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REINTERPRETING “DAUGHTER” BY E. CALDWELL AND “NOVYNA”/“THE NEWS” BY V. STEFANYK: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

ПЕРЕЧИТУЮЧИ «ДОЧКУ» Е. КОЛДВЕЛА ТА «НОВИНУ» В. СТЕФАНІКА: КОМПАРАТИВНИЙ ПІДХІД

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The suggested paper is the first attempt in American and Ukrainian literature study to make a comparative assessment of short stories “Daughter” by Erskine Caldwell and “The News”/“Novyna” by Vasyl Stefanyk. The acuteness of the research topic is defined by a new approach to interpretation of the outstanding writers’ creativity. Their literary heritage has been widely analyzed separately by native and foreign scholars while the typological comparison promotes deeper understanding of their short stories under discussion as well as the fiction worlds of the American and Ukrainian men of letters in general. Thus the research aims at tracing analogous and distinctive literary phenomena manifested in “Daughter” and “The News”/“Novyna”. The given study focuses on establishing similar and distinct features in the mentioned literary pieces within the following parameters: the compositional structure of the stories, the writers’ aesthetic ideal and credo, the implication of the water archetype, the usage and functioning of poetic details and camera-eye effect device as the basic characterization means in both works. Besides, the credit E. Caldwell and V. Stefanyk give to the vernacular languages of their native territories – Southern America and Western Ukraine – is discussed. In the course of the research the author of the article arrives at the conclusion that the considered literary pieces demonstrate typologically similar and diverse features that can be explained by the social and historical conditions that existed in the countries at the turn of the 19–20th centuries as well as by the national philosophies (American Existentialism and Ukrainian Philosophy of the Heart) and traditional imagery creating patterns. The individual writers’ style and the peculiar diction selection outline the uniqueness of the short stories. Summarizing the paper the author states that there exists cultural and aesthetic similarity as well as discrepancy of the two writers’ aesthetic vision.

Key words: typological similarities and differences (discrepancies), aesthetic ideal and credo, compositional structure, poetic detail, camera-eye effect, water archetype, American and Ukrainian national literatures.

Статтю присвячено порівняльному вивченню оповідань «Дочка» Е. Колдвела та «Новина» В. Стефаніка. Наявні дослідження творчості обох авторів зосереджені на вивченні їхнього доробку переважно в межах національних літератур, відповідно, порівняльна розвідка видається актуальною з огляду на можливість реінтерпретації зазначених новел у контексті творчості двох митців слова, американської й української літератур і вихід на подальші міжкультурні студії. Застосований нами типологічний підхід уможливив проведення паралелей між творами американського та українського митців слова, визначення схожостей і відмінностей у параметрах авторського кредо та естетичного ідеалу, композиційної побудови оповідань, образного й архетипного наповнення творів, а також використання художньої деталі та прийому кінокамери для змалювання персонажів обома письменниками. У статті також приділено увагу мовним особливостям оповідань, зокрема використанню локально забарвленої лексики, притаманної західноукраїнським діалектам, і порушенню граматичних норм синтаксичних конструкцій, властивих для мовлення афро-американців, функціонуванню стилістичних прийомів і засобів виразності. Окреслені аналогії й відмінності пояснюються суспільно-історичними факторами України та США, національними філософськими засадами (ідеї американського трансценденталізму, доктрини покладання на себе, української «філософія серця»), універсальними мистецько-літературними аспектами, а також індивідуальним письменницьким стилем Ерскіна Колдвела та Василя Стефаніка. Автор статті доходить висновків про культурно-естетичну спорідненість художнього бачення митців слова та подібність світоглядних гуманістичних позицій і бачить перспективи в подальшому компаративному розгляді інших творів цих письменників.

Ключові слова: типологічні схожості/відмінності, художня деталь, архетип води, прийом кінокамери, композиційна побудова, авторське кредо й естетичний ідеал, національні письменства США та України.

