

HERMENEUTICAL HORIZONS OF THE EPOCH IN BORYS TENETA'S PROSE

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The article deals with the research of the artistic interpretation of the epoch in Borys Teneta's prosaic heritage. The attention is paid to the paradigm of the author's outlook in the context of the historical period of the first third of the XX century.

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In XX century hermeneutics (as a method, theory or philosophy of any interpretation) took its rightful place in the system of the European humanist research, and later it was widely applied in the occidental literature studies, in comprehension of the basic methodological principles on which is based the modern theory of literature.

The impact of contextual connections with the occidental scientific experience and its original Ukrainian historical situation help to establish the methodological principles, after which the modern Ukrainian discourse of literature studies is formed. The system approach to the synthesis of the methodological points, dedicated to the process of reception and the problems of interpretation, is one of the crucial tasks of the modern research in the literature studies. The notable actuality is seen while studying the question of the artistic and historical reproducing the epoch, when the author's outlook conception "integrated" into a piece of belles-lettres, due to its being interpreted in a reader's consciousness, becomes the content of the consciousness itself, the distinctive beacon for the attitude towards the reality, the modernity, the history.

As known, with no history there is no people. Concealing the history means leaving a person with no historical memories and national consciousness, and, as a result, depriving of the possibilities of moral resurrection. Its vivid proof is the situation in Ukraine in the first third of the XX century, the period of waging a large-scale campaign to fight the cultural and spiritual acquisitions of the past. And it is only thanks to belles-lettres, as one of the most powerful means of cognition of a person and instrument of influencing the reality, a person's consciousness, feelings, will, psyche, perception of and attitude towards the world evolve, their national character is formed – their

individuality is created. The literature canvas is a peculiar historical reference book, in which is written down the past, the present, the possible future, and owing to which new notions are formed in imagination, feelings, unknown before, are born in souls. The authors, creating typical images and generalising life phenomena, reveal their own attitude towards the events depicted.

Borys Teneta's creative work reflects the most characteristic features and peculiarities of the evolution of the national literature, the culture, the history of the totalitarian period, the victim of which was the author himself. Borys Guriy (the author's real surname), being forcibly excluded from the literature process, united in his texts the best qualities of a writer, a philosopher, a conscientious citizen, yet the life path and the artistic heritage of the talented artist, unlike his contemporaries' ones, remains scantily explored in the domestic literature studies. The explorers generally emphasise the most bright representatives of the "shot down renaissance" period, undeservedly forgetting about all its participants. The separate studios of V. Dmytrenko, V. Melnyk, A. Pecharskyi, M. Chaban and the others, do not create the full image of an artist, do not present the idea of his artistic and aesthetic world-modelling conception. Therefore we should widen the object of the studios' attention, and stress not only the author's artistic heritage as an illustration of the epoch, but also objectively enlighten the number of questions raised by the author, and among them is his vision of history and modernity.

The purpose of the article is researching Borys Teneta's outlook paradigm in the context of the first third of XX century and its interpretation in the author's artistic heritage via the categories of time, spirituality and the people's historical destiny.

The genuine poet according to his internal senses, the frank prosaic by his vocation, Borys Teneta, going through life with his invariable motto "And I want to live the time given to me joyfully and fairly" [1, p. 171], understands with no illusions that the truth and the good must be fought for to maintain the national interests, history, and, in the end, one's own identity.

Borys Teneta's artistic heritage is mastering the actual range of modern problems, expressed in an original artistic way. Filled with the world of artistic images and pictures, the prose, at first sight, does not have any notable differences, but after some time a reader realises that it is not just a realistic reproduction of the author's contemporaneity, but a deep analysis of the hypercomplex historical epoch, the reality of the time of the totalitarian system, when a humble wish "to live joyfully and fairly" was almost unrealisable.

The author's lot was the complicated life choice, the path of artistic seeking and ideological struggle. The government's nihilistic attitude towards the Ukrainian people, the national history, the ancient customs and traditions was tearing the literature, contemporary with the author, away from its origins, depriving it of the national selfhood. Gradually the artistic word gains the contrasting colours of the dark past and the bright present, turns into the glorification of the party's achievements, different sorts of slogan-leaflets, and the characters of the literature works cease to feel, cannot empathise...

