the complex and challenging relation between Ševčenko and Stus. It is thus not surprising that a process of demythologization of Stus's image as a new Ševčenko, as well as demythologization of Ševčenko himself, have been repeatedly invoked since the beginning of the 1990s by those critics who have posited themselves as supporters of a postmodern approach to culture and literature⁶.

That being said, Ševčenko's presence in Stus's human and poetic path remains one of the main issues at stake for a deeper understanding of the poet who died in a camp in 1985 and of his artistic legacy. Even readers deprived of a full-fledged knowledge of Stus's poetry will expect the ševčenkian element to play an important part in it, due to the incommensurable role of the author of *Kobzar* and his personality in shaping modern Ukrainian culture and identity.

Before focusing on the various manifestations of the ševčenkian presence in *Palimpsesty* and Stus's earlier poetic books, let us briefly discuss Stus's scattered affirmations on Ševčenko in his critical writings and letters. A striking feature of Stus's relatively few remarks on the national poet *par excellence* is their refusal of any hagiographic or simply rhetorical exaltation. Stus obviously recognizes not only Ševčenko's poetic talent, but also his enormous contribution to the development of Ukrainian literature. Stus however chooses not to indulge in sterile glorification. In his unpublished notes from the early Sixties, when he was a postgraduate student in Kyiv working on his dissertation about the sources of the emotionality of the literary text, Stus explicitly underlines Ševčenko's unique role in the history of both Ukrainian poetry and identity. At the same time Stus reveals the deepest layers and the profound nature of Ševčenko's inspiration, finding them not as much in his patriotic or national message as in his painful relation with the world, his escape from it:

⁵ "У такий спосіб тема 'Василь Стус і Шевченко' виходить на вищий рівень її осмислення, де важить не так суголося чи, навпаки, одмінність поетичного голосу і словесної фактури написаних віршів, як її величність Доля, віру в яку і довіру до якої свято сповідував Стус, не страхаючись її, навіть злої" (Syvokin' 2001: 6).

⁶ See Pavlyshyn 2010, Pavlyshyn 1992: x, and Savčak 1992: 89.

Неприйняття дійсності, необхідність витворювати другу дійсність, шукаючи потрібн так конче потрібної [нас] кожному поетові гармонії було, можливо, однією з найбільших властивостей вогненної музи нашого Кобзаря⁷.

Such an approach, which interestingly anticipates Stus's future musings on the modernist poet Volodymyr Svidzins'kyj⁸, seems to contradict and overcome both the nationalist and soviet images of Ševčenko as a fighter for the rebirth of Ukraine⁹ or for social justice all over the world respectively¹⁰. Stus focuses on Ševčenko's intimate need for poetry, which however does not clash with the active, even belligerent character of his "fiery muse".

In the preface to his second poetry collection *Zymovi dereva*, published in 1970, Stus grants Ševčenko the first place in the history of his own human and literary *Bildung*. In the first paragraph of this short writing, which is titled *Dvoje sliv čytačevi*, Stus explains how important Ševčenko's poetry was in shaping his passion for poetry as he was a child, explicitly linking Ševčenko to his own mother:

⁷ V. Stus, *Načerky, rozdumy, uryvky tekstu periodu roboty nad kandydats'koju dysertacijeu*, Kyjiv, Instytut literatury im. T. H. Ševčenka Nacional'noji Akademiji nauk Ukrajinu, Arxiv rukopysiv, f. 170, od. zb. 1189, s. 5. "The refusal of reality, the necessity of creating a second reality, in order to look for that harmony which is so fundamental for every poet: that is perhaps one of the most striking features of our Kobzar's fiery muse". Unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine [AA].

⁸ See Stus's essay *Znykome rozcvitannja* from 1970-1971: "Така позиція Свідзінського – то тільки спосіб шляхетної герметизації власного духу і водночас – гойного його отілеснення. В цій позиції – єдиний його порятунок і надія на вижиття. Замкнутися, щоб зберегтися. Змаліти, щоб не помилятися у власній суті. Стати збоку, щоб не бути співучасником" (Stus 1994-1998, IV: 348).