Research territory and the acuteness of the research. Erskine Caldwell and Vasyl Stefanyk are outstanding short prose writers that have contributed

greatly to the national, American and Ukrainian, literatures as well as the world one. Their literary heritage has been widely considered by native and foreign

scholars, though the studies conducted were carried out exclusively within the paradigm of the national literary scopes. Despite a number of critical interpretive approaches, none has focused on a comparative evaluation of E. Caldwell's and V. Stefanyk's writings, the prism that would benefit to identifying new vectors in establishing the artistic world of both men of letters. It outlines the **acuteness** of the present study as the suggested paper is the first attempt in Ukrainian and American literature study to make a comparative assessment of the creativity of the writers, their novellas "Daughter" (E. Caldwell) and "Novyna"/"The News" (V. Stefanyk) in particular.

Research objectives and methods. The **object** of the study is the short stories "Daughter" and "Novyna"; similarities and discrepancies poetically expressed in the given pieces make up the **subject matter** of the present research. So, **the objective** of the paper is to single out similar and distinctive features in the novellas within the following parameters: the authors' aesthetic ideal and credo, the composition of the stories, poetic details, and camera-eye effects. The **typological comparative approach** will enable us to make judgments as for similarities and distinct features in the stories under consideration against the background of national American and Ukrainian histories and philosophies as well as the writers' individual artistic worlds.

Literature review. American and Ukrainian comparative literature study is a relatively new branch of a literary criticism. Despite a great distance that exists between the two national literatures and lack of direct contacts and genetic connections do not make it impossible to employ the comparative method to discuss the typology of definite literary phenomena. American-Ukrainian comparatism has succeeded to get a number of essential achievements ("*Literary Impressionism in Ukraine and the USA (typology and national peculiarities)*" and "*Ukrainian Philosophy of the Heart and American Transcendentalism*" by S. Pryhodi, "*Archetype in the novels by F.S. Fitzgerald and V. Domontovych*" by Yu. Matasova, "*Lyrics by Lesia Ukrainka and E. Dickinson: typology and national peculiarities*" by H. Chesnokova, "*The Typology of Symbolism in fiction by F.S. Fitzgerald and Todos Osmachka*" by V. Zinevych, "*Typology of the Comic in Fiction by I.S. Nechui-Levytskyi and Mark Twain*" by O. Dolgusheva, "*The Self-Other Opposition in Modern Massliterature of Ukraine and the United States (Based on Novels by I. Karpa and L. Weisberger)*" by O. Krushelnyska, "*Archetypes and toposes in post-modern poetry of Ukraine and the USA*" by T. Donii etc.). Unfortunately, none of them interprets the liter-

ary heritage of Erskine Caldwell and Vasyl Stefanyk in a comparative perspective. Recent researches have also evidenced the tendency to discuss the writers' creativity separately within the boundaries of their national literary discourse.

E. Caldwell's fiction received its considerable critical acclaim mostly in the previous century. Nevertheless, in the 21st century in the USA there have appeared a few research works that examine the author's creativity. In the majority of cases it is the writer's long prose fiction that attracted the current studies' attention. The topics considered are not marked by a great variety. Thus, Janet Holtman [10] discusses the questions of poverty-stricken whites in rural regions as presented in Caldwell's novels.

In his PhD dissertation "Clear-cutting eden: representations of nature in Southern fiction, 1930–1950" Christopher Rieger engages the framework of the ecological criticism to interpret the narratives by Erskine Caldwell, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Zora Neale Hurston, and William Faulkner. The emphasis is laid on the writers' perception of nature and the intersection of race, gender, and class with the natural environmental surrounding [13].

Dr. Borni Mahmoud Lafi [11] in the research paper entitled "Erskine Caldwell, Zora Neale Hurston and Life's Lower Elements in the South of the United States: Celebrating Region and Race!" suggests a comparative study of low elements in emotive prose of two American authors. There is an attempt to look at how the South of the USA was celebrated by both artists. The scholar addresses the issues of failure of the writers to satisfy the literary demands of the 1930s as well as the one of the Southern and Harlem Renaissance. The author affirms that "instead of betrayal and of selling out region and race, what Erskine Caldwell and Zora Neale Hurston actually did was claiming or celebrating the South and its people through refiguring and foregrounding what the Southern Renaissance and the Harlem or New Negro Movement sought to exclude and marginalize" [11, p. 76].

Amélie Moisy considers "Daughter" by E. Caldwell in terms of allusions to a number of social and cultural myths [12]. Among them the mythology of American Southerner, the figure of Poverty in Greek mythology, linguistic and ideological implications of mythology are in the focus of the scholar's attention.

