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Links Between Letters and Poems Written by Balys Sruoga

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The paper reviews personal letters and lyrics written by Lithuanian writer Balys Sruoga (1896–1947). The poet is distinguished for his unique writing style; his personal letters expose outstanding linguistic expression. It is not easy “to kill the author” in his poetry, to separate his lyrical subject from the poet himself.

We can retrace the author’s friendship, the contrasts of his mood, and the same poetical images as well as symbols in Sruoga’s personal letters to his wife Vanda Daugirdaitė. Sruoga transmitted his own life situation of ethical value from reality into the aesthetic form, and individualized it. The valuable poetic relationship with reality and poetic thinking was expressed through the composition of the lyric confession poem. The Dionysian and Apollonian motifs in Sruoga’s poetic and epistolary texts were examined to show that the same motifs and even the same formulations appear in both.

Consequently the study of parallels in Balys Sruoga’s personal letters and poetry opens a number of interesting research opportunities of fictive and non-fictive links: the construction of the individual linguistic world view, the manifestations of personal identity, and the search of creative identity forms.

Keywords: Balys Sruoga, personal letters, poetry, epistolary form, literature, Lithuanian modernism.

ЗВ'ЯЗКИ МІЖ ЛИСТАМИ ТА ПОЕЗІЄЮ, НАПИСАНИМИ БАЛІСОМ СРУОГОЮ

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У статті розглядаються особисті листи та лірична поезія литовського письменника Баліса Сруоги (1896–1947). Поет вирізняється своїм унікальним стилем письма; його особисті листи розкривають видатне мовне вираження. У його поезії не вдається «вбити автора», відокремити його ліричний сюжет від самого поета.

Ми можемо простежити дружбу автора, контрасти його настрою, ті ж поетичні образи в творах, як і символи в особистих листах Сруоги до його дружини Ванди Даугірдайте. Сруога передав власну життєву ситуацію етичної цінності з реальності в естетичну форму та індивідуалізував її. Цінний поетичний зв'язок із дійсністю та поетичним мисленням виражався через композицію віршованої ліричної сповіді. Діонісійські та Аполлонські мотиви в поетичних та епістолярних текстах Сруоги були досліджені, щоб показати, що схожі мотиви і навіть однакові формулювання з'являються в обох жанрових варіаціях.

Отже, дослідження паралелей в особистих листах і поезії Баліса Сруоги відкриває ряд цікавих дослідницьких можливостей вигаданих та не вигаданих зв'язків: побудова індивідуального мовного світогляду, прояви особистої ідентичності та пошук форм творчої ідентичності.

У самому базовому сенсі, писемність можна визначити як спосіб передачі інформації. Коли і письменник, і читач існують, цей процес можна розглядати і як засіб спілкування. Написання листів — один із найдавніших методів спілкування. Цей жанр не обмежений передачею конкретної інформації, оскільки часто включає обмін досвідом, емоціями та настроями. Завдяки цьому цей жанр часто наближається до поезії.

Баліс Сруога був литовським класиком, визначним письменником завдяки тому, що його бібліографія відрізнялася насамперед різноманітністю жанрів. Він писав вірші, поеми, есеї, займався критикою, а також перекладом. Сруога переклав на литовську мову твори Йохана Вольфганга Гете, Генріха Гейне, Оскара Вайльда, Генріка Ібсена, Поля Верлена, Шарля Бодлера, Олександра Блока, Олександра Бальмонта, Анни Ахматової, Самуеля Бенеллі та інших письменників.

Ключові слова: Баліс Сруога, особисте листування, поезія, епістолярна форма, література, литовський модернізм.

In the most basic sense, writing can be defined as a method of transferring information. When both the writer and the reader exist, this process can be seen as a means of communication as well. Writing letters is one of the oldest communication methods. This genre is not limited by the transmission of specific information as it often involves sharing experiences, emotions, and sentiments. Due to this, this genre often comes close to poetry. Naturally, emotionality is a feature of personal, not business correspondence. However, writing letters is a hobby of many writers.

The object of the article are very especially emotional letters written by Lithuanian modernist poet Balys Sruoga (1896–1947). He was a Lithuanian classic, remarkable among writers due to his bibliography being distinguished by the variety of genres, first and foremost. He wrote poetry, poems, plays, was engaged in criticism as well as translation. He translated texts written by Johan Wolfgang Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Oscar Wilde, Henrik Ibsen, Paul Verlaine, Charles Baudelaire, Aleksandr Blok, Aleksandr Balmont, Ana Achmatova, Samuel Benelli and other writers into Lithuanian. He was a great theorist of the theatre also.