⁹ Particularly noteworthy in this regard is Dmytro Doncov's glorification of Ševčenko in his several writings devoted to Ukraine's national poet, which include the 1961 monograph *Nezrymi skryžali Kobzarja (Mistyka lycarstva zaporož'koho)*. See e.g. Doncov's short essay *Dva antagonisty (P. Kuliš i T. Ševčenko)*, which was published in his collection *Dvi literatury našoji doby* (1935, 1958): "Шевченко горів смолоскипом, світив світильником, в яким ніколи не бракло олії, який світить і досі. [...] В ім'я цієї ідеї нації, Шевченко горів і згорів, залишивши, як фізично згасла зоря, своє світло вікам потомним" (Doncov 1991: 27).

¹⁰ See a good sample of Ševčenko's inevitable transformation into a forerunner of sovietism in *Ukrajin's'ka radjans'ka encyklopedija* (XVI: 293): "Основоположник революц.-демократичного напрямку в суспільно-політичній думці на Україні, виразник інтересів покріпаченого селянства, Ш. вперше на Україні висунув ідею селянської революції як шляху до ліквідації кріпосництва та царизму і послідовно проводив її у своїх творах". The soviet image of Ševčenko was also constructed in and through poetry. See the conclusion of Volodymyr Sosjura's 1938 poem *Na mohyli Ševčenka*: "Спи спокійно, поет! Ми, нащадки твої, / пронесем крізь віки твоє ім'я, / крізь колючі вітри, жорстокі бої, / Батьківщини сини незборимі. // Спи спокійно, поет! Образогненний твій / не зітерти не бурі, ні часу. / В більшовицькій сім'ї, славній, вольній, новій, / ми тебе не забули, Тарасе!" (Sosjura 1970-1972, II: 173-174) Note the highly rhetorical appropriation of Ševčenko's ideologized heritage by Sosjura's lyrical subject, who stands for the whole body of the new soviet mankind, and Ševčenko's consequent entry into the soviet "my".

Перші уроки поезії – Мамині. Знала багато пісень і вміла дуже інтимно їх співати. Пісень було стільки, як у баби Зуїхи, нашої землячки. І таких самих. Найбільший слід на душі – од маминої колискової ‘Ой, люли-люли, моя дитино’. Шевченко над колискою – це не забувається. А співане тужно: ‘Іди ти, сину, на Україну, нас кленучи’ – хвилює й досі. Щось схоже до тужного надгробного голосіння з ‘Заповіту’: ‘Поховайте та вставайте, кайдани порвіте, і вражою злою кров’ю волю окропіте’. Перші знаки нашої духовної аномалії, журба – як перше почуття немовляти в білому світі¹¹.

In a letter to his wife from 1976 Stus complains about the allegedly low artistic value of Lesja Ukrajinka’s poetry, which she shares – according to Stus – with a great deal of classic and contemporary Ukrainian poetic texts. This sad acknowledgment prompts Stus to ponder over the difficulties that modern Ukrainian poets have had to face:

Цікаво бачити, як тяжко бути нашому поетові – рухати реальність на собі, як тяжко чути не допомогу цієї рідної реальності, а заваду, стрим, обтяження. Один Шевченко виламався з цих пут, решті довелося йти в річищі, в баговинні¹².

In a previous letter from 1975 Stus fully shows his ability to discuss Ševčenko’s poetry in a rational, lucid way, refusing to surrender to the ecstatic adoration which has highly affected the Ukrainian reception of its national poet. Stus follows the evolution of Ševčenko’s poetics from the early years to the exile, observing the conservation of the same thematic axes and the evolution of the formal repertoire¹³. However, the last sentence devoted to Ševčenko in this letter clearly shows how Stus implicitly identifies his own hu-

¹¹ “My first poetry lessons came from Mum. She knew a lot of songs and would sing them in a very intimate manner. Aunt Zujixa, our countrywoman, knew as many songs as mum did. And the same ones. The biggest trace on my soul was left by mum’s lullaby ‘Ой, люли-люли, моя дитино’. You won’t forget Ševčenko at your cradle. And sadly sung ‘Іди ти, сину, на Україну, нас кленучи’ still moves me. It’s in a way similar to the sad lament of *Zapovit*: ‘Поховайте та вставайте, кайдани порвіте, і вражою злою кров’ю волю окропіте’. The first signs of our spiritual anomaly, melancholy as the first feeling of a baby on this earth” (Stus 1994-1998, I/1: 42).

