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ENGLISH FOLK BALLADS COLLECTED BY CECIL JAMES SHARP IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS: GENESIS, TRANSFORMATION AND UKRAINIAN PARALLELS

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Abstract. The purpose of this research, presented at the Conference sectional meeting, is to trace peculiarities of transformation of British folk medieval ballads, which were brought to the Southern Appalachians in the east of the USA by British immigrants at the end of the XVIIIth – beginning of the XIXth century and retained by their descendants, through analyzing certain texts on the levels of motifs, dramatis personae, composition, style and artistic means, as well as to outline relevant Ukrainian parallels. The analysis of such ballads, plot types and epic songs was carried out: 1) British № 10: “The Twa Sisters” (21 variants); American “The Two Sisters”(5 variants) and Ukrainian plot type I – C-5: “the elder sister drowns the younger one because of envy and jealousy” (8 variants); 2) British № 26: “The Three Ravens” (2), “The Twa Corbies” (2); American “The Three Ravens” (1), “The Two Crows”(1) and Ukrainian epic songs with the motif of lonely death of a Cossack warrior on the steppe (4). In our study British traditional ballads are classified according to the grouping worked out by the American scholar Francis Child (305 numbers), Ukrainian folk ballads – the plot-thematic catalogue developed by the Ukrainian folklorist Oleksiy Dey (here 288 plots are divided into 3 spheres, cycles and plot types). The investigation and comparison of the above indicated texts witness such main tendencies: 1) the American counterparts, collected in the Appalachian Mountains, preserve the historic-national memory and cultural heritage of the British immigrant bearers on the level of leading motifs, dramatis personae, composition peculiarities, traditional medieval images, epithets, similes, commonplaces; 2) some motifs, characters, images, artistic means, archaic and dialectal English of the Child ballads are reduced or substituted in the Appalachian texts; 3) realism of American ballad transformations, which overshadows fantasy and aristocracy of their British prototypes, is similar to the manner of poetic presentation of the typologically-arisen and described events by the Ukrainian folk ballads and dumas.

Keywords: ballads analysis, cultural heritage, comparison.

Emigration as a kind of direct external relations leads to diffusion of traditional oral song culture of a certain ethnos outside its state borders. As the British folk ballad is not only the peculiar symbol of song folklore of this country in the Slavic world but also the basis for understanding the essence of the ballad genre by Ukrainian philological science, the article is concentrating on ballad works which English ethnomusicologist and folklorist Cecil James Sharp defined as “poems that are narrative in substance and lyrical in form” in his monograph “English Folk-Song, Some Conclusions” (1907)⁶.

According to the statement of the Ukrainian outstanding researcher Ivan Denysiuk in his "ethno aesthetic treatise" (Yaroslav Harasym) "The National Peculiarities of Ukrainian Folklore" (2003), "there is no sharp, absolute isolation of spiritual culture, including verbal one, of one nation from culture of other nations. There exist civilization movements and types of cultures which interact and interplay, but the national genotype of the culture is preserved"⁹. That American ballad-song folklore, which is rooted in British traditions, is rewarding material for conducting cultural- and comparative-historical as well as textual analysis of oral poetic ballads. Roger de V. Renwick asserted that in the XXth-century American singing tradition there were revealed more than one hundred songs of the medieval (Child) ballad type which diffused to the USA from the British Isles²⁴. According to James Moreira, in the contemporary phase, "ballads are found throughout Europe and, as a result of outward European migration, in northern Africa, the Americas, and Australia, with analogues reported in India, the Orient, and Oceania"¹⁹. Being an international genre in the system of Ukrainian oral art, the Ukrainian ballad has mainly been evolving in contact-genetic interrelations with folklore of Slavic peoples and artistically reflects both nationally unique and typologically or genetically arisen events, marked by Ukrainian colouring, world-view and material-spiritual guidelines, thus stipulating for following Ukrainian parallels to British and American balladry.

The fieldwork conducted by the English musician and folklorist Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) and his collaborator Maud Karpeles (1885-1976) during the First World War in distant regions of the Southern Appalachians in North America resulted in a series of publications. Some of them are: "English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachian Mountains: Comprising 122 Songs and Ballads, and 323 Tunes" (1917) (co-compiler – the American folklorist Olive Dame Campbell (1882-1954)), "Folk-Songs of English origin collected in the Appalachian Mountains with pianoforte accompaniment", later edited by Maud Karpeles "English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians" (2 volumes, 1932).

