

FROM JAN KOCHANOWSKI'S "TRENY"
TO IVAN FRANKO'S ELEGIES

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The article traces the evolution of Ukrainian elegy upon the death from Jan Kochanowski to Ivan Franko. The author defines the genesis of the genre having studied the novelty and originality of the philosophical and poetic work "Treny" by Jan Kochanowski (Jan Kochanowski's "Treny" (1580)) and Franko's works "23rd anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's death" (1884) and "25th anniversary of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko's death" (1886) as a kind of funeral elegy.

The author mentions such significant works as "In eternal memory of Kotliarevskiy" by Taras Shevchenko, poems upon the death and death anniversary of Kobzar, which formed a new type of funeral elegy with its constant poetic and compositional scheme, and this or that way they are pasticcio of Shevchenko's style of writing. A significant step in the development of genre was represented by Mykhaylo Starytski's works, which marked the emergence of a realistic elegy upon the death with clearly defined emotional personal principle, where the persona is an immediate witness and excited participant of events. These works contributed to the rise of poetic inspiration. Starytski's elegy became the basis for Franko's elegies upon the death of Shevchenko. Franko established a qualitatively new genre invariant on the basis of traditional for this genre theme.

Key words: literary process, genre, kind, elegy upon the death, poetics, persona, emotional and prosodic colouring.

Ivan Franko's elegies are characterized by a variety of genre modifications. Although, the epoch of modernism had an effect on the genre development, at the same time one can trace antique, folklore, baroque, romantic and realistic traditions on the level of figurative and expressive opportunities, in the aspect of subjective and objective sphere, problematics and genre formation in particular. Two verses "23rd anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's death" [10, p. 373–374] and "25th anniversary of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko's death" [10, p. 397–400] deserve special attention among them. They significantly influenced the development and formation of Ukrainian elegy.

At that time (1884 and 1886) when Franko wrote these verses, elegy upon the death was widely spread in Ukrainian literature and had ancient traditions, which went back to "funeral lament and canticle" [7, p. 136]. Such verses are defined as a kind of elegy in many European literatures and in Polish in particular. Some scientists (Viktor Bondar, Nataliya Levchyk) of Ukrainian literature call them "pomennyky". "The phenomena of spiritual life, Shevchenko's oeuvre first of all, – writes Bondar, – became the theme of such genres of speculative and meditative lyrics as dedication poem, epistle poem and also too specific, but widespread at that time "pomennyk" [3, p. 136–137]. We consider that this point of view does not contradict ours, but, on the contrary, specifies it. The genesis of elegy upon the death or as it is called "funeral elegy" goes back to antiquity, but it gains special popularity among European poets of XV–XVII; it became one of the most popular kinds of genre in Ancient Ukrainian literature.

At the end of XVIII theoreticians distinguished two types of elegy: trenic and erotic [2, p. 50]. The same situation can be traced in old Polish literature. "Old Polish poets mourned over two great losses: the loss of prominent and dear people and the decline of the motherland" [14, p. 95]. These themes prevailed in Polish elegies till 20th of XIX.

Let us pay attention to the fact that the term "elegy" as the name was almost not used; "weeping", "lamentation", "tren", "poem for sorrowful funeral" were used instead

[10, p. 11–17]. All the above mentioned types of genre constitute a very important milestone in evolution of Ukrainian elegy as they promoted its modification and forms of author's poetic consciousness in particular.

The peculiarity of Ukrainian mournful elegy acquires expressiveness in the typological comparison with the correspondent works of French, Polish, English and German literature of XVI – first half of XVII. One can trace the coincidences in creation of the world image and concept of a character. The dominant features of poetic style, artistic peculiarity of national elegies and the dynamics of genre development proved on one hand the development of Ukrainian elegy within West European framework and on the other hand it proved the formation of distinctive features.

It was Polish literature of Renaissance which presented an unsurpassed example of elegy in the European literature, which is “Treny” by Jan Kochanowski (1580), a peculiar philosophical and poetic work, which showed the genesis of the genre. In particular, the human being concept, advocated by humanist, was utterly devastated, as this concept stated that one can preserve emotional harmony, if the internal problem of life and death, loss of dear people is viewed not from the point of view of a person's destiny, but from the point of view of providing future generations. But the author experienced misfortune, cruel injustice of destiny – the death of a tiny daughter, Urszulka.