Under such circumstances Borys Teneta had to fight for the fate of the literature, the culture, the history, and eventually for the destiny of his people. Reflecting over the contemporaneity, people's essence and their past, the national selfhood, the author creates an original artistic prose, which does not

meet the requirements of the party's ideology. The very first of his prose works attracts attention of readers and, certainly, critics. Borys Teneta's contemporary, critic Oleksiy Poltoratskiy, wrote on the pages of "Proletarska Pravda": "As for the social essence of Teneta's stories, we have to mark that there are not any (!) This is a strange and paradoxical thing... The revolution passes past Teneta's characters, and all the changes happened after it are perceived passively" [5]. Yet the analysis of the author's artistic heritage forces not to agree with the critic's words. Borys Teneta is an active writer of the Kiev literature and artistic periodical "Life and Revolution" (1925), which was "widely spreading its pages for the young Ukrainian literature sprouts" [2, p. 131]. It is exactly where Teneta's "Unemployed" is published – the short story, in which the author plunges into the inner world of the person, who has no job and therefore no means of adequate existence. Thinking over the lines depicting the fully satisfied reality against the background of poor life of the biggest part of the society: "... on the corner of the Avenue and Velyka there is a café. Music is heard and people are eating..." [6, p. 17], – we create an excursus into NEPman Katerynoslav of the first third of the previous century and the parallel with the no less contrasting present.

The continuation of the same "absence" of the social, that is the model background for comprehending and learning the national history, can be found in Teneta's further works. So, in the short story "Famine" (1927) the author continues interpreting his contemporary reality through the eyes of an artistic individual, who, like the author himself, understanding the essence of the time he lives in ("...I have heard an interesting talk of one young lady... What is the point in her entering the institute? (It is not a big deal she was not accepted). She will take the typist courses and with Ivan Semenovych's help (he is the technician, who wormed his way into the party during the Lenin's admission; she could not believe at first that such a reputable etc...) she will get a position and become a communist" [8, p. 15]), cannot confront the reality for a banal reason – he has no physical force, because "...wanted to write on this topic and wanted to add some

morale as well, so to say, because of such people everything gets corrupt, do not let such selfish ones into the party! Wanted but did not succeed... One cannot write with an empty stomach!" [8, p. 15]. Certainly, this is not the "social essence" that the cruel system wanted to see, not these words: "A proletarian must not cry even if starving! A proletarian must never lose courage! I shake my head and say: what fool said it? ...what fool?" [8, p. 38], satisfied the demands of the totalitarian reality. Such outlook bases of the author could not avoid the tragic fate – Borys Teneta, after committing suicide, was found among the talented writers forcefully excluded from the literature process, whose works are interesting for a modern researcher not only from the point of view of the artistic interpretation, but also as the history, the illustration of the epoch.

Going through the pages of Teneta's works gives the possibility to speak of the author's deep penetration into the people's social life, of covering the wide range of crucial problems of the reality contemporary with the author. Trying to retrieve the roots of the menacing disharmony in the society, the author in his artistic imagination goes back into the revolution years. Thus in 1929 a collection of short stories "The Tenth Second" is published ("The Tenth Second", "Smiths", "Hatred"), and its leitmotif is realising that implanting the interclass hatred awakens inhumane instincts in an average individual and lays the bases of cruelty and hatred of one person towards another. The bright example is the fact from the "Hatred" short story that the red commander Gnat Vlasenko fights against the Petlura squad, led by his brother Kindrat, and, being captivated by his own people, cannot prove that he is a soldier of the Red army, and, having an opportunity to run away, does not dare to do it and dies by the hand of his fellow Red army soldiers, although "dying by one's own hands is senseless, ridiculous... knowing your death is worth nothing..." [9, p. 19].

The author's talent and vision of the artistic world and reflections of the history and the contemporaneity in it are the most widely seen in the genre of novelette, as a form of the optimal reflection of the events of that time reality. In 1927 from under the author's