It is necessary to mention ponder ability of Cecil Sharp's scientific contribution to the development of English and American folkloristics in general, and English folk music and dance studies in particular. The name of the "influential scholar"²⁰ is found in the edition "Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art" (1997), namely in the article "Ethnomusicology" contributed by Lesley C. Gay Jr. and "Revivals" – Neil V. Rosenberg. Lesley C. Gay Jr. stated that the monograph "English Folk Song: Some Conclusions" by Cecil Sharp is "an important legacy, an antecedent of such work as Bertrand Bronson's research on the tunes of the Child ballads"¹⁸. Neil Rosenberg noted that Cecil Sharp was among the first, who "called for a revival of English folk music" in his writings, and added: "following his (Sharp's – O.K.) lead, the English Folk Dance and Song Society became the center of the social movement called «the first British folksong revival»"²¹.

Since 1930 Cecil Sharp House in London has been the home to "The English Folk Dance and Song Society" and "Vaughan Williams Memorial Library"²⁵. The official web-site of the society acquaints with biography of "England's most prolific folk music and dance collector", photos, taken by the researcher during his fieldwork⁷. Marking the 150th anniversary of Cecil Sharp's birth, "The English Folk Dance and Song Society" put on-line the scientist's Appalachian diaries, which he wrote in the period of 1915 – 1918. For example, on the 11 September 1916 Sharp and Karpeles fixed variant A of "The Two Sisters" in North Carolina. The diary notes, made by Sharp this day, informed that having fired off "The Two Sisters" and the first verse of "The Golden Vanity", Mrs Jane Gentry from Hot Springs promised to give it the next day. With humour the author added: "Told her not to die in the night or catch cold or do anything that would endanger my getting the song on the morrow"⁸. In Hot Springs, North Carolina the commemorative sign to Cecil Sharp and his informer was installed. The inscription reads: "English folklorist Cecil Sharp in 1916 collected ballads in the "Laurel Country". Jane Gentry, who supplied many of the songs, lived here"¹⁶.

The date of the 150th anniversary of Cecil Sharp's birth was covered by the British Mass Media. Particularly, on the 21 of November 2009 BBC Radio 4 programme "Today" broadcast the item "Cecil Sharp Folk Diaries Released" with the report on Sharp's musical legacy². Also on the 12 of December 2009 BBC News published the article "Audio slideshow: Cecil Sharp's diaries", which contained

explanations of Malcolm Taylor, the Library Director of "English Folk Dance and Song Society", as well as selected black and white images of that time¹.

The collection "Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachian Mountains" (1917) comprised texts of 67 songs and 55 ballads. According to the declaration of Sharp out of these 55 "the texts of the first thirty-seven ballads in this book are all recorded, most of them in various forms, in the late Professor Child's English and Scottish Ballads"⁵. Provided by the compilers, the "map showing the geographical position of the Southern Appalachians" marked the boundaries of the mountain district, which embraced the area of the states of North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama and Georgia, where Sharp and Karpeles collected songs and ballads. Sharp wrote that he continued the investigation, which his "colleague" Olive Campbell had begun earlier⁵. Another book "Folk-Songs of English origin collected in the Appalachian Mountains with pianoforte accompaniment" made public texts of American seven folk ballads and seven songs of British genesis. These publications served as the source material for the study.

In "Introduction" to "Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachian Mountains" (1917) Sharp described the region of the Southern Appalachians, where the English community existed, as an extensive area "covering some 110,000 square miles", which was a good field to "yield as bountiful and rich a harvest". The total population of the rural dwellers at that time was about 3 million people⁵. Dwelling on the matters of "the country and its inhabitants", "the singers and their songs", "the ballads", "the songs", "the cultural significance of tradition" etc., Sharp mentioned "exploring the major portion of what is known as the Laurel Country" in the state of Kentucky. The researcher concluded that "the present inhabitants of the Laurel Country are the direct descendants of the original settlers who were emigrants from England and, I suspect, the lowlands of Scotland". They began their settlement "about three or four generations ago, i.e. in the latter part of the eighteenth century or early years of the nineteenth". Sharp's remarks on the linguistic peculiarities of the song performers are also important: "Their speech is English, not American, and, from the number of expressions they use which have long been obsolete elsewhere, and the old-fashioned way in which they pronounce many of their words, it is clear that they are talking the language of a past day"⁵.