As for the critical assessment of V. Stefanyk's emotive prose a few recent studies are worth discussing. Thus, O. Kazanova explores the tendencies to dramatize and lyricize the writer's short prose fiction genres [2]. An attempt to reinterpret V. Stefanyk's fiction is made by S. Yamborko. The scholar considers

stylistic similarities and differences, color symbols including, observed in the works of the Ukrainian author and Polish modernistic literature as well as Vasyl Stefanyk's works in Polish as a productive link of literary, cultural and social interconnection of the two countries [9].

A range of PhD theses in Ukrainian literature selected V. Stefanyk's creativity as the subject of research of various literary phenomena. In O. Bihun's dissertation, for example, the writer's long and short prose fiction pieces serve an experimental material to analyze the genre paradigm of Ukrainian and French literatures at the turn of the 19–20th centuries [1]. Symbols, their meanings and implication attracted the attention of N. Naumenko who interprets a few Stefanyk's fiction in terms of archetypal images, folklore symbolic traditions as well as expressionistic manner of writing [5].

The epistolary heritage of the Ukrainian author became a special research focus for tB. Kyryanchuk [3]. The method undertaken enabled the critic to identify the hermeneutic concepts in V. Stefanyk's letters.

Besides, S. Kovaliv provides a profound discussion the ways the diaspora philologists L. Lutsiv assesses the literary achievements of the writer. The latter ones are viewed from the point of view of various methodological approaches, genre peculiarities, and the polemics with the literary criticism of the Soviet times [5].

The issues of the scholarly publication of Vasyl Stephanyk's belles-lettristic legacy are raised by R. Pikhmanets [7]. The author considers scientific collisions connected with the publication of the writer's short stories and novellas. The scope of the research includes linguistic and orthographic selection as well as the textual commentaries.

S. Kyrylyuk's research addresses the issues of cinematography techniques that were employed by V. Stefanyk in his fiction [4]. The scholar analyzes the role of a person in the black and white "frame" of the Ukrainian prose in the *fin de siècle* period. A special attention is paid to gestures, facial expressions, glances as mean of portraying characters. The scrutinized novellas are viewed through the prism of analytical anthropology, theory and history of cinema development.

As one can see the current studies of E. Caldwell's and V. Stefanyk's prose fiction are carried out mainly within a national literature, while extending the boundaries of the analysis and resorting to an international literary process will make a new perspective of discussion possible. The typological comparison is supposed to benefit in outlining

the individual writers' styles against the background of the world literature.

Findings, discussion and results. To begin with, let us consider the writers' credo and aesthetic ideal as they find their manifestation in the short stories under analysis. The historical and social reality in the USA and Ukraine has produced a noticeable impact on the literary practice in both countries. E. Caldwell widely developed the topics of the American South – the region of the country to be mostly associated with the slavery in earlier centuries and later with the social issues dealing with lives and fates of common black and white people earning their living by hard and ill-paid labor. V. Stefanyk was a witness to acute problems that Ukrainian peasantry faced at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. Both countries experienced a tragic transition process from slavery to the so called freedom, still full of poverty and deprivation. The latter ones in the works by Caldwell and Stefanyk are viewed not as abstract notions, but as concrete phenomena that involve the fates of individuals as well South American and Western Ukrainian communities. Here one can lay out the central similarity in the authors' aesthetic ideal – to express the condemnation of the current social circumstances and economic conditions without a single direct remark on their part. So, the writers managed to present a very sharp social conflict through the prism of a single event – of a tragedy within a separate family.

With an American writer the conflict becomes intensified by racial issues and by the opposition presented by the law (or law enforcement bodies), on the one hand, and the town dwellers, not well off crop sharers, both black and white, on the other. None of the police officers are introduced in the novelette by V. Stefanyk, but in two stories the reader can easily draw a distinction line between 'the letter of the law' and 'the spirit of the law'. In the case of "Daughter" the letter of the law is represented through the officials (Sheriff, Colonel) while the spirit of the law is manifested by the crowd that gathered in the jail yard. In the Ukrainian story, both legal aspects are connected with the protagonist himself. Here, the narrator's observations followed by the direct speech illustrate the idea: "*Йому стало легше, і він заговорив скоро:*

– Скажу панам, що не було ніякої ради: ані їсти що, ані в хаті затопити, ані віпрати, ані голову змити, ані ніц! Я си кари приймаю, бо-м завинив, та й на шибеницу!" [15, p. 49].