¹² “It’s interesting to see how difficult it is for our poets to bear the burden of reality on themselves, how difficult it is to get no help from this native reality, but just obstacles, pressure and oppression. Only Ševčenko was able to free himself from these chains, the others had to stay stuck in the pound. It seems to me that Lesja did not manage to escape this fate” (Stus 1994-1998, VI/1: 222).

¹³ “До речі, як Тобі здається творчість Шевченка на засланні? [...] Шевченко не писав, коли не чув стихії, він ще не знав, що таке інтелектуальна поезія, формальні завдання etc. Коли не писалояся, він не писав. А коли й писалояся – по тих Оренбургах і Кос-Аралах, то часто це були проби, чи ще тримається огризок олівця між пальців. Нарешті поетова стихія творила нові візерунки, досить часто видно: вірш тримається тільки дещо вимініним візерунком. Тематичної новизни вже нема. Є новизна, сказати б, композиційна” (Stus 1994-1998, VI/1: 148).

man and poetic path with Ševčenko's model: "На мене особисто ці вірші справляють враження як психологічний документ – про що і як мислилося йому, яким настроєм він підпадав на схожій самоті"¹⁴.

Stus seems also to be aware of the inertia caused by Ševčenko's unique authority in Ukrainian literature. In a letter from 1983 he openly states that Ukrainian poetry has to overcome Ševčenko in order to modernize itself: "Українська муза носить Шевченків кожух – і не тільки вприває в ньому: умліває"¹⁵. This very critical utterance, which can be compared to several other similar declarations in his letters, reflects Stus's highly demanding expectations about the renewal of the Ukrainian poetic tradition. Stus's keenness to detect the epigonic and provincial features of Ukrainian poetry and prose¹⁶ testifies to his strong desire to contribute actively to a true intellectual rebirth and reshaping of Ukrainian culture by means of his own literary activity.

The very fact that Stus rarely mentions Ševčenko in his writings, in comparison with his extremely frequent discussions of western writers such as Rilke, seems to confirm Stus's willingness to overcome the traditional national worship of the various stereotyped images of Ševčenko¹⁷. An ideally *authentic* Ševčenko, freed from the burden of the conventional representations that have oppressed him, ought thus to be seen as a component of Stus's complex intellectual and intertextual palimpsest, in which Ševčenko takes part as an essential element of Ukrainian literary identity.

¹⁴ "This poems give me the impression of a psychological document – about what he thought and how he thought, and to which moods he surrendered in such a solitude" (Stus 1994-1998, VI/1: 148).

¹⁵ "The Ukrainian muse wears Ševčenko's coat – not only she sweats in it: she faints" (Stus 1994-1998, VI/1: 441). Stus's observations partly recall the famous, provocative anathema against Ševčenko by Dmytrij Karamazov, the hero of Mykola Xvyl'ovuj's 1927 novel *Val'dšnepy*: "А за те я його ненавиджу, – надмірно запалюючись, сказав він злим голосом, – що саме Шевченко кастрував нашу інтелігенцію. [...] Хіба це не Шевченко – цей, можливо, непоганий поет і на подив малокультурна й безвольна людина, – хіба це не він навчив нас писати вірші, сентиментальничати "по-катеринячи", бунтувати "по-гайдамачому" – безглуздо та безцільно [...]" (Xvyl'ovuj 1978-1986, II: 305).

¹⁶ See a couple of very outspoken considerations from Stus's 1963-1964 critical essays *Na poetyčnomu turniri* and *Naj budem ščyri!*: "І тут ми підходимо до найболючішого питання нашої поезії – міри естетичності багатьох віршів, їх художньої внутрішньої цілісності" (Stus 1994-1998, IV: 166); "На жаль, багатьом нашим поетам бракує саме глибокої інтелектуальної позначеності" (*Ivi*: 173).