This research was based on the letters to his beloved woman and on two his poems. Balys Sruoga and Vanda Daugirdaitė have met in Moscow. After that they were working together for some time. Sruoga was editor-in-chief of the magazine named “Lithuania”, and Vanda was his secretary. They have felt in love with each other and were writing letters when they were not together. Sruoga used to love writing letters. He left almost 5,853 letters. And only a small piece of them were published. These letters were archived in the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius. 142 letters were addressed to his loved one Vanda Daugirdaitė. The copies of these letters were kept in the museum of Balys and Vanda Sruogai in their home in Kaunas. The majority of these letters were written during his studies in Russia and Germany (from 1919 to 1924). At the same time, Sruoga was writing poetry actively. It was included in his anthologies “Sun and Sand” („Saulė ir smiltys“, 1920) and “On the Path of Gods” („Dievų takais“, 1923). Those poems were dedicated to Vanda Daugirdaitė.

Sruoga created his first book when he went to St. Petersburg, and after that to Moscow to study philology. Vanda was in Lithuania at the time. They were friends for not long. And the early letters showed his extreme mood swings and feelings towards her very clearly. After that Sruoga and Vanda gave scholarships. Sruoga went to Munchen and worked on German studies and his dissertation. And Vanda went to Berlin and studied history. At that time they were engaged and were going to marry. The second book of poems was written in that period.

Sruoga’s best known work was the novel “Forest of the Gods: Memoirs” („Dievų miškas: atsiminimai“, 1957) based on his own life experiences as a prisoner in the Stutthof Concentration Camp operated by Nazis where

he was sent in March 1943 together with forty-seven other Lithuanian intellectuals after the Nazis started a campaign against possible anti-Nazi agitation in the occupied Lithuania. Literature theorists have focused on this novel the most. Meanwhile, poetry studies first of all attempted to define the place of Sruoga's works in the context of Lithuanian literature and literary movements, for example, neo-romanticism and symbolism. Letters and other ego-documents were used in order to disclose the historical and personal details of Sruoga's life. His letters have been studied without linking them to his poetry: the expression of salutations in personal letters and the cognitive model of 'love' in Sruoga's letters to Daugirdaitė. Letters have been used when analysing the timeline of writing and editing novel "Forest of the Gods: Memoirs". Lyrical parallels have been discussed broadly but were not analysed in depth. This research unfolded the characteristics of Sruoga's works by proposing an analytical method that merges ego-documentary with literature. There is the attempt to search the personal correspondence by Balys Sruoga for links that helped to construct the history of the author's personality, to clarify the behind-the-scenes aspects and to unfold the story of his friendship with his beloved woman. The connection between epistolarity and fictional texts was very promising and interesting for research about Sruoga.

The issues surrounding the links between the epistolary form and fiction

The epistolary genre was one of ego-documentary genres. Ego-documentary (in short — ED) itself was understood as 'the historic sources of personal nature where the subject and the writer was the same person. The author of an ED published the information about own interests, feelings, joy and concerns' (Roszak 2013: 47). ED could also be defined as the written account of personal space, self-witnessing written testament or first-person written account. In addition to letters, autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries were also considered to be ED. Some researchers tended to view unpublished poetry as ED as well. Such classification was based on the statement that 'rough, often unprofessionally rhymed words also expressed their world views, personal intentions, the understanding of the contemporary social life' (Berenis 2013: 18). Lyrical digressions in ED as well as poetry written without intention to publish did not differ from the published material in their essence. Even the text, written without any intention to publish, could reach the public eventually and could be included into anthologies. Its artistic value was not evaluated in this case. But there was a question, why researchers were united in viewing poetry that was recognised as ED as the expression of the author's world views or emotions while poetry recognised as literature and the intentions of their authors was so controversial. American anthropologist Clifford Geertz has defined the au-

thor of an ED as the following — the historical subject was seen ‘not only as the structure of discourse, but also as ‘body and soul’ that had a certain posture in the world and was distinguished by the will to operate’ (Berenis 2018: 19). Researchers of ED gave significance to how text helps to show the individuality of a person instead of the text itself — ‘in case of the written account of private space, the author has stopped being merely the measure of deciphering the communal mentality’. He [himself] has become an ‘individual of special mentality’ (Roszak 2013: 51). And yet: could ED be recognised as literature?

Aistė Kučinskienė has stated that there was a genre inseparability. First of all, it was difficult to discern a letter from literature due to the language style — ‘it was extremely important that language stylisation could and often was met in letters: an epistolary text was a writing method created by the writer that tended to be separated from the reality despite the author’s intentions solely due to the reason that it was written (it was transformed verbal communication) and the style of the letter was not strictly defined — it could come close to fiction’ (Kučinskienė 2011: 550). Vytautas Berenis also has noted the importance of style in ED. He said that ‘we could not forget that each ED was marked by the contemporary aesthetic tradition and the manner of writing’ (Berenis 2013: 21). Another thing that brought letters closer to literature was the fact that letters often became drafts of upcoming literary works. In case of beginning writers, a letter was a draft of a fictional work, a way to learn how to write, so letters belonged to ‘the creator’s biography, spiritual life, as a prototype of creative work’ (Kučinskienė 2011: 551). This exact principle was followed when analysing Sruoga’s letters as primary drafts of his poems. It was also important to mention that the lyrical texts provided in the letters were not recognised as poems during the time of their writing, but upon reading Sruoga’s poems written later or during the same period, it became possible to view these letters in such light.