In our study British traditional ballads are classified according to the grouping worked out by the American scholar Francis Child (305 numbers), Ukrainian folk ballads – the plot-thematic catalogue developed by the Ukrainian folklorist Oleksiy Dey (here 288 plots are divided into 3 spheres, cycles and plot types).

The analysis of such ballads, plot types and epic songs was carried out: 1) British № 10: "The Two Sisters" (21 variants); American "The Two Sisters" (5 variants) and Ukrainian plot type I – C-5: "the elder sister drowns the younger one because of envy and jealousy" (8 variants); 2) British № 26: "The Three Ravens" (2), "The Two Corbies" (2); American "The Three Ravens" (1), "The Two Crows" (1) and Ukrainian epic songs with the motif of lonely death of a Cossack warrior on the steppe (4).

Sharp and Campbell gave 4 variants of "The Two Sisters" (A was recorded in North Carolina, B, C, D – in Virginia); "The Three Ravens" (in Virginia). In the sampling "Folk-Songs of English origin collected in the Appalachian Mountains" Sharp provided 1 variation of "The Two Sisters" (Virginia) and 1 – "The Two Crows" (Virginia). All of the songs were fixed in 1916.

It is elucidated that the denoted texts of the British medieval ballads and their American offsprings reveal preservation of the leading motifs and dramatis personae. As a whole, 21 variants of № 10: "The Two Sisters" elaborate such motifs as courtship of sisters (one of them) with intent to marry, the elder sister's envy at beauty of her younger sister, drowning of the rival, pleading for rescue, offering ransom and refusing ransom, "the singing bone". Their Appalachian counterparts witness changes in the worldview of the heroes leading to a different manner of artistic depiction of the same event, leaving out some motifs and adding new ones. Thus, in "The Two Sisters" motifs are supplemented with such elements: robbery of the drowned girl, execution of the robber and the elder sister.

British № 26: "The Two Corbies" and the American offspring "the two Crows" work out the motifs of conversations of predatory birds, their feast on the dead body and elaborate fairy-tale expositions,

e.g. *"There were two crows sat on a tree, / Lardy hip tie hoddy ho ho / There were two crows sat on a tree, / And they were black as crows could be / Lardy hardy hip tie hoddy ho ho"* ("The Two Crows")³.

It should be mentioned that out of the Child ballad texts, № 10R (from Lancashire), № 10S (Kinloch MSS), № 10U (Long Island, New York) are more closely akin to the Appalachian "The Two Sisters" in refrains, dramatis personae and details, text pieces. 4 out of 5 of the Appalachian ballads about the rivalry of sisters show inclination to the development of fairy-tale expositions. Here is an example: *"There live dan old lord by the northern sea, / Bow down / There lived an old lord by the northern sea, / The boughs they bent tome / There lived an old lord by the northern sea / And he had daughters one, two, three. / That will be true true to my love / Love and my love will be true to me"*⁴. Constituting an important part of the ballad-song composition, the above given refrains of the Appalachian ballads, indicate their singing nature and usually ancient origin.

Altogether the American ballads feature diminution of the plot due to reduction of descriptive fragments. "The Two Sisters" present vivid examples of diminution in the episodes of drowning the younger sister by the elder one and in the scene of the miller's taking the body out of the pond onto the shore. In both cases folk artistic means, employed by the Child ballads, foreground the brightest visual details from the portrait depiction of the beautiful young sister: *"the milk-whitehan", "the lilly hand", "the middle sma", "bonnie / bonny back", "cherry cheeks", "yellow hair", "fingers white"* (№ 10B, C), *"white briest bane"* (№ 10F), *"lilly feet"* (№ 10E). In the second case the miller or his children poetically compare the drowned sister to *"a mermaidora swan"* (№ 10B), *"a white fish or a swan"* (№ 10I, M). Moreover the luxury of the outfit (*"diamond rings", "mony knots and platts", "gowden fringes"* (№ 10E))⁴ also underlines the physical beauty of the victim.

