

## THE UKRAINIAN LITERARY CANON: MYTH AND REALITY

Our thoughts are based on the following methodological principles:

- As the sum total of generally held historico-theoretical presumptions about a given national literary tradition, of aesthetic tastes and fancies, and also of certain market mechanisms, *at any given moment* **the contemporary literary canon** features a fixed nature and as such appears as a component of the national cultural tradition.
- **The contemporary literary canon** *undergoes modifications and changes*, which are heavily dependent on the dynamics of the national tradition itself, and on the logic of its evolution.
- **The contemporary national literary canon** is formed in a supra-national literary sphere both as an *imminent fact* of the given literary heritage as well as a *transcendental fact* of its socio-cultural and philosophical-aesthetic factors.
- **The literary canon** is not only an object for observation, but also a subject of the self-development of every national literature, and at any given time sets the initial parameters of most art forms and of philosophical-aesthetic meaning.

For the moment we will limit ourselves to the above and will attempt to explain the subheading of the paper, namely—what is myth and what is reality in terms of our speculative subject? Although we will later comment more on this, it is necessary to state at least **two theses** at this point. The first of these is that the proclamation of *the absence of a Ukrainian literary canon* appears as a negativistic myth. Acknowledged a priori, the above proclamation is explained in various ways, in particular by a weak and insufficiently developed critical discourse about our literature during the last two hundred years (pivotal in the formation of the contemporary literary canons of other European cultures). As we know, a third of these two centuries coincides with the Soviet period, with all of the falsifications characteristic of it. Thus, hardly anyone has seriously been concerned with the formation of the literary canon in Ukraine.

How can one provide a retort to the above? The formation of such a canon, in the fullness of its names and works, and most importantly, of its philosophical-aesthetic principles, began back in the 17th century through the efforts of the professors of the

Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. We can catalogue dozens of original courses in poetics, aesthetics, and rhetoric dedicated to the art of the word and its most representative examples. To date, some of these have been looked at (see Hryhorii Syvokin, *Old Ukrainian Poetics*, Kharkiv: Akta, 2001), but most—in Latin, Polish, and Old-Ukrainian (encompassing hundreds of documents—see Zoia Khyzhniak, *On the Paths of History: The Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Names of the XVII-XVIII c.*, Kyiv: 2001, pp. 11-18), located in the holdings of the Vernads'kyi Central Academic Library and the library of NaUKMA, still await study.

Later on, beginning with the works of M. Maksymovych, Sreznevsky, M. Tykhonrarov, A Pypin, O. Ohonovsky, M. Petrov, Ye. Dashkevych, the efforts of M. Kostomarov, P. Kulish, M. Drahomanov, and leading up to the fundamental studies of I. Franko, M Peretz, M. Hrushevsky, Lesia Ukrainka, including the modernistic criticism of M. Vorony, M Sribliansky, M. Yevshan, and of their opponent, S. Yefremov, Ukrainian literature was described in terms and concepts particular to romanticism, positivism, and early modernism just as carefully, as for instance, Polish literature was. It suffices to recall that Lesia Ukrainka first brought the concept of “neo-romanticism” into Slavic terrain from Germany in her 1900 study “New Social Drama” two years prior to Edward Porebowicz’s definition of it in his 1902 study “Polish Poetry of the New Century”.

But even in the 20th century’s most dramatic decades in Ukraine, we had D. Chyzhevsky, O. Biletsky, Yu. Mezhenka, A. Shamrai, M. Zerov, M. Drai-Khmara, M. Vozniak, Ye. Malaniuk, Yu. Lutsky, Yu. Sherekh, V. Petrov, M. Kostetsky, not to mention the presently active B. Rubchak, I. Fizer, H. Hrabovych, M. Tarnavsky, O. Ilnytsky, M. Pavlyshyn, and many others, whose combined achievements can in no way be qualified as a “weak critical discourse” about Ukrainian literature.