An especially close link between literature and epistolary texts was noted when the literature was clearly related to real-life experiences or biography of the author. Kučinskienė has showed this by analysing the epistolary and literary texts by Lithuanian female writers, Žemaitė and Šatrijos Ragana. She has stated that if creative works ‘arose’ from the biography, the letter became an intermediary element (Kučinskienė 2011: 551). Dominique Maingueneau has defined the relationship between the creative work and reality also. He said that writing dominated the writer’s life but writing was a form of life and the act of writing — working on a manuscript created a zone where the contact between ‘life’ and ‘fiction’ became extremely obvious (Maingueneau 1998: 52). The aforementioned aspects clearly complicated the distinction between letter and literature. So, we should discuss the reader (the addressee) who, at first glance, might seem as the main feature distinguishing letters from literature.

Letters were considered to be sources from one's private space, meaning that they were addressed to a specific person instead of many readers, unlike literature. Textologist Siegfried Scheibe has claimed that 'a letter was addressed to a person who was in a different place (room) than the author of the letter. A letter contained a message, information or references that could be communicated to the addressee almost in the same way if that person was in the same place' (Scheibe 1988). However, Kučinskienė contradicted this view:

"Is it possible that the addressee's presence in another room or the intimate nature of the message makes a letter what it is? While a literary work often does not have a specified addressee, an implied reader (who is also not sitting in the same room since he is understood as an abstraction) is often intrinsic to it.... Also we can assume that a letter, much like a literary work, 'slips out' of the author's hands as a result of the act of writing as the author loses the right to text and the issue of the owner becomes difficult to solve." (Kučinskienė 2011: 554).

Thus, even the discussion about the reader (addressee) did not solve the issue of the distinction between a literary work and a letter, so we can conclude that all literature was letters, in a way, since it was addressed to someone and conveys a message. It might be said that epistolary works could benefit literary analysis and could be read not only as documents but like literary or near-literary texts as well. Hence, the analysis of letters could not only unfold important details from the author's life or personality but also could disclose the meaning hidden in a literary work.

The relationship between the creator and the hero

According to Stanislav Roszak, 'in a hundred years, sources that revealed the history of a family and the biographic details of its members became witnesses of individual experiences that conveyed not only the sentiments of an epoch but the creator's personality, too' (Roszak 2013: 52). Thus, this paper balanced between life, letter, and literature.

In life and literature alike Sruoga was considered a rebel. So it was difficult to put this figure down to any literary movement:

"He found it hard to adjust to his environment; he felt some aversion to the environment and was somewhat a rebel." (Yla 1997: 336).

"Balys Sruoga, having been put among other literary classics, is anxiously fussing: it is too crowded for him in any scheme or chain of pathetic epithets." (Kubilius 1996: V).

Sruoga was the first poet who moved the entire Lithuanian poetry towards modernism. On the one hand, the writer was distinguished by intense

expression of the internal condition, innovative poetics and modernist protest. On the other hand, the poet did not distance himself from the romantic poetry tradition. Sruoga used to love to state in his literature criticism papers that the expressive text continued the main theses of romantic lyricism, and the essence of the creative work was the inner, spiritual world, and personal expression was the spirit of the work, as well poetic imagery was a live fraction of spirit. So, Sruoga assessed his creative efforts in the context of the Romantic paradigm. He used to write that any fictional work could only be assessed by the power of the spirit's openness. In this case, the view of ED researchers corresponded with Sruoga's one. 'The researcher tackled the issues of the auto-portrayal and self-assessment of a new age person, in other words, he analysed language that was used in the attempt to express oneself, one's social status and moral values' (Roszak 2013: 55). Mikhail Bakhtin also has stated that 'there was a link between the literary and ED research'. He has noted that 'non-lyrical works by the author, where the prosaic idea is always expressed more clearly, were very important' (Bachtin 2002: 100).