feather comes the novelette "Harmony and Pigpen". The allegorical and symbolic name of the work indicated the contradicting essence and character of the author's perceiving the situation in the country of that time. Depicting two contrasting forms of people's lives – the "pigpen" as a symbol of the cruel and dirty today, where all of us "stand in a knee-high marsh. There is the sun somewhere... There is... For it penetrates through a crack and even gilds the marsh, and pigs are lying around in the warm mud and grunting with satisfaction. They feel good, they have no thoughts and doubts at all. Should you start trying to awaken them, they will call you an idiot. Do not think they keep holding the past. It would not be bad, but they can smell everything new and fresh, victorious, and they crawl there, bringing their pigpen along" [7, p. 66], and "harmony" as an illusion of the ideal society, where "there will be people someday, when there is harmony... But that time must be very distant, I cannot even imagine how distant, even though I work and built that sunny harmony" [7, p. 67], Borys Teneta introduces into the text clearly symbolic images of the main characters Kateryna and Mykhailo, whose relations are built on the life contrasts, and are the reflections of the opposed directions of the life of that time. Like-minded people and spiritually close in the past, filled with the dreams of the happy future, they assault Perekop during the civil war, an on meeting again in some time, they turn out to be different and strangers to one another. Mykhailo, recalling his beloved one's "dark eyes and the words persistently anxious", thinks: "Strange they are. They create obstacles for themselves, and then struggle. Katherine is the same... You should do the best the life allows you. You cannot jump over your head anyway. You must not give way to your feelings. You should create a party-discipline for yourself..." [7, p. 49].

In Borys Teneta's prose there is an objective and to some extent innovatory process of the artistic comprehension of complicated life phenomena. The author feels and realises his participation in the people and the nation's destiny. All the tragedy of the first third of the previous century produces an echo in the artist's soul and works, the oppressing impact of

the contemporary with the author social and political situation and the tense in the social and literature life of Ukraine of the mentioned period is clearly felt.

In 1928 took place the voluntary liquidation of the literature-artistic group "Lanka-MARS", the member of which was Borys Teneta. Being the part of the literature-artistic organisation, the author along with its other representatives strived to be the defender of "his national truth, understood and sanctified by all the peoples, without raising the struggle against Marxism, and, if possible, calmly going past it" [4, p. 101]. But honestly "illustrating" the epoch, reproducing the reality of that time seemed to be an utterly difficult task. We cannot fail to agree with the thought of Borys Teneta's comrade, lanchanian T. Osmachka, who mentions in his historico-memoir research of the Ukrainian shot down renaissance, that they should have "had the most neutral attitude towards the government without helping it in anything with an artistic word, and truthfully depicted their own, Ukrainian life in the artistic images, but in the way that was possible under the political conditions of that time... And what do the young Ukrainian writers write about, when they consciously decided to pass past the acuity of the time, which was daily shaking the villages with screams of uproar and violence... treating their writers' duties honestly and bravely meant being arrested by Cheka within a week, with no possibility of being freed till the Last Judgement. And even if someone walks free, their souls are crippled, for very often the person in there is turned into Cheka's secret collaborator. And there was no saving the truthful word" [4, p. 103-104].

G. Kostiuk recalls, that in early 1928 Borys Teneta gave him the typewritten copy of the forbidden leaflet by Mykola Hvyliovi "Ukraine or Little Russia?" and uneasily said: "To write like that... one must have an outstanding civil courage and talent. Hvyliovi is the only one among us who has it. But have you read "From Diversion – to the Abyss" by Andriy Hvyliia? Read it to the end. Looks like a grand pogrom is about to break out..." [3, p. 215-216].

In a way, those were the prophetic words – the fatal for the Ukrainian intelligentsia thirties. The arrests of Teneta's close fellow-writers G. Kosynka,

V. Pidmohylnyi, Ye. Pluzhnyk, D. Falkivskiy and others, meant the end of the authors best artistic plans and hopes, among which was the idea of creating a historical novel, the theme of which was the "history and practice of conquering Mexico by the Spanish colonizers led by Cortez". Shocking episodes, terrible annihilation of the native population of Aztecs and Indians. The Ukrainian literature had not had such a theme so far..." [3, p. 220] – underlined Teneta. Certainly, we cannot fail to mention the fact that the novel would undoubtedly have connections with the actual cruel Ukrainian contemporaneity, and therefore it was being written slowly, with the hope for the changes in the totalitarian state, which instead of supporting and developing the national ideas as a part of the "soviet" internationalism, was destroying the best blossom of the nation in camps and torture chambers.

Borys Teneta's ideological and aesthetical struggle represents a new way of thinking, fresh outlook positions. Borys Teneta's works are the whole artistic world, in which not only the author's personality is reflected, but also the history and the contemporaneity of the people. The author shows the inseparable connection of the time, he created the system of images incarnating the nation's character, psychology and wisdom. Is this meaning the author's artistic heritage will always be modern and actual, for it is determined by the necessity of revealing the historical truth, understanding the national past, educating the national consciousness of the separate generation.

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