

Oksana Mikolaivna Slipusko

"Byzantium: pro et contra :
Ambivalence of Byzantinism in Taras
Shevchenko's writings", Ol'ga
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OKSANA MIKOLAΪVNA SLIPUŠKO
[OKSANA MIKOLAIVNA SLIPUSHKO]
[ОКСАНА МИКОЛАЇВНА СЛІПУШКО] (Kiev, Ukraine)
Оксана Миколаївна Сліпушко
E-mail: oksana-slipushko@ukr.net

[Rev.:] Ol'ga Al'bertivna Bigun, *Byzantinum: pro et contra.*
(*Ambivalence of Byzantinism in Taras Shevchenko's writings*),
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Comparative studies of Taras Shevchenko's legacy focused around the ascertainment of the interaction between the poet's imaginative world with Christian tradition have a long history and some achievements. Unfortunately, Byzantine spiritual culture in the force field of which Taras Shevchenko emerged as a person and an artist, almost entirely fell out of the sight of scholars studying Shevchenko's creative work (except for the studies of Yaroslav Rozumnyi and Oksana Yakovyna). This gap has been adequately filled by Olga Bigun's monograph *Byzantinum: pro et contra. (Ambivalence of Byzantinism in Taras Shevchenko's writings)*, which presents the first comprehensive attempt at perception of Byzantine tradition in Taras Shevchenko's creative work relying on Ukrainian national history, mentality, and spirituality. The choice of this very material points to the researcher's involvement in the complex controversial issues of Byzantine cultural and civilizational influence. The monograph demonstrates the author's impressive knowledge in the sphere of Byzantine studies (V. Bachynin, A. Domanovskyi, E. Gibbon, V. Zhyvov, K. Leontiev, D. Obolenskyi, F. Uspenskyi, Yu. Chornomorets, I. Shevchenko, N. Yakovenko) and corresponds to the "culturological turn" of modern comparative studies the essence of which lies in forward movement from essentialism of literariness towards social codes, conventions, and representations aimed at expanding the horizons of the interpretation of a literary text.

The main issue addressed in the monograph is how the world view and philosophical and aesthetic ideas of Taras Shevchenko about byzantinism correlate with his artistic phenomenology, imaginative artistic imitation/dialogue of Byzantine cultural experience. Olga Bigun emphasizes the ambivalence of Shevchenko's byzantinism: byzantinism as a tradition, as the world of immanent Christianity, and byzantinism as a philosophical and political paradigm and textual substrate. The

variant of synthesis of contact and of genetic, historical and typological approach to the analysis of binary collisions of byzantinism proposed in the monograph enables the reader to clarify the origins of ambivalence of this notion in Taras Shevchenko's creative work.