The rebellious Prometheus, the creative Romantic genius, was the Sruoga's alter ego. But did the semantic similarity between Sruoga's letters and poems allowed us to identify the author with the lyrical subject? Sruoga's personality has raised as much discussion as his works. But literature theorists did not tend to link personality traits to the lyrical subject created by the poet. One might contradict such a statement. Bakhtin has claimed that 'the exceptional individuality of a creating author entered the aesthetic object, became an architectonic form, since an event, person, phenomenon became individualised' (Bachtin 2002: 333). Both poetic letters and poems by the author could be seen as an emotional confession by Sruoga where distinct personality traits described in the memoirs of his contemporaries became noticeable. On the other hand, as Bakhtin said, 'if the author completely identified with the hero, nothing complete and self-sufficient could be created, only the actual future that was beyond the semantic future could be continued' (Bachtin 2002: 101). As a result, 'analysing poetry became quite problematic due to the fact that author was at one's most formal when writing poetry. He disappeared in the chiming external and picturesque as well as plastic and rhythmic internal forms, so it seemed that he did not exist, that he blended with the hero or that conversely, that there was no hero, only the author' (Bachtin 2002: 98). This feature of poetry complicated not only the search of the relationship between the author and the hero but also the analysis of the whole text in general. The failure to understand the positions of the author and the hero made it difficult to describe the theme of the work as well. Bakhtin has stated that 'due to the aforementioned feature of pure poetry — near absolute indistinguishability between the author and the hero — it was extremely complicated to distinguish and phrase the theme as a certain semantic prosaic

or epic assumption' (Bachtin 2002: 99). When analysing a poem by Alexander Pushkin, Bakhtin has noted that wording the theme of a poetic work would always be conditional and not entirely adequate; in order to describe it as accurately as possible, one should take the biographic details and other texts by the author into consideration. Bakhtin compared abstract and non-specific poetry to a musical work and labeled it an expression of a possible thought or action. Due to this, it was sometimes handy to use the behind-the-text material as it was explained, supplements and sometimes even demonstrated the genesis of a poem.

When discussing the poet and the hero, Bakhtin, on the one hand, has claimed that 'in poetry the hero almost did not have anything to oppose the author with'. On the other hand, he said that 'the author seemingly permeated the hero leaving only a small possibility of individuality in his core itself' (Bachtin 2002: 274). In poetry the author often had objectified himself because this genre required not only an outside glance, a defined hero's personality or a clear fabula but also an aesthetic and artful expression of an emotion. Bakhtin has noted that 'poetry was seen and heard oneself from the inside by using the emotional eyes and the emotional voice of the other. One heard himself in another, with others and for others' (Bachtin 2002: 279). The hero was that 'other' that the author overtook and used to express its own emotions:

"I find myself in the emotionally agitated voice of another, I am personified in the voice that sings about another, I found authoritative access to my internal agitation; I sing about myself with the potential lips of another loving soul" (Bachtin 2002: 279).

In poetry, unlike in other genres, it was not necessary to create a complete hero. Bakhtin has stated that 'in it, the moral point of view was the internal state or an event that was not only a definition of the hero in action, the hero only experienced it but this experience did not complete the hero' (Bachtin 2002: 280). Roszak has claimed that 'letters showed not only the history and biographic details of a family, but also became witnesses of individual experiences that convey, in addition to the sentiments of an epoch, the creator's personality, too' (Roszak 2013: 52). So, we should also discuss and compare how Sruoga expressed his emotions in his letters and what emotions became clear in the space of the poetic hero.

Early works by Sruoga showed a movement from temporary impressions, aesthetic poetic vocabulary and symbolistic declarations to expressionistic expression. This could be linked to Sruoga's mood swings and creative process that his contemporaries had defined like this:

"In his youth he especially had mood swings. He wrote poems spontaneously, as a result of teenager love... Back in 1919 to 1920 we used to walk

around the oak-wood in Kaunas, the Mickevičius Valley, Balys would suddenly become very quiet, walk away, sit down in the grass and start writing. This is it, there's already a poem..." (Sruogienė 1996: 116).

"One moment he is extremely happy, then he is extremely unhappy, then there's a great upswing, hope, and then a downfall, the last moment of tragedy, replaced again by incredible delight in buds, grass, snow..." (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1997: 98).

Sruoga's letters were very sentimental, the emotions were very pronounced, often dramatic:

"The sea. Crazy laughter. Unspeakable misery. Frantic freedom. And a silent evening prayer. The spirit is laughing, the spirit is melting in the sun-rays – the spirit sees eternity." (Sruoga 1921: P5146).

"Why am I so miserable, why I am I so scared? There is no comfort! I cannot call for help! I have no strength to endure the pain!" (Sruoga 1922: P5185).

"Like a dog left outside at night in autumn" (Ibid: P5194).

As we could see in the letters, the author experienced everything very vividly, often leaned towards extreme mood swings: absolute despair or endless joy. The lyrical subject in Sruoga's poetry was also defined as a spontaneous, poetic, and a very dynamic personality. The subject was nervous and experienced dynamic mood swings:

"A silent touch of an oar
The whiff of a dying wind
Some expectation of joy –
...
The oar falls out silently again –
The soul cries, the soul feels –" (Sruoga 1996: 187).