19 elegies, dedicated to her death, embodied the heavy grief and various moods of disconsolate father's soul:

It fades and, losing all its living hue,
Drops by the mother from whose roots it grew:
So was it with my Ursula, my dear;
A little space she grew beside us here,
Then Death came, breathing pestilence, and she
Fell, stricken lifeless, by her parent tree.
Persephone, Persephone, this flow
Of barren tears! How couldst thou will it so? [1, p. 21].

“Treny” by Jan Kochanowski were studied a lot of times and these studies proved their meaningfulness, innovation and originality. The researchers believe that they influenced greatly the development of European elegy, creating a school of followers. “The creative work of Jan Kochanowski, - says Rostyslav Radyshevskyi - fulfilled a very important inspirational role among Ukrainian poets and stimulated independent creativity” [8, p. 9].

“Treny” created a new school of followers. “Trenomania” seized several generations of the writers of XVI-XVIII. The first follower was a famous Polish-Ukrainian poet Sebastian Fabian Klonowic, who wrote “Zale nagrobne na slachetnie urodzonego Pana Jana Kochanowskiego” in 1585. It was an elegy which “paid respect of educated compatriots to the poet of genius” [4, p. 61] and it played a significant role in the formation of mournful elegy, the works dedicated to the writers in particular. Such poems were popular in many European literatures, in English in particular. «An elegy upon the death of Dr. John Donne» by Thomas Carew was dedicated to one of the most outstanding poets of England of XVII. John Denham's “Elegy upon the Death of Cowley” attracts special interest among these works, it contains the review of English poetry, and moreover Cowley's oeuvre is declared to be its summit by Denham. Let us point out that modern English dictionary of literary terms by Chris Balding, first of all, gives the following definition of elegy: “an elaborately formal lyric poem lamenting the death of a friend or public figure” [13, p. 66].

Shevchenko's poem “In eternal memory of Kotlyarevskyi” started the elegy upon the death in new Ukrainian literature. The further development of the genre is connected with Shevchenko's name – “Over the grave of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko” Oleksandr Afanasyev Chuzhbynskyi, “Upon Shevchenko's death” Vasyl' Kulyk, “Shevchenko's funeral” Oleksandr Konyskyi, “Over the coffin of Taras Shevchenko” Petro Tavalha-Mokrytskyi, “Upon Shevchenko's death” and “Mourn and cry” Oleksandr Navrotskyi, “Upon the funeral of Taras Shevchenko near Kaniv” Mykhail Maksymovych, “The death day of our father Taras Shevchenko” and “The eight's pomennyk of Taras Shevchenko in

eternal memory” Yuri Fedkovych, “In eternal memory of Taras” and “Taras’ eternal memory. 5th death anniversary” Ksenofont Klymkovych, “Wreath on Taras’ grave on 8th anniversary of his death 1869” Volodymyr Shashkevych, “20th anniversary of the great funeral” Panteleymon Kulish. These and other poems not only secured the elegy upon the death leading place in Ukrainian literature, but also highlighted the boundaries of the genre. Despite the fact that the abovementioned works are different by volume, level of subjectivity and emotionality, stylistic devices, availability of Shevchenko’s image and facts from his biography, usage of Shevchenko’s poetic speech, availability of Bible and poetic phraseology, folklore colouring, usage of nature images, volume of social motives and philosophical generalizations, even the feelings of regret, grief and pain which penetrate all the poems, they are subdued by the time, apprehended, fresh and they create a certain type of elegy upon the death with its stable poetic and compositional structure.

Let us note that all the works are pasticcio of Shevchenko. And that is understandable, every among the abovementioned poets as well as all “Ukrainian poetry of the middle of XIX bears the traces of powerful Shevchenko’s impact... ” [6, p. 17]. It was he who “created” new Ukrainian literature and led it to the world level. The official authorities of Russian empire and its supporters attempted to deny the existence of Ukrainians as a nation and called us “Little Russians” and our language “Little Russian dialect”. After Shevchenko proved that Ukraine existed, they started not to convince, but forbade, destroy, ravage and wipe everything Ukrainian off the face of the earth. As Franko said “the impression of Shevchenko’s poetry was so powerful that the enchantment of his word was so long lasted that there existed a belief in the minds of many Ukrainians that Ukrainian poetry could reveal itself only in the form sanctified by Shevchenko, only his style seemed to be really poetic, only his melodies “corresponded to Ukrainian nation spirit” we should follow only this direction” [12, p. 233].