¹⁷ On the manifold but actually rather homogeneous images of Ševčenko in the 20th century, both in literature and in culture in a broader sense, see Alwart 2012. For an overview of the main trends in the critical reception of Ševčenko from his death in 1861 up to 1980, see Luckyj 1980 and Koschmal 2014: 206-234. See also "Sučasnist'" (1989, 5) for a wide selection of writings on Ševčenko.

Ševčenko's presence in Stus's poetry can be analyzed focusing on two main issues: on the one hand, Stus features Ševčenko as a fictional character in his poetry; on the other hand, he conducts a complex intertextual dialogue with his poetic legacy.

Ševčenko's revival as a hero of *Rollengedicht*, or as object of lyrical evocation as well as panegyric invocation is obviously not new to 20th-century Ukrainian poetry. One could mention for example Jevhen Malanjuk's well known sonnet *Ševčenko* (1930)¹⁸, Maksym Ryl's'kyj's and Bohdan-Ihor Antonyč's poems with the same title and from the same period¹⁹, or pursue the widespread image of Ukraine's national bard in the poetic output of both the Ukrainian Sixtiers²⁰ and the repressed writers of the second half of the 20th century in Ukraine²¹. Ševčenko as a theme and an unavoidable point of reference was not alien also to the artistic conscience of the Ukrainian Avant-garde²².

¹⁸ “Не поет, бо це ж до болю мало, / Не трибун, бо це ж лиш рупор мас, / І вже менш за все ‘Кобзар Тарас’ / Він, ким зайнялось і запалало. / [...]” (Malanjuk 1954: 48). On Malanjuk's reception of Ševčenko, and on Ševčenko in the 20th century in general, see Grabowicz 2006. On earlier stages of Ševčenko's reception, and particularly on Mykola Kostomarov, see Grabowicz 1993.

¹⁹ “Не баграницею, не золотом – / Живою кров'ю він кипить, / Тому його людським кіотам / По віки вічні не містить. / [...] / Людина він! Не ждїть його там, / Де ваші божества дрібні! / Усім золоченим кіотам / Він вирік несмертельне: ні!” (Ryl's'kyj 1967: 101); “Не пишній монумент із мармуру Ти залишив по собі, / коли тут відходив, звідкіля немає вороття. / [...] / Це Ти сто літ показував мету і шлях стовпом вогнистим, / ми виросли у спадщині Твоїй, / як в сяйві сонця листя, / у куряві воен, у мряці буднів час Тебе не зрушив. / [...]” (Antonyč 2012: 299). Note the complex dynamics of deification and humanization in both poems.

²⁰ See for example Lina Kostenko's “poetic dialogue” with Ševčenko *Kobzarevi*, from her 1961 collection *Mandrivky sercja*, “Кобзарю! / Знов / до тебе я приходжу, / бо ти для мене совість і закон. / [...]” (Kostenko 1969: 109).

²¹ See the several “Ševčenko-poems” in the recent anthology *Poezija iz-za grat* (Holub 2012), e.g. Svjatoslav Karavans'kyj's *Pro Ševčenkа*, “Жив поет із серцем Прометей / У гурті заляканих людей... / Жив з пігмеями й не став пігмеєм! / Вмер, а все лишився Прометей!” (cf. Holub 2012: 312). Among imprisoned poets Ševčenko might turn into a fellow inmate. See the opening stanzas of a 1977 poem by Mykola Rudenko: “Сідай, Тарасе. В нас єдина мати – / Земля побоїш, гроз та лихоліть. / Зустрілись ми у темнім казематі, / Де часу досить, щоб погомоніть. // Мов отченаш, повторюю для себе / Твої рядки, що вийшли із-за ґрат. / Раніше ти до мене сходиш з неба, / А нині завітав, неначе брат” (Rudenko 1980: 40).