The second explanation for the mythical absence of the literary canon comes down to the relatively multilingual historical aspect of Ukrainian writing. Because of this, conclusions are reached regarding the discontinuity of the literary process over the past 1000 years, and a corresponding impossibility of a more or less acknowledged canon. D. Chyzhevsky, Yu. Shevelov,, V. Krekoten, M. Yatsenko, and in their wake O. Myshanych, L. Ushkalov, and Oksana Pakhlovska have seemingly answered the intentionally accentuated contradictions of this situation. Regardless, we continue to endeavor to convince the scholarly world community that the Latin and Polish of the 17th-18th centuries, and the in-part Russian of the 19th century do not contradict civilizational literary continuity, **if it is understood in philosophical-psychological categories of the national mentality rather than solely in linguistic terms.**

Indeed, apart from the use of Church-Slavic (the de facto “bookish” language of Eastern Europe) and Old-Ukrainian in the ancient and Kozak Chronicles (Hrabiianka’s, Velychko’s, and others), Ukrainian writers universally availed themselves of Latin and Polish (their efforts are detailed in R. *Polish-Language Ukrainian Poetry from the End of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the Beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Krakow: PAN, 1996). Does this contradict the formation of Ukrainian aesthetic Baroque paradigms with corresponding lists of names and works? Probably no more than the Latin-language work of Mikolay Rei contradicts the formation of Polish Renaissance paradigms.

We will add here, that according to the observations of D. Chyzhevsky, truly Ukrainian morphological forms of nouns already prevail in the *Izbornyk* of 1076 (See D. Chyzhevsky, *The History of Ukrainian Literature: From the Beginnings to the Age of Realism*, Ternopil: Present, pp. 102-105). V. Nimchuk has noted that practically all phonetic traits of 13th century Ukrainian, including traces of its Halych dialect, are visible in the text of the Yevseiev Gospel of 1283. S. K. Rosovetsky has convincingly shown the presence of Ukrainian language forms (phonetic, morphological, and lexical) in the text of “The Ihor Tale”. (See S. K. Rosovetsky, “‘The Ihor Tale’ in the Context of Succession Relations”, *Rad. Literaturoznavstvo* (1985), No.7, pp. 28-33). I Ohienko identifies 30% of the lexemes of one of the oldest examples of Ukrainian writing—*The Tale of Bygone Years*—as genuinely Ukrainian, that is, they show the original lexical basis of Ukrainian.

In other words, Old Ukrainian is present in the discourse of ancient Church Slavic texts. Because of this Yu. Shevelov is firmly convinced of the existence of the parallel functioning of a bookish Church Slavic and a living conversational Old Ukrainian language (See Yu Shevelov, *The Historical Phonology of the Ukrainian Language*, translated from the English by S. Vakulenko and A. Danylenko, Kharkiv: Akta, 2002, and the same author’s “On the Origin of the Belorussian language, “Phonema Errans”, and others). All of this can be naturally extrapolated onto the rest of Ukrainian literature’s “bookish” languages, and relegates the linguistic argument to the margins of the polemic on the continuity of the literary process.

We will return to myths later. For the time being, however, we will discuss the second thesis, regarding the undeniable reality of the subject at hand. This is, in our view, the present-day **openness** and **unconserved nature** of the Ukrainian literary canon, which in the last decade has passed *from existing in a state of academic stability to a state of critical urgency*. This does not represent a crisis of the subject or the loss of it, but only a meticulous revision of its various aspects. It does not place under doubt the presence of the representative and established high achievements of Ukrainian literature, but indicates

a change in their configuration, in part of the configuration of the canonic whole, and correspondingly, the polemization of scholarly-critical thought surrounding the Ukrainian literary canon.

The universally evident reasons for this are the long-anticipated rebirth of Ukrainian statehood, the fundamental change of ideology in Ukrainian society, a review of the methodological bases of research on literature and a whole complex of accompanying factors. What problems and activity have come to the forefront in light of these radical socio-historical and world-outlook changes? Which literary ages are they applicable to in the first place? How are they shown? Who, and for what reasons, initiates them? We will attempt to shed light on some of these questions below.