The monograph has a clear, logical structure. The first chapter explores the principles of forming ideas about byzantinism in Shevchenko's world view. External influences have been analyzed here: historical sources (E. Gibbon), works of Ukrainian religious figures (K. Turovskyi, M. Smotrytskyi, I. Kopynskyi, P. Mohyla, D. Tuptalo), social and political thought (O. Bodianskyi, H. Halahan, O. Hertsen, M. Kostomarov, M. Maksymovych, O. Khomiakov, P. Chaadaiev), as well as internal factors (religiosity, Christian sensitivity, brilliant intuition, through knowledge of the Bible as well as of patristics and eidetic imagery). This chapter also deals with the iconic concept of a symbol approached through the prism of religious (Christian) understanding of the image. The author argues that Taras Shevchenko's iconic paradigm of a symbol was a logical continuation of the Kyivan-Rus one and, even further, of the Byzantine tradition, which have a common basis: a universal principle of Christian philosophical and aesthetic fundamentals. A typological analysis of *Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary* by Roman Sladkospivets and the poem *Mariia* by Taras Shevchenko is carried out by means of the application of logos ideas of conciliar unity incarnated in the Virgin. The typological parallels of the image of "Mother Church" in the writings of M. Smotrytskyi and I. Vyshenskyi are analyzed. Characterizing Shevchenko's aesthetics, Olga Bigun sees it as a transformation of Byzantine tradition through emotional and sensual dominant of cordocentrism peculiar to Ukrainian ethos. Taras Shevchenko became acutely aware of "Byzantine" religious and cultural model of Russia which actually followed Golden Horde civilizational patterns and was "alien" to the cultural and mental perception of the world by the poet. Immediate impressions of the author are recorded in *The Diary*, and his receptive interpretations can be seen on the pages of his books as well as in his paintings.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive description of the Byzantine concept of holiness in the works of Taras Shevchenko. The study of genesis and formation of the symbolic parallel of *Kyiv-Jerusalem* is of particular interest. The meaningful content of *Jerusalem idea* demonstrates Taras Shevchenko's thorough knowledge of the Old Testament dogmatic theology in the sphere of Judaic history and culture. Comparison of Kyiv with Jerusalem is carried out on the basis of symbolization and allegorization. Introducing the mythologema of Jerusalem to the discourse of the artistic works, Taras Shevchenko brings about actualization of its Biblical semantic field adapting it to social and political, cultural, and spiritual needs of the epoch. Shevchenko's interpretation of "Jerusalem features" of Kyiv as a sacral, not a political center is close to *Kyiv idea* of the Ukrainian polemicists of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The typology of the Church Slavonic language as informational and symbolic structure in the spiritual legacy of Kyivan Rus and creative works of Taras Shevchenko is also considered in the second chapter. Following L. Hnatiuk, the author examines the Church Slavonic language without applying a genetic approach, but analyzing its functional parameters in the linguistic consciousness of its speakers. Taking into consideration Shevchenko's early acquaintance with biblical texts (which started at school), Olga Bigun, addressing the studies of several linguists (H. Vynohradov, L. Hnatiuk, H. Yavorska), focuses on the ready blocks for the description of situations, actions, and experiences that are actualized automatically as the speaker is focused on literary presentation. "That's why in the creative work of Taras Shevchenko" – argues the author of the monograph – "along with the meaningful reception of biblical topography there is also the level of mechanical/automatic feedback of linguistic consciousness to this or that artistic idea by citations, allusions, reminiscences from the Bible" (p. 152).

Chapter three – *Christian messianism: Taras Shevchenko and Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood* – written in a polemical manner, deserves particular attention. It seems that the attention of the researcher was caught by every single mention of a definite range of problems. Such thoroughness is another feature of scholarly writings of Olga Bigun. Prudence and thoroughness in the handling of complex research material provides significant results for the conclusions to the unit: "Christian messianism of Shevchenko has no clear national color. For the poet, the freedom of the people, their free self-expression is the greatest blessing and he does not speak of the superiority of this or that ethnic group. The roots of such beliefs are close to Evangelical Christian life prescriptions with no ethnic distinctions, where "there is no Greek nor Jew, no circumcision nor uncircumcised, no barbarian nor Scythian, no slaves nor free ..." (Col. 3:11). Therefore, the essence of the religious nature of Shevchenko's Messianic beliefs is that the freedom of one nation does not deprive another nation of free existence" (s.192).

Chapter *Byzantinism as knowledge: mythology of the book in the works of Taras Shevchenko* is devoted to significant characteristics of the book in the relative plane: a book in the Byzantine tradition – in Kyiv Rus literature – in the works of Taras Shevchenko. Reception of the phenomenon of the book in the works of Taras Shevchenko is multi-faceted, but its ideological dimension resembles the idea of bookishness in the early stages of Christian culture. Attention is drawn to the special status of Shevchenko's lyrical characters, who display portrait wisdom which is not always interpreted by the poet in a positive way (*Moskal's well*). Apparent parallels with Kyiv Rus literature are here conspicuous, as the ambivalence of the image of the book inherent to the medieval mind is traced on the one hand and, on the other, mind, literacy, and intelligence are pointed out. Ambivalence in relation to education is peculiar to Shevchenko's works; it is rooted in his acquaintance with the religious and ideological stereotype common for ancient Ukrainian literature. We

should also note the attention paid to the artistic interaction that expands informative horizons of the monograph (chapters *Between the Old and the New Covenant: on the problem of dialogueness* and *Iconographic themes of art paintings*).