Thereby, sensitivity was one of the most important features of the lyrical subject ("Hopeful, sleepless nights / Teary eyes / Face of copper" (Ibid: 70) and the poet. Sruoga often expressed his feelings very directly in his letters to Vanda. He was not afraid to describe his tears and pain:

"I have no roof, no family, and yet I'm still Sruoga, crying like a crazy man" (Sruoga 1922: P5171).

"I am walking around the dirty streets and garden all day, and my heart keeps crying so!" (Sruoga 1922: P5194).

Both writer and the lyrical subject often anticipated the pointlessness of the world. This sense of despair he described especially poetically in one of the letters:

“I do not know if you’ll believe that my heart is crying. The leaves are flowing in the direction of wind, they bid farewell to the world, they sing songs of abyss while longing for eternity. I am cowering while listening to the ringing of leaves, and I am ever so wistful. And it seems that the whole world is merely an echo of a falling tear.” (Sruoga 1919: P5280).

In poems, hopelessness was often expressed by comparing life to a prison (“Chains in the evening, the sky in the morning. / A blossom and dust meet the same fate. / My prison, my birth” (Sruoga 1996: 66). The image of life-prison, called captivity, can be found in letters as well: “I want so much to help you, while breathing sun and singing the bloom, to escape the earthly captivity so that I could help you lift yourself up to the blue skies.” (Sruoga 1919: P5280).

The space where the lyrical subject operated was very telling. Bakhtin has claimed that ‘the centre of the arrangement and the moral significance of external objects depicted in a work was the external body and the external human soul. All objects were tied to the exterior of the hero, his external and internal (bodily and spiritual) limits’ (Bakhtin 2002: 205). Both the creator and the lyrical subject wandered in a depressed manner between the earthly routine, reality and dreams, visions, ideal worlds; they divided life into separate moments that did not possess objective time and stable space. Sruoga used to consider which is more real — meaningful dreams or meaningless life. This illustrated the complicated relationship that Sruoga and his lyrical subject had with space: the emotionally open lyrical subject had difficulty finding himself and opened up while spontaneously merging with the surroundings.

Sruoga and his lyrical hero were united in their wandering between earthly routine, reality and dreams, visions, and ideal worlds. The poet dreamed a lot and retold his dreams in his letters. The ones were sometimes so vivid that he himself had difficulty separating the dream from the reality or a vision. Dreams were intertwined with memories, wishes, and prayers:

“I remember: Kaunas, Nemunas... And you are so full of sun, of sunrays, of warmth! Such a silent day, such bright sun, you’re so close! But this is not a dream, this was all mine — mine — mine! Will I ever feel the heat, will you ever be close, will our sun be hot, will you and the sun ever be mine? What am I dreaming! But — if I was unable to dream with open eyes right now, I would not be able to live.” (Sruoga 1921: P5154).

“It seems that a somewhat special sacred morning has dawned in my soul. And I do not know how to pray so that I can praise this holy day. I would shout to the world — my sacred — sacred — vision but there is a ringing bell somewhere, and I can only kneel down and fall silent.” (Sruoga 1922: P5164).

The limit between a dream, memory, vision, prayer, and reality was unclear. It was as if Sruoga was living in them. This imagery was conveyed as short moments that merged and dynamically changed in his poems:

“Be a gentle visitor for a moment
Of my forgotten existence!
...
I do not know your path.
I grew up in the wilderness and dreamt
I sung about you in the distance
And the vision in the night –
And the agony of exile –
I am awake, just for you!” (Sruoga 1996: 101).

The Dionysian orientation

The Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy could be noted in Sruoga's early works and letters. When analysing the timeline of his early ones, the thing that first struck the eye was the abundance of negative emotion such as sadness, suffering and loneliness while waiting for the response from the loved one. Such semantics showed the Dionysian side of the creator: his Nietzschean artistry and Baudelairean spleen. The lyrical subject often looked at the sky, tried to become one with it. There was a world of dreams and visions but the motives of an abyss, falling down, disappointment in the world. The subject's hopelessness and downfall were also common.

Restlessness was linked to suffering that rised from not being able to be with the loved one. Life was often seen not as a gift and joy but as endless suffering, prison, and a burden. It was often expressed in symbols of abysses or decadent outbursts of the personal subconscious:

“I am still the same, I collected violets at midnight and burned them in the grand bonfire I made in the middle of the forest, like I burn my grief near the brink of an abyss today...

Oh, blessed be those who cursed the salves and blessings, those who happily smiled while falling down the abyss, blessed be all of you, all – Eternal Peace for you in the hour of death.” (Sruoga 1996: 94–95). –

“The leaves are flowing in the direction of wind, they bid farewell to the world, they sing songs of abyss while longing for eternity.” (Sruoga 1919: P5280).