At the turn of 20th-21st centuries two epochs—the oldest, 11th-13th century epoch (representing the beginnings of writing and the origins of the Ukrainian literary tradition), and the 20th century (the ideologically mutant, spiritually devastated, and textually robbed age of totalitarianism), have proven to be the most “unconserved” and open for polemics. Almost all polemics apropos the oldest literature are caused not so much by the emergence of new artifacts (although we will have something to say on this), as they are by the natural need to ascertain the genealogical model for the cultural development of Eastern Slavs.

The former model was established in line with the views of M. Karamzin, M. Pogodin, S. Solovev, and other Russian thinkers, and based itself on the postulate of the historical unity of East Slavs. The question regarding the ethnocultural ownership of Kyivan Rus’s literary milestones thus disappeared in view of the concept of “Old Rus’ian”. This concept would perhaps satisfy the most demanding of academic circles even today, if it were not for two factors.

First, if it were not implicitly identified with only one ethnic group—the Russian, which in a conceptual, imperialistically defined unity and self-identity, simply did not exist at the time. Second, if notwithstanding its quality of manifested cultural tolerance, this concept did not signify the absolute privatization of the Kyivan literary heritage by Russian literature—as its own undoubted historical starting position. It’s the same old story—like with Ukrainian history! But more than enough reasons exist to call into question the correctness of such an usurpation. Is that not why D. Lichachev, V. Vynogradov, B. Rybakov, and others so intently turn their attention to Novgorod, Smolensk, Pskov, etc. in their search for the author of “The Ihor Tale”, in this attempting to regard it as the starting point for the Russian literary canon? In other words, this genealogical line has been twisted totally out of proportion.

Yu. Shevelov always maintained the natural “division of Old Eastern Slavic writing into separate streams, Ukrainian and Russian; the simple principle of the unity of tradition on a single territory; the linkage between territory and the written word—which meant that Ilarion belonged to the Ukrainian tradition and Luka Zhydiata to the Novgorodian-Russian, and that the “Ihor Tale” was ours and not theirs. I continue to regard this to be a productive principle.” (Yu. Shevelov [**Yuriy Sherekh**], *I—Me—For Me (and Around Again)*, V.1. In Ukraine—Kharkiv—New York: M.P. Kots Publishers, 2001, p. 155). M. Hrushevsky, D. Chyzhevsky, S. Hordynsky, L. Makhnovets, M. Vozniak, and others, were all of the same opinion. B. Yatsenko stresses: “it was M. Hrushevsky who wrote that even from the times of M. Maksymovych and V. Belinsky, “The Ihor Tale” was thought to be a clearly Ukrainian literary document, and only later did it become a political “ace in the hand”, which, as Russian scholars openly noted, ‘was necessary to rip out of Ukrainian hands’” (B. Yatsenko, “In the Grips of One’s Own Mystifications (about articles by E. Keenan and H. Hrabovych)”, *Slovo i Chas* (2002), No. 5, p.28).

Indeed, the entire Ukrainian chronicle tradition, by its nature, belongs to old-Ukrainian culture, being imbued with the topoi and eidola of the Kyivan, and later Halytsko-Volynian Princedoms, aesthetically and poetically analogous, inseparable from the folkloric and mythological worlds of the Poliany, Drevliany, Siveriany, Ulychi, and other natives of ancient Ukraine-Rus’. Parallel oral folk tradition and written culture serves as testimony to the latter—“antiquities” (in the words of D. Chyzhevsky), ritual songs, the heroic epic, featuring its leading hero (Chernihovite Illia Muromets/Murovets), etc.. 11th—13th century genre tradition—“teachings”, “odes”, direct literary reference to canonic texts (“The Ihor Tale”, Volodymyr Monomakhs teaching “About the Law and Grace,” *Chronicles of Bygone Years*) in 14th—17th century chronicles and Ukrainian baroque literature (see B. Yatsenko, *The Ihor Tale and its Age*, Kyiv: Vyd. Oleny Telihiy, 2000, pp. 14-63, **S. K. Rosovetsky**, “The Ihor Tale in the Context of Succession Relations”, *Radianske Literaturoznavstvo* (1985), No. 7, pp. 26-35) are evidence of this. It is here that we find the origins of the Ukrainian literary canon, because, as we all know, melons do not grow on peach trees.