The fourth and final chapter is devoted to the detection of morphological concept of Christian Paideia in ancient literature and works of Taras Shevchenko. Shevchenko's employment of the principles of Christian ethics and aesthetics to create a semantic horizon of the works directed towards the plane of the inner morality of a human being, his awareness of the possibility of exercising freedom of spirit through proper knowledge and action, is considered separately. The image of monasticism in creative work of Taras Shevchenko through comparison with ancient texts, interpretation of the myths of *the army of Christ/militia Dei* in his poem *Haidamaky* and, the exegesis of the poem *When I die, bury me* with elements of reconstruction of Moses' testament – should be of a particular interest to the reader.

The findings in Olga Bigun's study are scientifically-grounded, considerate, provided with theoretical, historical and literary arguments, and the monograph is based on extensive bibliography. In general, Olga Bigun fully fits the coordinates of modern Ukrainian research in artistic legacy of Shevchenko, has significant theoretical and methodological, historical and literary potential, providing productive criteria of literary analysis. In particular, this is the first monograph in Ukrainian literary criticism where a reasonable concept of Shevchenko's byzantinism and its artistic denotations are put forward. This concept consists of: 1) intersemiotic premise of byzantinism in cordocentric transformation; 2) the basic structure of holiness and its many contexts; 3) mythologema of a book and apology of bookishness as presentation through the system of symbols and images; 4) artistic perspective of paideia. Multifaceted reading of Byzantine intentions in the works of Taras Shevchenko is a defining feature of the monograph. It reveals the ideas absorbed from the outside, their artistic reception and immanent layer of Byzantine tradition with holistic picture of typological similarities and differences in the works of Ukrainian literature of the previous periods.

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Ol'ga Al'bertivna Bigun, *Byzantium: pro et contra. (Ambivalentnist' vizantijstva u tvorčosti Tarasa Ševčenka)*, Misto NV, Ivano-Frankivs'k, 2014 s.

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Ol'ga Al'bertivna Bigun, *Byzantium: pro et contra. (Ambivalence of Byzantinism in Taras Shevchenko's writings)*, Misto NV, Ivano-Frankivsk, 2014. – 412 p.

Information about the author:

Information about the Author in English:

Slipushko Oksana Mykolayvna – Prof. Ph.D., Dr. of Sci., Head of the Ukrainian Literary History and Shevchenko Studies Department in the Institute of Philology at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. In 1996, she graduated from the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (speciality – Ukrainian language and literature). In 1998, she defended a Candidate (Ph.D.) thesis entitled “Old Ukrainian bestiary: genesis and system” (Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University). Since 2001, she has been a lecturer in the Institute of Philology at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. In 2009 she defended her Doctoral (Dr. of Sci.) thesis entitled “The literary characters evolution and function in the written sources frameworks of the Early and High Middle Ages (11th century to the first half of the 13th century) at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University. Since 2012 she has been Head of Ukrainian Literary History and Shevchenko Studies Department. In 2013 she was granted the title of Professor. She has written several monographs: *Old Ukrainian bestiary: ancient Ukrainian character, civil ethics, spirituality in animal archetypes, myths, symbols, emblems* (Kyiv, 2001), *Sophia of Kyiv. Medieval Ukrainian literature: the Kyiv Rus' Epoch (10th-13th centuries)* (Kyiv, 2005), *Builders of Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv* (Kyiv, 2007), *The evolution and the functioning of literary images in the books of the state of Kyiv Rus (11th– 1st half of the 13th century)* (Kyiv, 2009), *The spiritual state of Taras Shevchenko* (Kyiv, 2013).