The attitude of the poet and the lyrical subject was also linked to the Dionysian image when developing the atmosphere of secrecy, mysticism, the unsaid in the letters as well as in the poetry. The idea expressed in the poem “Miserere” had come from a letter:

“I will not be the same as I can only be with you in a tale, I will not be the one that you long for — I will be the cold and icy wind, and nothing else. And you will hurt for me, as you yourself call it shame, and we will both be unwell, but you know it yourself... As for others, I cannot be different, because I will never allow anyone else to enter my soul and find out what is going on inside... I will be a hypocrite, a hooligan, a fraud and a sinner — I do not care about it at all... my unearthly secret will not be disclosed” (Sruoga 1922: P5181). —

“It is so bleak... I am listening to horror... I am listening to the abyss... I stop breathing — I am kneeling near a cross — I have many secrets — I have closed the blinds, I have drawn the curtains, and now no guests will come visit me...” (Sruoga 1996: 95).

Misery was the most prominent emotion in Sruoga’s letters and poetry. This feeling was often described directly as well as poetically and dramatically in his letters:

“But I am horribly, horribly sad! I have no roof, no family, and yet I’m still Sruoga, crying like a crazy man.” (Sruoga 1922: P5171). —

“I am walking around the dirty streets and garden all day, and my heart keeps crying so!” (Ibid: P5194).

The lyrical subject was also searching for comfort on the streets:

“If you have nothing to live for
Go to the long
Autumn street...
There you can soothe your dirty face
And the storm will silence
The power of hunger...
Hopeful, sleepless nights
Teary eyes
Face of copper
Pain threading through dirty streets” (Sruoga 1996: 70).

Misery was often intertwined with longing and loneliness in the texts:

“Today I’m alone ... crying without consolation! Why am I so miserable, why I am I so scared? There is no comfort! I cannot call for help! I have no strength to endure the pain! Like a dead body buried in the field!” (Sruoga 1922: P5185).

The sense of loneliness was similarly described in one of the poems:

“Like a single osier in the field
Is waiting for sun that is not coming
I am calling out in the field and I fail

And I am wandering besides the road
I follow the falling star
The sad god of the fields
Caraway and dill smell
Do you hear, do you know
How alone I am here with the fields?" (Sruoga 1996: 115).

The sense of loneliness and the inability to call for help was strengthened by the open and empty space — the field. Loneliness and misery were mixed with longing that was expressed very lyrically:

"Where it is silent, there I'll be alone, alone, sun will not ever look at my window. And I will repeat during sleepless nights — my beloved Vandukas — will you hear me! And when I will cry out of longing, will you come visit me! My heart, I have found myself again in some endless longing and I am again unstopably sad. I do not know why. I am somewhat scared, somewhat uncomfortably grim, I want to shout, shout — and cry. I would somewhat like to call you beautifully, to do something so good for you so that you would know how sad I am, that you would feel how horrible it is for me without you in the world! But what can I tell you, what can I do for you!" (Sruoga 1922: P5167).

"The longing motive is especially vivid in the poem "The Cold Crusade":

"As if no one knew my lonely paths
Where I loved the storm, where I speak with longing —
...
And I drown in the cold love of my visitors of longing.
...
I would keep screaming this horrid lament, the lament of a hungry soul!
Until another stolen crusade seduces the soul..." (Sruoga 1996: 16).

Symbols of impermanence linked to the ambivalent semantics of the vitality of flora convey the Dionysian atmosphere in the texts. Sruoga identified himself with a birch tree in his letters:

"What endless ache! Pads along like a hungry dog banished to the wilderness and I know it will not find it Here, and I know there is no way back for me, and I know my heart will quiver like that of a birch ... will crumple the strength, an autumnal storm will descend, will break a branch, and I will stand and look at the ground!.." (Sruoga 1920: P5130). —

"And a distant birch, the lonely orphan, drowned in the sky." (Sruoga 1996: 116).

In the works, a birch symbolises lack of power, weakness, misery, and loneliness. Other plants embody impermanence:

“The leaves are flowing in the direction of wind, they bid farewell to the world, they sing songs of abyss while longing for eternity.” (Sruoga 1919: P5280). —

“We, like wheat ears, are waiting in gloom
For the scythe to reap us...
Until dreams weaved silently
Tangle and unravel...” (Sruoga 1996: 28).

“Chains in the evening, the sky in the morning.
A blossom and dust meet the same fate.
My prison, my birth” (Ibid).

Thereby, Dionysian emotions are not only similar but are also expressed in a similar manner in these texts. Longing is supported by the motive of loneliness and the obvious intent to express feelings.

The Apollonian orientation

As Sruoga’s and Daugirdaitė’s relationship became closer, the tone of the letters changed as well. The series of love poems and the second book were also completed at the time. Dionysian atmosphere was more and more often counterbalanced by the Apollonian sentiment. Sruoga was a solar poet who admired Konstantin Balmont, and Vyacheslav Ivanov. His symbol of the sun was linked to the aesthetic of the German Romantics, the Russian mystical symbolism of the halo. It expressed the eschatological revival and the renewal of the world and unfolded the most important moral meanings of the poetic worldview.