²² One should mention at least Muxajl' Semenko's 1914 shocking sentence “Ja palju svij ‘Kobzar’” from his manifesto *Sam* included in his 1914 collection *Derzannja*, and his subsequent reappropriation of Ševčenko by titling his 1924 poetry book *Kobzar*. On Semenko and his reception of Ševčenko, see Ihnytckyj 1978: 474-489. See also *Tretij lyst do Tarasa Hryhorovyča Ševčenkа* by Leonid Černov (real name L. Malošyčenko, 1899-1933): “[...] От би вийти / З Вами, любий, поруч: / – Годі / клястися / ім'ям / пролетар'яту!! / І тікала б / вся літературна сволоч / Під бичами / очисного мату. // Маяковський з Пушкіним, / А я, Григоричу, з Вами. / Поруч з Вами – / кожному поетові не те. [...]” (cf. Kocarev, Staxiv's'ka 2014: 657-663). For a psychoanalytical reading of Ukrainian Modernists' conflictual relationship with Ševčenko, see Hundorova 2009: 132-143.

In Stus's poetry, Ševčenko's traditional heroic image as the quintessential incarnation of ideal Ukrainianness is however a rather rare phenomenon²³, mainly limited to his stylistically and thematically motley *juvenilia*. See the opening lines of one of Stus's first poems:

Борітеся – поборете! Мені Тарас порадив у безсонної ночі,
Коли, немов сонця, горіли очі й пашіло тіло в їхньому вогні²⁴.

Ševčenko's sporadic appearances as a character in Stus's poetry are mainly linked to the *topos* of the immensity of the steppe and the subsequent endless journey that the subject must manage to undertake in order to accomplish his spiritual mission. In this regard the Ševčenko of Vasyl' Stus tends interestingly to melt with the latter's stereotypical image of Hryhorij Skovoroda²⁵.

In *Taras na zaslanni* from the early Sixties a sorrowing Ševčenko is doomed to never regain his homeland:

Світ перейду – і упаду
десь на чужій стерні.
Вже свого краю не знайду,
не попрощаюсь. Ні²⁶.

Not dissimilar is *Ševčenko. Doroha do Ors'ka* from 1972, one of the few poems in Stus's mature collection *Čas tvorčosti / Dichtenszeit* in which the usual focus on the inner world of the lyrical subject is replaced by the appearance of a fictional character:

²³ In this regard Stus's representation of Ševčenko might be compared to Ihor Kalyneč's. Kalyneč mentions Ševčenko not more often than a handful of times in his work, but reveals his lyrical subject's complicated attraction to Ševčenko and the inescapability of his model. So, in the 26th poem of his 1972 collection *Dodatky do biografiji* Kalyneč's lyrical subject seems to identify himself with Ševčenko through paradox: "[...] немає добрих геніїв є / тільки злі навіть Христос / і Шевченко в стражданні / зрадили ідеали задля / незчисленних мук у нескінченність" (Kalyneč 2004a: 354). In *Realiji*, also written in 1972, Ševčenko is identified with the protest voice of a whole generation: "Наша пісня протесту / Шевченко // Вчора / Сьогодні / Завтра" (*Ivi*: 334). In his later poetry, Kalyneč interestingly links his lyrical subject's reading of Ševčenko with the former's bodily dissolution: "[...] потопельник / щораз частіше / хапаюся за томик / Шевченка // мене меншає / по краплині / [...]" (Kalyneč 2004b: 416).

²⁴ "Keep fighting. You are sure to win! Taras suggested on a sleepless night, / When my eyes burnt like suns and my body blazed in their fire" (Stus 2007: 108).

²⁵ See the first stanza of Stus's early poem *Vstup do poemy "Skovoroda"*: "Холоне ніч у відсвітах багряних... / Навколо – безгоміння. Вдалині / Видніють жовті німічні вогні / Забутих селищ. На степних курганах / Уже з'явився промінь. Золотий. / На сході і на серці - неспокій" (Stus 2007: 45).

²⁶ "I shall cross the world and fall / In some distant field. / I shall not find my own land, / I shall not bid it farewell" (Stus 2007: 352).

І закривавились твої сліди
по сніжних кучугурах. Скільки ока –
Все далина: порожня і глибока.
А ти – іди. А ти – іди. А – йди²⁷.

The two last lines of this English sonnet seem nevertheless to announce a brighter, prophetic future for the exiled poet:

Цей навіжений, цей скажений степ
на весну бугилою поросте²⁸.