E-mail: oksana-slipushko@ukr.net

Information about the Author in Polish:

Oksana Slipuszko (Oksana Nikolaevna Slipuško, Oksana Mikołajwna Slipuško) [Оксана Ніколаєвна Сліпушко, Оксана Миколаївна Сліпушко] – Prof. Ph.D., Dr. of Sci., Kierownik Katedry Historii Ukrainskiej Literatury i Szewczenkoznawstwa (Instytut Filologii w Uniwersytecie Tarasa Szewczenki w Kijowie). W 1996 roku ukończyła kierunek filologiczny na Uniwersytecie Tarasa Szewczenki w Kijowie ze specjalnością „ukraiński język i literatura”. W 1998 roku obroniła doktorat «Staroukraiński bestiariusz: geneza i system» w Uniwersytecie Tarasa Szewczenki w Kijowie (literatura ukraińska). Od 2001 roku jest wykładowczynią w Instytucie Filologii na Uniwersytecie Tarasa Szewczenki w Kijowie. Jest doktorem habilitowanym (temat pracy «Ewolucja i funkcjonowanie obrazów literackich w paradygmatie piśmienniczych pamiątek wczesnego i wysokiego średniowiecza (XI w. – pierwsza połowa XIII wieku)», specjalność: literatura ukraińska (Kijów 2010). Od 2012 roku jest kierownikiem Katedry Historii Ukrainskiej Literatury i Szewczenkoznawstwa. W 2013 roku została profesorem. Monografie: «Staroukraiński bestiariusz (zviroslov): narodowy charakter, społeczna moralność i duchowość dawnych Ukraińców w zwierzęcych archetypach, mitach, symbolach, emblematach» (Kijów 2001), «Sofia Kijowska: ukraińska literatura średniowiecza: okres Rusi Kijowskiej. Szkice» (Kijów, 2005), «Budowniczowie Soboru Mądrości Bożej w Kijowie» (Kijów 2007), «Ewolucja i funkcjonowanie literackich obrazów w księgach państwa Rusi Kijowskiej (XI w. – pierwsza połowa XIII wieku)» (2009), «Duchowe państwo Tarasa Szewczenki» (Kijów 2013).

E-mail: oksana-slipushko@ukr.net

Informace o autorce v češtině / Information about the Author in Czech:

Oksana Slipuško (Oksana Nikolajevna Slipuško) – Prof. Ph.D., Dr. of Sci., vedoucí Katedry dějin ukrajinské literatury a Ševčenkologie (Ústav filologie University Tarase Ševčenka v Kyjevě). Vystudovala obor filologie na Universitě Tarase Ševčenka v Kyjevě se specializací Ukrajinský jazyk a literatura (1996). Obhájila doktorát na téma „Staroukrajinský bestiár – geneze a systém“ na Universitě Tarase Ševčenka v Kyjevě ve specializaci Ukrajinský jazyk a literatura (1998). Od roku 2001 přednáší na Ústavu filologie University Tarase Ševčenka v Kyjevě. Habilitovala se prací „Evoluce a působení literárních obrazů v paradigmatických památkách raného a vrcholného středověku (11. století – první polovina 13. století)“ ve specializaci Ukrajinská literatura (Kyjev 2010). Od r. 2012 je vedoucí Katedry dějin ukrajinské literatury a Ševčenkologie. Vr. 2013 byla jmenována profesorkou. Monografie: „Staroukrajinský bestiár: národní charakter, sociální etika a duchovnost dřívých Ukrajinců ve zvířecích archetypech, mýtech, symbolech a emblémech“ (Kyjev 2001), „Kyjevská Sofie: ukrajinská literatura středověku: období Kyjevské Rusi. Státeč“ (Kyjev 2005), „Stavitelé Chrámu Moudrosti Boží v Kyjevě“ (Kyjev 2007), „Evoluce a působení literárních obrazů v knihách Kyjevské Rusi, 11. – první pol. 13. stol.“ (Kyjev 2009), „Duchovní stát Tarase Ševčenka“ (Kyjev 2013).