The mentioned difference can be explained by the attitude of the American and Ukrainian people towards the power and authorities. In the USA, the law is a regulation everyone is obliged to follow;

the legal body and its representatives are supposed to be honored and respected by any citizen of the country irrespective of the occupied position or social status. The principle of equal justice under law, determined by the Constitution, is observed *de jure* and *de facto*. In Ukraine, unlike the American states, for long periods of time people expressed their utter disrespect, if not contempt, for the authorities as they embodied the power of suppression and aggression that did not evoke the feelings of trust or reliability. Thus, the social acuteness having typologically similar historical and economic background find in the two prose fiction pieced different personal, psychological and artistic reflections.

If to proceed considering the psychological matter which is highlighted through the protagonists, Jim and Hryts, it is necessary to refer to the national philosophic frameworks. American transcendentalist philosophy (R.W. Emerson, H.D. Thoreau) elaborated the doctrine of self-reliance and that of a self-made man. It is supplemented by the Southerners' high sense in pride when it comes to money matters [11]. Jim that had to keep himself and maintain his daughter had been working by the sweat of his brow, thus, trying not to be dependent on anyone but himself. Even being deprived of all the earnings, Jim was too proud to ask anyone for help since it was beyond his comprehension to realize that back-breaking toil may fail to secure appropriate living conditions for Clara. To intensify the effect, E. Caldwell resorts to a poetic detail, introducing the lexeme *something* (as in the following sentence: "... *me and my wife could have fed her something*" [14, p. 40]). It bears the implication of barbaric conditions and reduced circumstances of all the town dwellers that was the result of the exploitative treatment on the part of the employers. So, the reader comes across a contradictory dichotomy of the ideal and the real which is caused by the violation of central ideas concerning the universal equality of humans for the god and by the discrepancy of material and spiritual values that rises in the particular social and historical circumstances.

Ukrainian philosophy of the heart (H. Skovoroda, P. Yurkevych) in its turn suggests a deeper connotation of V. Stefanyk's poetic details. The image of a stone ("*камінь на грудях*") is one of them. According to P. Yurkevych, the heart of a human is a core of the spiritual and moral life; it is the heart that generates various intentions of a person, be they good or evil [8, p. 75–77]. Thus the stone trope can be interpreted in a way that the decision Hryts had made was a voluntary one; the only intention of his was to give the child a relief, no matter how moral

or immoral it may seem. It was certainly not an easy choice to make. A long way through the hills and valleys – another poetic detail – implies, on the one hand, having extra time to reconsider the resolution and abandon it, and, on the other hand, to postpone the moment of drowning the child. Nevertheless, similar conditions and the crimes committed determine different psychological states of the characters – the state of affect (Jim) and the state of a sensible man (Hryts).

So, the given analysis proves that Erskine Caldwell and Vasyl Stefanyk in their short story pieces expressed similar world vision and moral principles. Through the depicted inhumane deeds the writers exemplify their own humanness that is rendered to the readers by bright artistic and poetic means.

Another aspect that deserves a close scrutiny is the compositional structure of the stories. None does have a conventional plot pattern that originated from G. Freytag's ideas. It suggests the sequence of causally related events that starts with the exposition followed by the rising actions that in their turn lead to the climax. The latter one indicates the turning point of a literary work and is supposed to make the situation stable and the central conflict resolved. Erskine Caldwell and Vasyl Stefanyk arrange their novelettes in a way of making an emphasis on the psychological state of the characters and the readers' response rather than on the development of events. It explains the fact that the Ukrainian story starts with the denouement; the author by means of continuous retrospections lays out the motive of Hryts' crime. The whole story is written in the past tense, though for a Ukrainian reader it is easy to distinguish between the narration proper and the instances of flashbacks. The usage of adverbial modifiers of time (*відколи, а тепер*) as temporal markers of the present and the past provides the key to grasp the differences and to follow the alterations as well as the writer's narrative strategy.