If we compare these poem with other literary portraits of Ševčenko by *šistdesjatnyky* and dissident writers, we will notice in both of the latter a tendency towards a glorifying representation of the national poet which seems to be missing in Stus's *oeuvre*. Clear examples of this trend are the short epos *Smert' Ševčenka* by Ivan Drač and the poem *De son, de sny, de tysjači syniv* by Mykola Vinhranov'skyj.

In Drač's lines the whole universe seems to be subjugated by the unchained strength of the poet. See its second stanza:

Поет став морем. Далеч степова.
І хмарочоси, й гори. Ним залиті.
Бунтують хвилі – думи і слова,
І сонце генія над ним стоїть в зеніті²⁹.

In Drač's neo-avant-garde depiction of Ševčenko, traditional elements of Ukrainian national mythology melt with symbols of the modern age, forging a text which is at the same time a praise of a national hero and a celebration of timeless and all-human poetic strength. Vinhranov'skyj's 1964 poem, which Stus wrote down in one of his notebooks in the early Sixties and which was for this reason mistakenly included in both academic editions of Stus's work³⁰, concentrates rather on Ševčenko's messianic role for Ukraine:

Той Сон – вітрило нації. Той Син –
безсмертя нації на всі літа і всевіч,
хоча б, приймні, відсвітом косим

²⁷ "And your bloody traces / on those snowy hills. Endless / is the valley, empty and deep. / Go, just go. Go, just go ahead" (Stus 2008: 156).

²⁸ "This crazy, this furious steppe / will be covered with chervil in the spring" (Stus 2008: 156).

²⁹ "The poet turned into a sea. The vastness of the steppe. / Skyscrapers and mountains. Soaked by him. / The waves rebel, and so do thoughts and words. / And the genius's sun is at the zenith over them" (Drač 1962: 108).

³⁰ See Stus 2007: 331-337. See also Svitlana Jovenko's bitter comments on these considerable philological blunders (Jovenko 2012a, Jovenko 2012b, Jovenko 2012c).

упало б щастячко на сліпоту і неміч
отих рабів німих. Самому занімійть
на гнівній палі правди понад сміттям,
то Сон-Шевченко, виснений століттям
для пробудіння всіх синів й століть³¹.

Ševčenko the man is thoroughly identified with his prophetic poetry and the palinge-netic message that Ukraine should draw out of it. It is rather easy to notice how Ševčenko as the propelling strength of the nation in Vinhranovs'kyj's poem considerably differs from the lonely wanderer of Stus's both Ševčenko-centered poems.

The author of *Kobzar* also appears in *Jak dobre to, ščo smerti ne bojus'ja*, one of the first poems of *Čas tvorčosti / Dichtenszeit*, in the context of an idealized all-Ukrainian poetic genealogy of the lyrical subject:

Народе мій, до тебе я ще верну
і в смерті обернуся до життя
своїм стражденим і незлим обличчям,
як син, тобі доземно поклонюсь
і чесно гляну в чесні твої вічі,
і чесними сльозами обіллуюсь.
Так хочеться пожити хоч годинку,
коли моя розвіється біда.
Хай прийдуть в гості Леся Українка,
Франко, Шевченко і Скворода³².

Here Ševčenko is mentioned together with the two other 'national writers' of Ukraine, Ivan Franko and Lesja Ukrajinka, and the freshly rediscovered Hryhorij Skovoroda, whose complete works had been published in Kyiv in 1961 after a long silence. Stus's poetological lyrical subject, who in this poem seems hardly separable from his implied author, strives to guarantee for Stus's poetry one more established place in the Ukrainian literary pantheon. At the same time, it should be underlined that the lyrical subject does not intend to visit

³¹ "That Dream – the nation's sail. That Son / – the nation's immortality, forever and ever. / May at least as a tenuous glimmer / joy descend on the blindness and weakness / of those dumb slaves. I'll fall silent / before the angry pillar of truth above wretchedness. / That's Ševčenko, that's the dream of centuries / for the awakening of all sons and centuries" (Vinhranovs'kyj 2013: 174-175).