E-mail: oksana-slipushko[at]ukr.net

[Český překlad: Libor Martinek]

Informácie o autorke v slovenčine / Information about the Author in Slovak:

Oksana Slipuško (Oksana Nikolajevna Slipuško) – Prof. Ph.D., Dr. of Sci., vedúca Katedry dejín ukrajinskej literatúry a Ševčenkologie (Ústav filológie Univerzity Tarasa Ševčenka v Kyjeve). Vystudovala odbor filológie na Universite Tarasa Ševčenka v Kyjeve so špecializáciou ukrajinský jazyk a literatúra (1996). Obhájila doktorát na tému „Staroukrajinský bestiár – genéza a systém“ na Univerzite Tarasa Ševčenka v Kyjeve so špecializáciou ukrajinský jazyk a literatúra (1998). Od roku 2001 prednáša v Ústave filológie Univerzity Tarasa Ševčenka v Kyjeve. Habilitovala sa prácou „Evolúcia a pôsobenie literárnych obrazov v paradigmatických pamiatok raného a vrcholného stredoveku (11. storočie – prvá polovica 13. storočia)“ v špecializácii ukrajinská literatúra (Kyjev 2010). Od r. 2012 je vedúcou Katedry dejín ukrajinskej literatúry a Ševčenkologie. Vr. 2013 bola menovaná za profesorku. Monografie: „Staroukrajinský bestiár: národný charakter, sociálna etika a duchovnosť dřívych Ukrajincov v zvieracích archetypoch, mýtoch, symboloch a emblémoch“ (Kyjev 2001), „Kyjevská Sofia: ukrajinská literatúra stredoveku: obdobie Kyjevskej Rusi. Stateč“ (Kyjev 2005), „Stavitelia Chrámu Múdrosti Božej v Kyjeve“ (Kyjev 2007), „Evolúcia a pôsobenie literárnych obrazov v knihách Kyjevskej Rusi, 11. storočia – prvej polovice 13. storočia“ (Kyjev 2009), „Duchovný štát Tarasa Ševčenka“ (Kyjev 2013). E-mail: oksana-slipushko[at]ukr.net

[Slovenský preklad: Ivica Hajdučeková]

Информация об авторе по-русски / Справка об авторе на русском языке/ Information about the Author in Russian:

Слипушко Оксана Николаевна – доктор филологических наук, профессор, заведующая кафедрой истории украинской литературы и шевченковедения Киевского национального университета имени Тараса Шевченко. В 1996 году окончила филологический факультет Киевского национального университета имени Тараса Шевченко по специальности украинский язык и литература. В 1998 году защитила кандидатскую диссертацию «Древнеукраинский

бестиарий: генезис и система» в Киевском национальном университете имени Тараса Шевченко (украинская литература). С 2001 читает лекции в Институте филологии Киевского национального университета имени Тараса Шевченко. Защищила докторскую диссертацию на тему «*Эволюция и функционирование литературных образов в парадигме литературных источников Раннего и Высокого Средневековья (XI – первая половина XIII вв.)*» (Киев, 2010). С 2012 года – заведующая кафедрой истории украинской литературы и шевченковедения. В 2013 году получила звание профессора. Основные монографии: «*Древнеукраинский бестиарий (зверслов): национальный характер, общественная мораль и духовность давних украинцев в животных архетипах, мифах, символах и эмблемах*» (Киев 2002), «*София Киевская. Украинская литература Средневековья: период Киевской Руси (X – XIII вв.)*» (Киев 2002), «*Литература Киевской Руси. Очерки*» (Киев 2005), «*Зодчие Софийского собора*» (Киев 2007), «*Эволюция и функционирование литературных образов в книжности Киеворусского государства (XI – первая половина XIII вв.)*» (Киев, 2009), «*Духовное государство Тараса Шевченко*» (Киев, 2013). E-mail: oksana-slipushko@jukr.net

Інформація про автора / Довідка про автора українською мовою / Information about the Author in Ukrainian:

Сліпушко Оксана Миколаївна – професор, доктор філологічних наук, завідувач кафедри історії української літератури і шевченкознавства Інституту філології Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. 1996 року закінчила філологічний факультет Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка за спеціальністю «українська мова і література». У 1998 році захистила кандидатську дисертацію «*Давньоукраїнський бестиарій: генезис і система*» у Київському національному університеті імені Тараса Шевченка (українська література). З 2001 року — викладач Інституту філології Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. Захистила докторську дисертацію на тему «*Еволюція та функціонування літературних образів у парадигмі писемних пам'яток Раннього і Високого Середньовіччя (XI – перша половина XIII ст.)*» зі спеціальності українська література (Київ, 2010). З 2012 року — завідувач кафедри історії української літератури та шевченкознавства. У 2013 отримала почесне звання професора. Основні монографії: «*Давньоукраїнський бестиарій (зверслов): національний характер, суспільна мораль і духовність давніх українців у тваринних архетипах, міфах, символах, емблемах*» (Київ, 2001); «*Софія Київська. Українська література Середньовіччя: доба Київської Русі (Х-ХІІІ століття)*» (Київ, 2002); «*Література Київської Русі. Нариси*» (Київ, 2005), «*Будівничі Софійського собору*» (Київ, 2007), «*Еволюція та функціонування літературних образів у книжності Киеворуської держави (XI – перша половина ХІІІ століття)*» (2009), «*Духовна держава Тараса Шевченка*» (Київ, 2013).

E-mail: oksana-slipushko@jukr.net

Звесткі пра аўтараў (па-беларуску) / Information about the Author (in Belarusian):

Сліпушка Аксана Мікалаеўна — доктар філалагічных навук, прафесар, загадчык кафедры гісторыі ўкраінскай літаратуры і шаўчэнказнаўства Кіеўскага нацыянальнага ўніверсітэта імя Тараса Шаўчэнкі. У 1996 годзе скончыла філалагічны факультэт Кіеўскага нацыянальнага ўніверсітэта імя Тараса Шаўчэнкі па спецыяльнасці — украінская мова і літаратура. У 1998 годзе абараніла кандыдатскую дысертацыю *Стараражытнаўкраінскі бестыарыјом: генезіс і сістэма* ў Кіеўскім нацыянальным універсітэце імя Тараса Шаўчэнкі (украінская літаратура). З 2001 года выкладае ў інстытуце філологіі Кіеўскага нацыянальнага ўніверсітэта імя Тараса

Шаўчэнкі. Абараціла доктарскую дысертацыю на тэму: *Эвалюцыя і функцыянаванне літаратурных вобразаў у парадыгматыцы літаратурных крыніц ранняга і высокага Сярэднявечча (XI — першая палова XIII ст.)* (Кіеў, 2010). З 2012 года — загадчык кафедры гісторыі ўкраінскай літаратуры і шаўчэнказнаўства. У 2013 годзе ёй прысвоена званне прафесара. Асноўныя манографіі: *Старажытнаўкраінскі бестыярыум (жераслоў)*: нацыянальны характар, грамадская маральнасць і духоўнасць старажытных украінцаў у архетыпах жывёл, міфах, сімвалах, эмблемах (Кіеў, 2001), *Софія Кіеўская. Украінская літаратура Сярэднявечча: перыяд Кіеўскай Русі (X — XIII стст.)* (Кіеў, 2002), *Літаратура Кіеўскай Русі. Нарысы* (Кіеў, 2005), *Задыя Сафійскага сабора* (Кіеў, 2007), *Эвалюцыя і функцыянаванне літаратурных вобразаў у книжнасці Кіева-Рускай дзяржавы (XI — першая палова XIII ст.)* (Кіеў, 2009), *Духоўная дзяржава Тараса Шаўчэнкі* (Кіеў, 2013).

E-mail: oksana-slipushko[at]ukr.net

[Тлумачэнне на беларускую мову: Olga Pańkowa, Julia Pietielczyc]