The same transformation occurs to № 26. The British corbies inform: *"Ye'll sit on his (knight's – O.K.) white hause-bane, / And I'll pike out his bonny blue een; / Wi ae lock of his gowden hair / We'll theek our nest when it grows bare"*,¹⁴ in another variant of this British ballad: *"We'll sit upon his (knight's – O.K.) bonny breast-bone, / And I'll pike out his bonny gray een; / We'll set our claws intil his yellow hair, / And big our bowr, it's a'blawn bare"*¹⁵. While the British texts mean a knight, the American crows speak about a horse: *"We'll press our feet on his (horse's – O.K.) breast-bone, / And pick his eyes out one by one"*¹⁵. Thus the description of the feast omitted the following ornamental epithets *"white"* in *"white hause-bane"*; *"bonny"* – *"bonny breast-bone", "bonny blueeen", "bonny grayeen"*; *"gowden"* – *"gowden hair"*; *"yellow"* – *"yellow hair"*.

However the analysed American ballads of English genesis preserved in "The Two Sisters" some traditional epithets: *"true love", "a gay lady", "fair lady", "fair maid", "fingers so small"*,³ *"gay gold ring"*²³; and the negative simile: *"It's no fish and it's no swan, / For the water's drowned agaylady"*⁴; in "The Three Ravens" – the commonplace: *"Three old crows sat on a tree, / Just as black as crows could be"*²³.

The diminution of the plot is also the result of leaving out some fantastic motifs and characters: e.g. the image of a *"harper"* or *"fiddler"* and *"the singing bone"* motif in "The Two Sisters". Although the plot of A (North Carolina) finishes with the climax, where the farmer makes harp screws and harp strings from the breast-bone of the drowned lady, the instrument doesn't voice the criminal.

Aristocratic vein is obvious in the Appalachian ballads, but the advancement of the society, different social order led to substitutions in some dramatis personae, e.g. instead of a knight (a lord, a baron, a suire, a king's son) *"A young man camea-courting there"*²²; British corbies are going to feast on *"a new slain knight"*⁴, American crows – *"a horse" "whose body has not long been slain"*¹⁵.

Speaking of Ukrainian parallels, national ballads of the plot type I – C-5: "the elder sister drowns the younger one because of envy and jealousy" (ballad songs "O the father had two daughters" ("Oy bulo v bat'ka dvi dochky"), "O the mother had, had two daughters" ("Oy mala matusia, mala dvi dochky") and others) are similar to the British № 10: "The Twa Sisters" in developing the same range of the above mentioned leading motifs and composition elements (the fairy-tale exposition, the sisters' opposition, intense dialogue between the siblings in the episode of drowning), metaphorical assimilation of the Ukrainian younger sister to *"the rosy flower"* (*"рожева квітка"*)³, *"the blooming rose"* (*"як рожа цвіла"*)¹³; the British one – *"the sweetest flower", "a flower" "the fairest flower (flour)"*¹³. But the Ukrainian ballads of the given type close the narration with the climax and do not elaborate the

“singing bone” motif or the criminal’s punishment. Instead Ukrainian fairy-tales about “the guelder rose pipe” (“kalynova sopilka”) embody this fantastic motif.

In Ukrainian dumas, ballads, songs “the banquet” of predatory birds (ravens, eagles) and carnivorous animals (wolves) belongs to favourite narrative mean sofaristic conveying an image of lonely death of a Cossack warrior on the steppe. In one of the oldest and best dumas “Escape of brothers from Azov” (“Utecha brativ iz Azova”), which describes runaway of three brothers from Turkish captivity, grey wolves (“vovky-siromantsi”) and black-winged eagles (“orly-chornokryl’tsi”) held the funeral of the youngest unmounted infantryman (“pishoho-pishanytsi”, “pishoho pikhotyntsia”), who died of thirst (“bezviddia”), hunger (“bezkhlib’ia”) and exhaustion on the clear steppe¹⁴.