³² "My people! I will return to you, / and in my death I will become restored to life, / in my torment, and with my candid face / I will bow down to the ground to you, as your son, / and honestly will glance into your honest eyes, / and I will shed honest tears on you. / I so want to live an hour more / When my pain will disappear. / Let them come and visit me, Lesja Ukrajinka, / Franko, Ševčenko and Skovoroda" (Stus 2008: 13). Some lines are taken from Marko Carynnyk's and C.H. Andrusyshen's translations of another version of this poem, which appeared in "The Ukrainian Weekly", LVI, 1988, 4 (24 January 1988), p. 10.

metaphorically Ševčenko, Franko, Ukrajinka and Skovoroda, but haughtily expects them to come to him and pay him a visit. This could be read as a metapoetical hint at the unsystematic nature of the poetic dialogue that Stus conducts with the above mentioned authors and with Ukrainian literature in general. As already said, Stus's complicated relation with his national literary tradition appears to consist in both a painful refusal of a great deal of its legacy and the compelling necessity to pursue its path to world literature, following models such as Ševčenko himself and the modernist poets Mykola Zerov and Volodymyr Svidzins'kyj.

Let us now eventually turn our attention to some concrete examples of intertextual 'visits' paid by Ševčenko to Stus's poetry. It can be reasonably maintained that the most important traces on Stus's poetic world have been left by some of those timeless images and themes that largely shape Ševčenko's poetic world itself, such as the native land, fate/destiny (*dolja*) and the feminine archetype of the Mother. Having been recontextualized as secondary elements of a modernistic literary construction whose core is the emotional life of the lyrical subject, these images and themes in Stus's poetry may be explained in their origin and meaning in connection with the essential role of Ševčenko's authority for the whole of Ukrainian literature.

Since his early poetry of the first half of the Sixties Stus had drawn heavily on Ševčenko's classic theme of the lyrical subject's love-hate relationship with Ukraine, torn between past glory and hope for future rebirth. In lines like "О краю мій, коли тобі проститься / крик передсмертний і важка сльоза / розстріляних, замучених, забитих / по соловках, сибірах, магаданах?"³³ the everlasting power of Ševčenko's model in Ukrainian poetry is easily detectable.

Ševčenko's paradigm in Stus's poetry from the Sixties can manifest itself in a more or less evident manner through the adaptation of ševčenkian scenes to the present age of Stus's lyrical subject. So, the following lines from Stus's 1962 *samizdat* experiment *Delo N° 13 / BEI339* clearly remind the reader of the oneiric flight over the imperial capital in Ševčenko's poem *Son*:

Стольний граде! Стволовий надрізе!
Ліхтарі як спалахи ракет.
Зібгана душа спішить урізатись
На мосту Патона – в парапет.

Спить – не спить Дніпро, завжди гостинний,
Зречена душа – без крил – летить
За биками, за човнами и за кпинами...
Свій пролитий полишає слід.
Не сльозою зійде – а фонтаном

³³ "Oh, my country! When will you be forgiven / for the death moan and the heavy tear / of those who have been shot, tortured and killed / at Solovki, Siberia, and Magadan?" (Stus 2007: 152). These lines were then repeated in later poems and found their way to *Palimpsesty*.

Над водою. Не сльозою, сплеском,
Мов бар'єром від життя віддалена”³⁴.

The rage of Ševčenko's lyrical subject towards the land he cannot recognize as his homeland anymore, as well as his rage over God's indifference are central to one of Stus's best known poems from his mature collection *Palimpsesty*:

Немає Господа на цій землі:
не стерпів Бог – сперед очей тікає,
аби не бачити нелюдських кривд,
диявольських тортур і окрутенств.
В краю потворнім є потворний бог –
почвар володар і владика люті
скаженої – йому нема відради
за цю єдину: все трощити впень
і нівечити, і помалу неба
додолу попускати, або світ
безнебим став. Вітчизною шалених
катованих катів. Пан-Бог – помер”³⁵.

Stus undertakes a refined elaboration of his original model. The initial literal quotation of Ševčenko's verse evolves towards a new interpretation of God's blindness: the horror of human life in his own country is so terrible that God does not want to look at it. Not only God has disappeared, he is dead. Modernity confers to the ševčenkian subtext a new expressiveness and a clear existentialist connotation. Let us not forget that Stus was a passionate reader of Albert Camus.