Franko said that the first who “led Ukrainian literature out of the epoch of imitation of Shevchenko’s style” was Starytskyi [12, p. 238]. First of all, it concerns elegy, because the majority of Starytskyi’s poems were written in the genre of elegy [5, p. 259–273], the elegy upon the death take the foremost place. These works are notable for diversity as they are dedicated not only to outstanding people, but also to dear people. The elegies “In the memory of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko” and “Shevchenko’s death anniversary (Before grave renewal)” deserve special attention. Among the other poems of this cycle they are remarkable for emotional and intonation colouring and the peculiar depiction of a persona, who is a spokesman of nationally the most conscious part of Ukrainian people.

It is known that Shevchenko died in Saint Petersburg on the 10th of 1861 and was buried on Smolensk cemetery. Fulfilling the testament of Great Kobzar, his friends and dear people tried to get a permission to bury Shevchenko’s ashes in Ukraine. The funeral procession went through Petersburg heading to the railway station and then to Kyiv on the 26th of April that year. Starytskyi was among those people who escorted the coffin from Kyiv to Kaniv, where Shevchenko was buried on Chernecha Mountain on the 22nd of 1861. Exactly these events, reproduced 20 years later, were the basis of Starytskyi’s elegy “In the memory of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko”, written in the form of recollection story involving modern events [9, p. 65].

The landscape plays a special role in the genre structure of the poem. The spring, its beauty, which is the embodiment of awakening and flourishing of everything alive sharpened the senses, strengthened the pain from the loss and added certain dramatic effect, which was deepened by the connection with the present. One can find a range of traditional elements of a romantic elegy in this elegy, but there are no complaints of destiny, reflections about death, life perishability. Everything depicted is focused on the loss of the dearest, “own prophet” and the belief that “eternal shackles will be broken down” and “The light of truth, love and science will shine over miserable peasants”, which caused the solemn and elevated, though sad, tone of the elegy. At the same time, the poem has elements of realistic elegy, first of all in depiction of a persona, who becomes a spokesman of those who took part in the funeral procession, for whom Shevchenko is a staunch

defender of Ukrainian people and Ukraine, and parting with him is a loyalty oath to the ideas advocated by “our father”.

Somewhat different mood penetrates the elegy “Shevchenko’s death anniversary (Before grave renewal)”. The subject is the events of 1884 when cast iron cross was installed on Shevchenko’s grave on people’s donations, earth embankment was arranged, the grave was turfed. There is no exhilaration of the previous Starytskyi’s poem, though the belief in poet’s immortality and the power of his word sounds loudly.

These poems of Starytskyi denoted a new stage in the development of the genre of elegy. They marked the emergence of a realistic elegy upon the death with distinct emotional personal principle, where a persona is an immediate witness and concerned participant of events, which gave an impulse to the poetic inspiration. The elegies of Starytskyi became the basis of Franko’s elegies upon Shevchenko’s death. “The characteristic stylistic devices of the poems of this type, – Viktor Bondar points out, – are rhetoric exclamations, questions with different degree of rhetoric, addresses. The addressees of the latter are “brothers”, who came together to “pray for the saints, Shevchenko in particular, the deceased poet himself and also “God” [3, p. 140].” These works are distinguished by original structure: the availability of introduction and ideologically intense ending.

Franko’s elegy “23rd anniversary of Taras Shevchenko’s death” was created in elevated-patriotic spirit and is deprived of intimacy, sensitivity and sentimentality, even sadness penetrating the whole poem can be defined as patriotic. The persona plays the role of a spokesman of feelings and thoughts of the nation:

I pay respect to you
From millions who knew,
From millions in tears,
From Motherland that suffers! [11, p. 373].