That the influence of old Ukrainian culture on the formation of the old Russian literary tradition (Zadonshchyna, the writings of Klyment Smoliatych, Serapion Volodymyrsky, Yosep Volocky and others) is absolute and definitive, must be acknowledged. The decisive role of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in the birth of learning and education in Russia must be recognized with the same directness and gratitude that Polish thought in the arts recognizes the benevolence of Czech cultural influence on the further development of its own culture in the 13th-14th centuries.

It is something else altogether that the above represents an old and highly politicized problem, charged with imperialist emotion and undying Slavophile whimsy (see **Andrei Walicki**, *In the Grips of a Conservative Utopia*). The Ukrainian side of the equation is at times complicated by a culture-shaping romanticism. An indication of this is the erstwhile introduction into the literary canon of the *Book of Veles*, something which has evoked sharp criticism among authoritative Slavists (See H. Hrabovych, “In the Footsteps of National Mystifications”, *Krytyka* (2001), No. 6 (44), pp. 14-23).

We should duly note that the *Book of Veles* has been adopted by Russian cultural thought since 1960, and later 1976, with even greater determination. We can today find over 100 Russian-language internet sites on the *Book of Veles* (e.g., see <http://paganism.ru/vlesbook.htm>) in addition to 2 editions of the text itself (*Nauka i Religia*, Moscow, 1992, and *Menedzer*, Moscow, 1995), and a plethora of publications by B. A. Gebinder, V. Torop, V. Gritskov, A. Platov, D. Gavrilov... This, however, is a concern of Russian culture, whose greatest authorities (D. S. Ligachev and O. V. Tvorogov) have not recognized the authenticity of the *Veles* text.

We are interested in something else—in view of similar cultural collisions, a tendency has arisen to expel various landmark old-Ukrainian texts from the Ukrainian literary canon into the realm of literary mystification. This is especially the case with “The Ihor Tale” (See Edward Keenan, “A Word About How Yaroslav, Prince of Halych, Shot at Sultans”, *Krytyka* (2000) No. 12 (58), pp. 4-7, **H. Hrabovych**, “The Eternal Return of Mystification” *Krytyka* (2001), Nos. 1-2, pp. 6-10). Such a view, as any other of course, has the right to exist. If, however, we regard the canon as a productive, content and form-shaping substance (as we do), the literary-referent evidence of the 13th-20th century time-frame is absolutely and categorically more significant than the lack of a bone fide original—which constitutes the main argument of the opponents of the “Tale’s” authenticity.

Proof of the authenticity of “The Ihor Tale” in our view is the immense generative capability of this text, its reference points, motifs, themes, aesthetics, and poetics—which run through the entire extant literary heritage from ancient times until the present day. Moreover, the scholarly concerns of “The Ihor Tale” should not be modeled on the scandalously-sensational case of the *Book of Veles*, as is done by H. Hrabovych. Its premature introduction into some school curricula indeed deserves condemnation—but why the comparison with *The Ihor Tale*? And in light of such quasi-scholarly shenanigans why has *The Ihor Tale* become such a thorn in the side of those who rush to label it a falsification, as they do the *Book of Veles*? What is the reason behind these knee-jerk

comparisons? We have our own explanation. But the whole question, it seems, ventures beyond the realm of literary scholarship.

Ukrainian Renaissance and Baroque literature represents a completely ratified historico-aesthetic bloc, with its list of greatest authorities. This list is widely reflected by various anthologies, and has been conscientiously studied by various Ukrainian researchers: D. Nalyvaiko, L. Ushkalov, Yu. Barabash, O. Maksymovych, V. Lytvynov., M. Sulyma, V. Ishchenko, Yu. Peleshenko, and others. Among the most popular anthologies we can single out V. Shevchuk's *Apollo's Rage*, or an anthology *Old Ukrainian literature*, edited by M. Sulyma (1996); among more recent scholarly studies—L. Ushkalov's *From the History of Ukrainian Literature of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Kharkiv: Akta, 1999).