Unlike the Ukrainian man of letters, Caldwell creates an effect of suspense. The exposition does not introduce the crucial event of the narrative. So in the text there is a combination of the narrator's foreshadowing as for the central happening ("*I picked up my shotgun and done it*"; "... *have taken the word*") and retrospection that lay emphasis on the daughter's multiple complaints of being hungry. The effect is achieved through various repetitions, mostly distant syntactical ones (parallel constructions ("*Daughter said she was hungry, and I just couldn't stand it no longer. I just couldn't stand to hear her say it*" [14, p. 39]); "*I made enough working on shares, but they came and took it all away from me. I couldn't*

go around begging after I'd made enough to keep us. They just came and took it all off. Then Daughter woke up again this morning saying she was hungry, and I just couldn't stand it no longer" [14, p. 40]; *"I'd made enough for all of us", Jim said. "I just couldn't stand it no longer. Daughter'd been hungry all the past month"* [ibid].

Scarce intervening indications of the terrible crime that come from the crowd seems to be addressed to the readers for them to experience empathy and the sense of personal presence. The objective narrator leaves the reader partially ignorant of Jim's being imprisoned till the middle of the story – the moment when the reason of Jim's being jailed becomes known.

An interesting case of a typological analogy (and consequently of a difference) can be observed in the writers' portrayal of the characters. Both protagonists are fathers, responsible, loving and caring ones. Jim and Hryts are too sensitive to bear the sufferings of their children that made them arrive at a desperate decision to stop their pain. But if Jim's act looks like an affective one, for it is clear that he is not fully aware of the committed crime and its consequences, Hryts' intention seems to be a conscious one, though the readers would not classify it as a willful murder. Approaching the texts from the emphatic perspective they would rather justify both, as in the personages' opinion depriving the kids of life was the only proper thing to do. It is impossible not to mention the key textual characterizing device – the camera-eye effect. Both writers resort to it, though the device functions with a different degree of frequency and purposes. In "Daughter" close ups aim mostly at portraying Jim's appearance: *"When he saw them, he stuck his chin between the iron and gripped his hands around it"; 'Jim's long thin face looked as if it would come through the bars"; "Jim's face squeezed between the bars until it looked as though only his ears kept his head from coming through"* [15, p. 38–39]. These examples suggest an image of the man who is exhausted by the backbreaking work and fatigue, while the inner state of his remains beyond direct Caldwell's presentation. Neither the visual picture of Clara is created in the text as the readers might be looking forward to discover (as predicted from the novelette's title). Only Jim's constantly repeated utterances and a few mentioning of the daughter by the crowd produce an effect of a virtual girl's presence.

Unlike Caldwell, Stefanyk pays much attention both to the appearance of Hryts and his internal condition combining the camera-eye effect with poetic details. Besides, the girls are also portrayed in

the story as real rather than virtual personages despite the absence of their extended facial and character traits. In fact, it really does not matter. What matters is the way Handzunia and Dotska endure extreme starvation and severe cold and the way they look like in the father's eyes: *"Лише четверо чорних очей, що були живі і що мали вагу. Здавалося, що ті очі важили би так, як олово, а решта тіла, якби не очі, то полетіла би з вітром, як пір'я. Та й тепер, як вони їли сухий хліб, то здавалося, що кістки в лиці потріскають"* [15, p. 48]. Here the readers encounter bright similes and metaphors that intensify the close shots. As for Hryts, himself, the Ukrainian man of letters does not dwell upon his outer portrait, but prefers an emphasis on the perception of reality. For example, rounding off the daughters' portrait, Stefanyk selects a very concise, but exact word *"Мерці"* (*"The dead"*). Hryts repeats the word twice within a paragraph magnifying a terrible implication. Further, the lines *"Почорнів, і очі запали всередину так, що майже не дивилися на світ, лиш на той камінь, що давив груди"* [15, p. 48] metaphorically express utter despondency mixed with fear and helplessness.

In general, the imagery of V. Stefanyk seems to be deeper than the one created by E. Caldwell. First, the name of the younger child sounds like Dotska which literally means 'daughter'. In this respect the similarity between the two stories is transparent. Grammatically, the absence of the article in the American title (*"Daughter"*) endows it with a generalized meaning, deprived of any particular reference to the precedent name or accident. The name of the elder child in the Ukrainian work is the one without any etymological connotation, but its usage in the diminutive variant (Handzunia) implies the father's love and deep sensitivity that become foregrounded against despair and tragedy.