The loving figure kept searching for hope and consolation in the nature and open spaced like the sea or sky in the texts:

“... I want to go to sea — there are more tales there, there waves are echoing and singing, there’s the eternal circle, there’s more love and soul, there’s more silence, mystery, and life.” (Sruoga 1922: P5278).

“... A new force surrounded my spirit, it seems that the entire world is in my heart, and it seems that it is so bright in the heart that I can only sing the heavenly hymn.” (Ibid: P5161). —

“It seems as if I would jump into the sea
Pray along with the wave —
Maybe the bleak night will break into light
Maybe dawn will break in the heart!” (Sruoga 1996: 21).

“Oh soul! The soul is anxious...
...
Calm down! Let the sun fall down

Let the sky glow

The sky, blue and bright like a dream, will soon be in you!" (Ibid: 41).

The 'sea', the 'sun', and the 'sky' were linked to the divinity and the Apollonian imagery in the texts and symbolised escaping the earthly prison.

The Russian solar poetic symbolism actualised life, enlightenment, movement and change, endless eternity, organics, the discovery of nature and self, passion, burning, completeness, and the proximity to the myth. The symbols of the sun, the sea, and the cosmos showed the mystery of being, the sense of endless, and the alienation of the lyrical subject from the daily life in Sruoga's works. The sun was often conveyed as a metaphor for life. Sruoga called his life 'sun' and his troubles 'wind' in one of the letters. The sun is expressed as a metaphor for the sun as well in poetry and letters:

"Our meeting, our misfortune, our being together — I had no thoughts that could specify and convey this, there are some winds interfering with my sun." (Sruoga 1922: P5179).

"And you are so full of sun, of sunrays, of warmth! Such a silent day, such bright sun, you're so close! But this is not a dream, this was all mine — mine — mine! Will I ever feel the heat, will you ever be close, will our sun be hot, will you and the sun ever be mine?" (Sruoga 1921: P5154). —

"A rocky shore is drowned in the sun
Blue waves kissing
Sunny feet, sweet, silent
Shining in the sun, loving in the sun —
...
Blue shore has drowned in the sun
Grew and grew up, ripened and matured
Fruits in the earth, berries in juice
Firm chests naked in the sun" (Sruoga 1996: 163).

Sun was also linked to the love interest. The epithet 'beloved' is often replaced with 'sunlit' in the letters:

"So that you would become as intoxicated with my love as the heat of the Sun matures a young flower. I want you to miss me, I want you to be mine — mine — Sunlit." (Sruoga 1921: P5146).

"If only you were here, I would crown you with a white flower wreath that has a heady scent and you would be white and sunlit, my queen of flowers" (Ibid: P5139).

Sun is the antithesis of loneliness, misery, and longing:

"Where it is silent, there I'll be alone, alone, sun will not ever look at my window" (Sruoga 1922: P5167). —

“I have closed the blinds, I have drawn the curtains, and now no guests will come visit me...

Sunrays, sunrays are my visitors...

I talk with them and I keep silence with them and while I complain, they love me...” (Sruoga 1996: 94).

The variant of the sun symbol, fire, embodied life, creation, and love. It was stated in one of the letters:

“No, I will never forget the time you asked me: “but I gave you all — what else do you want?” — But I want a lot, I want the world to drown in the blue skies, I want the sky to descend on earth and like you, I want fire to burn in your eyes! I want fire to burn in your eyes! Then I will be! Then the mountains will be transparent and the heart will carry stars — then I will drown in love. “I gave you everything already!” Oh no! You couldn’t have given me everything because you don’t yet know who you are or what you possess! Even I, having thought about it all night, can’t find the words to tell you who you are to me and what you possess! And how can you give me the fire that burns in your eyes, that is invisible, that is eternal, that is inseparable from your essence! How can you give me the fire on which it depends whether the world should exist or not! That fire connects your body and soul... And it is slightly odd that when I kiss your body, as intoxicating its breath is ... — your smouldering fire will be the foundation of the eternal life!” (Sruoga 1920: 5135).

Several of Sruoga’s poems were close to this letter where the fire obtained the same meaning: fire was life (“The kindled life will not die” (Sruoga 1996: 35), fire was soul (“I ponder and ponder / I weave and I weave / If I glanced at you / Would the evening fire fade?” (Ibid: 147), fire was love (“Invisible flames / Without aching, painful wounds / Will grasp, cradle, fondle” (Ibid: 280), fire was passion (“That the poet’s overwhelming heart / Will set you on fire.” (Ibid: 331).

The aspiration of the love interest in the works was to be the source of happiness that gave the desire to live:

“I don’t even know how to tell you, but I want to tell you so much time and time again how I want to live because of you, how much I want to bloom because of you, how much I want to love and love even stronger! And it seems that even if I said that word for a thousand times, I could never tell you all that grows and blossoms in my heart — because of you, because of you!” (Sruoga 1922: P5164).