Today, this perhaps age of highest achievement for Ukrainian culture, is presented to the world by the prose of Ivan Vyshensky and Meletii Smotrytsky, the poetry of Stefan Yavorsky and Hryhory Skovoroda, the oratorical prose of Inokenti Haliatovsky and Antony Radyvylovsky, Dymytry Tuptalo's hagiography, and the dramaturgy of Feofan Prokopovych, Mytrofan Dovhalevsky, Mykhailo Kozachynsky, and others. More fully studied in their philosophical-aesthetic and genre-stylistic aspects, these texts exert multifarious influence on today's literary experiments, which range from V. Shevchuk's neo-baroque poetry and Ye. Pashkovsky's intellectually orgiastic texts to I. Kalynets's sumptuous poetic constructions, I. Yov's avant-garde visual poetry, M. Miroshnychenko's and I. Luchuk's curiosity poems, and others.

The 19th century corpus of romantic and positivist literature appears to be universally acknowledged in a similar way, complemented perhaps, by earlier proscribed and unpublished works by T. Shevchenko (especially the poems "The Great Vault", "The Plundered Grave", "Standing in the Village of Subotiv...", "If it were You", "Drunken Bohdan", and others), P. Kulish (*The Black Council*, various poems), I. Franko (especially the poem "The Funeral" and the following scholarly studies: "Within the Realm of the Possible", and "What is Progress"), and works by B. Hrinchenko, V. Samiilenko, Ya. Shchokoliv, and others. Also making a return into the cultural fold are the philosophical-cultural heritages of M. Kostomarov, M. Drahomanov and entire ranks of Halych cultural activists.

At this point in history what we are seeing is not so much a review of the status of works, as a review of their critical reception. Examples of such a process are H. Hrabovych's *Shevchenko as Mythmaker*, Oksana Zabuzhko's *Shevchenko's Myth of Ukraine: An Attempt at a Philosophical Analysis* (Kyiv: Abrys, 1997), and T.

Hundorova's Franko—*Not a Stone Mason* (Melbourne, 1996). These titles are in themselves symptomatically indicative of the tendency to radically modify thinking apropos certain canonic monuments of 19th century Ukrainian literature, or even of entire cultural periods (see **T. V. Bovsuniska**, *The Phenomenon of Ukrainian Romanticism, Part I: Theogenesis and Ethnogenesis*, Kyiv: 1997). This of course, represents a reaction against the intellectual shortcomings and ideologization of previous interpretations. Romantic and positivist literature, it could be said, are simultaneously fields of refined intellectual polemics, subtle maxims and subtle rhetorical gestures, which in no way infringe upon generally accepted canonical high achievements.

The landscape of 20th century literature appears altogether differently—disheveled, cubically altered, quartered and shimmering. It is not so much post-totalitarian (in its artistically meaningful part it never was flesh and blood totalitarian), as it is brushed away from totalitarianism by the global winds of history. Bibliographic call-cards glisten in the wind like aspen leaves, with no certainty yet as to how they will fall into place.