In another poem from *Palimpsesty* Ukraine is defined as both native and stranger according to Ševčenko's tradition:

Бо вже ослонився безокрай чужинний,
бо вже чужинецький оширився край.

³⁴ “Capital city! Barrel carving! / Street lamps as rocket flares. / My stooped soul hurries to bump / on Paton Bridge – on the parapet. // It sleeps, it doesn't sleep – always welcoming is Dnipro. / My rejected soul flies – without wings – / Beyond the beams, the boats, the slanders... / It leaves its spread traces. / Not like a tear, but like a fountain / over the water. / Not like a tear, but like a spray, / As if a barrier divided it from life” (Stus 2007: 139).

³⁵ “There is no Lord in this world: / God didn't stand it – he escapes, / not to see inhuman offenses, / diabolic tortures and wickedness. / In a monstrous country there's a monstrous god – / the lord of monsters, the rabid king of / evil – he's got but one delight: / destroying everything, / and gradually / lowering the sky, so that the world / will end up with no sky. / Fatherland of crazy / tortured torturers. The Lord God - died” (Stus 2009: 109).

Прощай, Україно, моя Україно,
чужа Україно, навіки прощай³⁶.

Several other examples of this painful dialectics between the 'own' and the 'alien' can easily be detected in the wide and still in many regards not fully understood corpus of Stus's poetry.

After this brief but comprehensive survey of Stus's most ševčenkian lines and poems, the question arises as to their role and deeper meaning in Stus's work in its entirety. We should recall Jurij Ševelov's above-mentioned statement about the spontaneous, even 'physical' nature of Stus's never ending dialogue with Ševčenko's fundamental model. Ševčenko was for Stus and his poetry an essential point of reference, the very root of the Ukrainian literary tradition to the development and enrichment of which Stus entirely dedicated his life. The same fact that Stus did not mention Ševčenko among his lifetime favorite poets, whom he openly recognized in Goethe, Rilke and Pasternak³⁷, testifies to his 'unmediated' relation to Ukraine's foremost cultural myth. If Ševčenko is on the one hand the air that Stus breathes³⁸, he is on the other hand the expression of a literary culture which cannot but be defined as very remote from Stus's own one. Stus's genuinely modernist poetry can as a matter of fact benefit from a fruitful confrontation with Ševčenko's Romanticism³⁹, but is not to be naïvely confused with a repetition of its patterns in the 20th century. Ševčenko's substantial contribution to the complex mosaic of Stus's poetic influences and intertexts must be read through the lens of literary history, bearing in mind both the 'necessary' character of the ševčenkian presence, and its natural adjustment in the context of modernist dialogic poetics.

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³⁶ "The foreign infinity is already closed, / The foreign land can already be seen. / Farewell, Ukraine, my Ukraine, / My foreign Ukraine, forever goodbye" (Stus 2009: 115).

³⁷ See Stus's letter to his family from 15/01/1984: "Для мене, мабуть, є три поети: Гете [...], Рільке і Пастернак" (Stus 1994-1998, VI/1: 455).

³⁸ See note 3.

³⁹ On Ševčenko's Romanticism see Naxlik 2003. On the link between Romanticism and the image of the national genius in Central and Eastern Europe see Rothe 2010.

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Abstract

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Taras Ševčenko in the Prose and Poetry of Vasyl' Stus

The presence of Ševčenko in the poetry of Vasyl' Stus and Stus's widespread stereotypical image as a reincarnation of Ševčenko in the 20th century have occupied an important role in both literary studies and popularization. In my article I reconsider this fundamental issue by discussing Stus's reception of Ševčenko in his critical essays, his letters, and his poetry. My focus is on both Ševčenko's presence as a 'fictional character' in some poems by Stus and the overall influence of Ševčenko's poetry on Stus's poetic writing. Moreover, Stus's representation of Ševčenko is compared with other images of the 19th-century poet in modern Ukrainian poetry from the Avant-garde up to the Seventies. In the conclusion I point out how Ševčenko's Romanticism should not be confused with Stus's Modernism. The former should be seen as a part of the complex intertextual mechanism which lies at the heart of Stus's poetry.

Keywords

Taras Ševčenko; Vasyl' Stus; Ukrainian Poetry; Literary Influences.