Taking into consideration the significance of Shevchenko for Ukraine, the Ukrainian language and literature, the author emphasizes the poet’s immortality, says about eternal people’s memory and respect, which causes “tyrant’s malice and wrath of the mighty”, who are trying:

Your words, amusement in the grief,
Must be burned, extracted from the minds,
From history removed must be this native name,
And then proclaimed: “Shevchenko is a myth” [11, p. 374].

The huge Shevchenko’s influence on national consciousness of his compatriots is rendered by Franko with the help of the image of an oak: “The steppe oak gave birth to a huge strong forest” [11, p. 374]. It is characteristic that the poet is not interested in the circumstances of Shevchenko’s death, his image and some biographic facts are also absent in the elegy. The attention is concentrated on the crimes of “tyrants” and “mighty people”, rendering the features of invective and introduces a new element into genre structure of the poem, which is dominant in the poem “25th anniversary of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko’s death”. The refrain “They are afraid ...” makes the elegy more dramatic. According to the tradition formed in Ukrainian elegy upon the death in XIX, the poem is finished optimistically:

The light will beam around us at hand!
We will be always free and brave
All sons of holly Motherland
Will come with honour to your grave [11, p. 374].

Unlike the previous poem the elegy “25th anniversary of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko’s death” is bigger in seize. On the basis of the traditional theme for the elegy upon the death, which is 25th death anniversary, Franko creates a qualitative new elegy, which became a significant stage in the genre development.

What is the novelty of the poem?

First of all, the basis of the poem was not sorrow, anguish, but pain for Ukraine, comprehension of the huge loss for Ukrainian people, which added the elegy tragic and dramatic tone:

Kobzar, so many years passed,
They were so hard to realize
That crows dragging corpses
Like much of grief in souls
In order honour, language, name remove
Violence and lies are in the move.
Our home was destroyed in pieces
By enemy who increases! [11, p. 397].

The poem acquires a patriotic sounding when feeling of pain for Ukraine and Ukrainian people intensified by the pride for state, because “there is no equal to it in the world”, transforms into wrath and indignation and the poem acquires the patriotic sounding [11, p. 398–399].

Shevchenko’s image penetrates the whole poem, as the elegy is written in the form of address to Shevchenko, which is reflected by such words: “our Kobzar”, “father Taras”, “our father, the tortured prophet”. Franko believes that one of the reasons of the worsening of situation in Ukraine during past 25 years after Shevchenko’s death was the absence of a leader, whom Shevchenko was:

The tears streams that fell onto your grave,
The grief that covered all Ukraine,
As though put out its mettle and might:
When losing you and went away deprived... [11, p. 398].

This fact, of course, emphasized one more time the significance of Shevchenko. The only one hope for Ukraine is the youth, but it needs to be guided.

The range of rhetoric questions finishes the elegy, which strengthened pessimism and gave the poem the features of a “cry from the heart”:

Who will wake up forgotten truth?
Who will give bread to hungry men?
Taras, our father, tortured prophet –
When will be light in awful night? [11, p. 398].

The absence of philosophical considerations about life and death, the essence of being, etc. is characteristic of two elegies. The author does not touch upon the circumstances of the life and death, does not mention the achievements and merits of the deceased. It should be pointed out that the structure especially of the second poem does not require it. On the basis of the theme traditional for this genre Franko creates a qualitative new elegy, which Ukrainian poetry had not known before.

Thus, Ukrainian elegy upon the death is a complex and many-sided poetic phenomenon. Conventionally, these poems are divided into two main groups: the elegies upon the death of outstanding persons; the elegies upon the death of beloved, close and dear people. It all defined the peculiarities of their style, poetic and compositional structure and emotional and prosodic structure. Franko’s elegies belong to the first group. They are written in elevated style, full of social motives and have patriotic sounding. The most notable features of their genre structure are the feeling of loss, grief and pain, glorification of Shevchenko is intertwined with the address to the nation, call for fight etc. They are distinguished by original structure: the availability of introduction and ideologically intense ending.

Franko’s elegies “23rd anniversary of Taras Shevchenko’s death” and “25th anniversary of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko’s death” raised one of urgent aesthetical problems, which is the place of a poet and the role of poetry in the society, their main mood was critics and denial of the existing order and uncompromising protest against enslavement of Ukraine.

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