The prosperity of the soul and the desire to live was a frequent motive in Sruoga’s poetry:

“The wandering
Traveller’s soul
Hears a new birth
And blooms again...” (Sruoga 1996: 91).

Such sudden rebirth and joy was often related to dreams, visions, being in-between two worlds — ‘being alert’ in the texts (“And the vision in the night — / And the agony of exile — / I am awake, just for you!” (Ibid: 101) — “How often have I dreamed of you. Nights are so hot, it seems that I am alert in sleep — it seems I see you in my sleep! I cannot sleep at night, the song sings itself and I hurry somewhere in the gloom” (Sruoga 1924: P5238). Dream became an antithesis of a miserable, lonely life. Sruoga believed that one dreams of people who think of the dreamer a lot.

Similar doubts were presented in the poem ‘Passengers’ (“Upon the arrival — / Like a dream, as if she is alive — / She did not promise neither lilacs nor a wreath” (Sruoga 1996: 147). Dreams were not only bright, unexpected, but also passionate, intoxicating, intimate. The passion was described directly in the letters, kisses, hugs were mentioned:

“I turned on the light, I called you with my eyes, but you are not here, and yet I saw your eyes so clearly, I heard your heartbeat so well, I kissed you, my darling, so silently, your chest trembled so silently and gently... And I did not know if I was dreaming or if I was alert, it only seemed that you were there, right there, bright, young, my Vandukas... I still cannot believe, I think that you were with me, I think that you were alive — your spirit, your body...” (Sruoga 1922: P5169).

“And last night I had such a beautiful dream about you. You were so young, so beautiful, so pure! And I kept kissing you until oblivion, until nothingness — — — ... I wish I could have the same dream about you tonight!” (Sruoga 1924: P5236).

Dreams were sensual in poetry as well but they were conveyed more subtly here:

“A dear echo of the loved one
Will flutter in silence —
And the wreath will light up
With silent echoes
With crazy dreams
With heady glances” (Sruoga 1996: 127).

The metaphor of fire was often used to express the passion born in dreams in poems (“Let them know / That crowns are fluttering / That I burn in a green dream / That I flutter and sing!” (Ibid: 121).

Receiving a long awaited letter is another reason for joy:

“Once I receive your letter, I get some relief for my soul, I am calmer, I don’t feel actual fatigue and I can work much better! Just you write, Vandukas! ... Will I receive a letter from you? Or will I again be alone — alone — abandoned.” (Sruoga 1923: P5229).

It was difficult to pinpoint the actual mention of a letter in poetry, but one could presume that Sruoga labeled a letter from the loved one a ‘prophet of sun’:

“The first whiff, the first flowers of a new spring —
Bird cherries, cowslips, bindweeds...
...
New worries, graceful worries — new trumpets —
Have spilled a grey fog...
Pray, spirit... Fall and worship the upcoming morning...
The prophet of sun has arrived!” (Sruoga 1996: 62).

Daugirdaitė was often referred to as sun both in poetry and letters, on the other hand, ‘blooming flowers’, ‘spring’ were the words that Sruoga used to express undefinable joy. Joy and pain almost always were born out of love in Sruoga’s works.

Thereby, the significance of Apollonian symbols in Sruoga’s poetry and letters was very similar. Lyrical letters contained a lot of aesthetic moments due to which the analysed letters came close to poetry. Such concurrences helped us understand Sruoga’s creative work because the idea of his poems would not be as clear if not for slightly simpler metaphors, found in the simpler context of his letters.

Conclusion

First of all, regarding Balys Sruoga’s letters and poetry we could consider the scheme consisting of ‘reality-letter-fictional work’. It demonstrated the link between the reality and poetry through the spiritual link between friendship and love. A fictional work was the result of an actual real-life experience. A letter became in between. It was used to express the same idea, albeit not aesthetical or finalised as literature.

Second, both the lyrical subject of the poems and Sruoga auto-portrayed in the letters were very sensitive and emotional. They were distinguished by their complicated psychology and mood swings. Both subjects were close to the romantic and the symbolistic type of a poet. They were somewhere between the Dionysian and the Apollonian image, the reality and the dream. Sruoga was more open in the letters. He has tended to describe his feelings directly more often, but very poetic as well. He was a subject for self-assessment in the poems viewed and was regarded from the inside that turned into the lyrical subject.

The third conclusion was that, all the analysed works unfold Sruoga’s experiences. Misery, the pain of love caused by loneliness and longing,

and undefinable joy, resulting from love, dreams, and visions are most frequently conveyed through texts.

The final conclusion: the moral poetic architectonic relationship of Sruoga with the reality and his poetic worldview has been expressed compositionally, in a lyrical confessional poem.

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