Second, the archetype of water in V. Stefanyk's story allows its polysemantic interpretation since any archetype is known to have a double nature. Water can be treated, on the one hand, as a life giving source, and, at the same time, an element that takes a human life away. Both sides find manifestations in the analyzed novella: the younger daughter gets drowned in the river, while the elder one pleaded dismissal from her father to stay alive. Hryts let Handzunia go and supplemented his decision by the words of care and love. The river itself is not presented as ominous or evil. On the contrary, the writer compares it to a stream of a live silver: *"У місячнім світлі розстелилася на долині ріка, як велика струя живого срібла"* [15, p. 49], though a moment later the sparkling river's waters made Hryts freeze and feel the physical

and moral burden becoming heavier and less bearable (“Гриць здригнувся, бо блискуча ріка заморозила його, а той камінь на грудях став ще тяжчий” [ibid]).

The final point to discuss in the given paper is the writers’ credit to the language of the local communities. E. Caldwell’s story demonstrates the difference between the author’s narration and the speech of the characters. In the majority of cases the readers find a conventional device to present the speech with the help of a-grammatical constructions (Vox Pop) – “*I just couldn’t stand it no longer*” [14, p. 40], “*I wasn’t nowhere around...*” [14, p. 41], “*It don’t seem right ...*” [14, p. 40]. V. Stefanyk’s diction selection is vernacular irrespective of the narrative part. While the American writer uses syntactical structures to reflect the local and ethnic language and speech peculiarities, his counterpart aestheticizes the vocabulary of Western Ukraine. For a long time that territory experienced the influence of many countries, and, naturally, the language also was under the impact of the neighboring tongues. As a result the author’s style suggests quite a number of lacunae for the contemporary readers as well as the ones acquainted with the literary Ukrainian language, not with its dialects or variants. For instance, such lexemes as *бучок, борзенько, пацити, глемедати, мелдуватиси* etc. puzzle the recipients by their meanings and etymology. No wonder then that the collections of V. Stefanyk’s works are very frequently supplemented by explanatory notes and his fiction in general has become an object of particular PhD research studies.

Conclusion and perspectives. To summarize the paper we can state that “*Daughter*” by Erskine Caldwell and “*The News*” by Vasyl Stefanyk demonstrate a number of typological similarities as well as discrepancies. The authors’ credo and aesthetic ideal are analogous due to the writers’ personal involvement in the life of people depicted: Caldwell’s literary career reflected his experience of living in the American South and his observations of hardships

ordinary people had to endure; Stefanyk – a native born Western Ukrainian – presented the tragic misery of peasantry that suffered much from the ruling powers.

Similar (dissimilar) features in the styles of both authors were identified in the compositional structures and the functioning of the camera-eye effect. The Ukrainian writer begins his story with the denouement, turning back in the rest of the piece to the reasons and details of the tragedy. His American counterpart creates the effect of suspense by postponing the introduction of the central event till the middle of the novelette. Both resort to retrospections to explore the root cause of the accidents. The camera-eye effect is a leading textual device of characterization in “*Daughter*” as well as in “*The News*”, though the latter one suggests a wider scope of application combining the outer personages’ image with the inner state.

Considering the artistic nature of the works we can argue that the Ukrainian piece evokes a deeper tropological connotation thanks to a greater number of poetic details as well the archetypal implications. Besides, Erskine Caldwell and Vasyl Stefanyk reflected the local and ethnic uniqueness of language and speech.

So, the scrutinized short stories demonstrate typologically common (different) features. It can be explained by the writers’ similar perception and comprehension of poverty, deprivation and social inequality as universal problems and their implied condemnation as well as by the national philosophies and imagery creating patterns, individual authors’ styles and writing techniques.

The perspectives of further research lay in the scope of comparing longer prose fiction works by Erskine Caldwell and Vasyl Stefanyk to specify the stylistic and poetic means of celebrating the national (American and Ukrainian) spirit and explore cultural and aesthetic similarities (discrepancies) in the writers’ artistic vision.

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