In the historical ballad “Where are you from, Yvasiu? – From beyond the Danube” (“Vidky Yvasiu?– Z-za Dunayu”) parallelism in the lines “Over that blood the raven is croaking, / And about the son the mother is weeping” (“Nad tov krovtsov voron kriache, / A za synom maty plache”)¹⁷ underlines the mother’s loss of her son in military actions against Tatars, Turks and Poles and intensifies her grief. Here the first line “Over that blood the raven is croaking” is a metaphorical indication of the Cossack’s death.

In another Ukrainian historical ballad “Oh behind dark forests” (“Oy za temnymy lisamy”)¹² the semantically negative symbolism of this bird of prey is somewhat smoothed out by the personification of the ornithological image: “Oh behind dark forests / There is lying a shot Cossack, / There is lying a shot Cossack, / And he is blood stained. / There is no one to grieve for / The Cossack and to toll for. / The horses are tolling with their horseshoes, / And the Cossacks with their sabres, / The black raven with his wings, / And mother with her tears” (“Oy za temnymy lisamy/ Lezhyt’ kozak zastrelianyy, / Lezhyt’ kozak zastrelianyy, / Sche yi kriol’oyu obilliany. / Nema komu potuzhyty, / Po kozaku podzvonyty. / Dzvoniat’ koni pidkovkamy, / A kozaky shabel’kamy, / Chornyy voron krylon’kamy, / A matinka– slizon’kamy”). The introduction of the conflict in this ballade elaborates the motif “the warrior’s death in battle” in a traditional folk key, when there are no relatives to bury the “shot” and “blood stained” Cossack with due religious ceremonies. The rhetoric devices of negative parallelism and gradation perform a compositional function, create and intensify dramatic effect of the depicted episode. “The black raven” expresses his grief by movements of his wings– symbolic tolling church bells. Further the narrative is built in the form of an address to the orphaned mother: “Do not weep, mother, do not grieve, / Because your son has already got married” (“Ne plach, maty, ne zhuryisia, / Bo vzhe tvoy syn ozhenyvsia”). The text is filled with successions of metaphors in order to embody the traditional for Ukrainian folk singing motif “death in battle as a wedding”. Here in one of the metaphors ravens are likened to “parents-in-law” (“svaty”): “(The son – O.K.) Took himself four parents-in-law – / Black birds on the clear steppe” (“Uziav sobi shtyry svaty – / V chystim poli chorni ptakhy”).

The ballad “The black ploughed land” (“Chorna rillia zaorana”) unfolds the above presented motif “the warrior’s death in battle” through the images of a battle field as a harvest field and a personified raven. Looking for her son, the worried mother gently asks the bird: “–Tell me, the raven sweet, / Is my son still white? / Are his eyes still bright? / Are his lips pink?” (“–Skazhy meni, voron mylyy, / Chy miy synok ishebilyy? / Chy sche ochen’ky yasnen’ki, / A chy ustaram’ya nen’ki?”). “The raven sweet” knows the son well because he “is grazing on him” (“z yoho popas maye”): “Already his lips are dark blue, / His face is already black; / I am sitting on his face / And drinking his eyes” (“Vzhe yoho usta synen’ki, / Yoho lychko vzhe chornen’ke; / Ya na lychku prysidayu, / Ochi yomu vypyvayu”)¹¹. Here the dialogue, selected colours and shades provide the artistically coded message and contrast life (“white” “son”, “bright” “eyes”, “pink” “lips”) with death (“dark blue” “lips”, “black” “face”). The extended metaphor softens the tragic news.

In conclusion, the research and comparison of the texts of the Child ballads and their American counterparts, collected in the Appalachian Mountains, show two main tendencies: 1) preservation of the historic-national memory and cultural heritage on the level of leading motifs, dramatis personae, composition peculiarities, traditional medieval images, epithets, similes, commonplaces; 2) reduction or substitution of certain motifs, characters, images, artistic means, archaic and dialectal English. Altogether realism of American new ballad transformations, which overshadows fantasy and aristocracy of their British prototypes, is similar to the manner of poetic presentation of the

typologically-arisen and described events by the Ukrainian folk dumas and ballads. Prospects of further research are seen in extension and continuation of comparative studies of British, American and Ukrainian folklore.

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