The situation in the present-day professional academic community, which we will attempt to characterize below, is completely natural, even more so, typical. “Okay”, says the researcher of the history of Ukrainian literature to his colleague, “list the names of our prose writers, whose body of work, in your opinion, beyond any doubt belongs to the 20th century literary canon”. “Everyone”? asks the colleague, “or only the most important and those who undeniably belong there”. “Only the most important and those who no doubt belong there”. “In that case we have: V. Stefanyk, O. Kobylanska, V. Pidmohylny, M. Khvylovy, V. Domontovych, O. Dovzhenko, H. Tiutiunyk, V. Zemliak, V. Shevchuk...” “How about Ulas Samchuk”? “Samchuk? Perhaps, although personally I agree with the view of Yu. Shevelov, who as you may remember, maintained that ‘most of his novels with the exception, perhaps, of *Maria*, and to some extent *Volyn*, will be forgotten. Although the fashion for crude, ponderous novels may return in the future” (in Yu. Sherekh, “I—Me—For Me”, V. 2, p. 100). “And how about I. Bahriany”. “What about Bahriany?—A great natural talent with the minimum of culture”, as Yu. Shevelov comments (in Yu. Sherekh, “I—Me—For Me”, V. 2, p. 177). “Sure” is the response, although the colleague adds, “without Bahriany MUR (The Ukrainian Artistic Movement) would not have been what it was, and our literature would not have been what it was” (ibid, p. 181). “Is this good or bad?” “I don’t know—I’ll think about it”.

Let us now postulate a similar dialogue on the subject of dramaturgy. “What do you mean who?—We know who: Lesia Ukrainka, V. Vynnychenko, M. Kulish, O. Kolomiets, although I have certain doubts about the last”. “That’s it?” “Yes, you want to hear about

those engraved into the canon, not simply the talented”. “True, but what then are we to do with Yu. Kosach, regardless of his political lack of principle? The aforementioned by you Yu. Shevelov has the following to say about Yu. Kosach’s prose and dramaturgy: “These pieces belong among the finest examples of Ukrainian literature. Perhaps they are not currently published, or even read—but they will live on in the future” (in Yu. Sherekh, “I—Me—For Me”, V. 2, p. 136). “Well, perhaps if you have in mind *A Play about Yury the Victor* and *The Order...* maybe I haven’t decided yet for myself”. “Okay, although the case of Kosach is delicate, what about the absurdist dramas of the relatively early and ideologically entirely noble V. Dibrova?” “True, they haven’t been staged, they have hardly ‘happened’!” “What? 15 years in print and they have yet to ‘happen’?” “Some have been around for 15 years, others for 2. Just the same—they haven’t ‘happened’”.

And finally—apropos poetry: “This genre is our richest. Here even the average person knows that the canon consists of P. Tychyna, M. Rylsky, M. Zerov, Ye. Pluzhnyk, B. I. Antonych, Lina Kostenko, I. Drach...” “And Vinhranovsky?” “Of course, Vinhranovsky too”. “Well then, Malaniuk also?” “Malaniuk is not as certain, because when you think about it, Yu. Sherekh was right in maintaining that ‘Malaniuk was nothing but play’” (in Yu. Sherekh, “I—Me—For Me”, V. 2, p. 107). “But you’re not being entirely truthful, as Yu. Sherekh maintained that ‘**my** Malaniuk was nothing but play’. He later adds that ‘in all of this it is impossible not to see another side. When the life of a person and the work of a poet are play and nothing but play—this in itself already constitutes life and poetry, and not play. This is the paradox of Malaniuk, through which he became a chapter in the history of Ukrainian spirituality, poetry, and culture. Someone should come along who would be able to show the person and the poet through play and beyond it. Beyond artificial posturing and cheap pathos, that would indicate yes, there was a living person, a personal style and suffering—everything real’” (in Yu. Sherekh, “I—Me—For Me”, V. 2, p. 107).

Now imagine that present at these conversations is not only the summoned to our support Yu. Shevelov, one of our greatest 20th century minds, but an ordinary teacher of letters, a college lecturer, philology student, or comparativist colleague from Europe or America who is just beginning to discover Ukrainian literature—this terra incognita of Western literary scholarship. What are they to do faced with such a plethora of opinion? How are they, in the midst of such polemical incertitude, to determine the main and the most important? What can they rely on? Indeed, “someone should come along”, more accurately, “some should come along”.

Let us attempt to fathom the main reasons for such particular diversity of opinion

about 20th century Ukrainian literature. The first reason will not even be the complete change in worldview and ideology occurring from the middle of the 1980s (the *perebudova* era), but rather, the complex, acute, and to this day relevant problems represented by tradition and originality—in a narrower sense, of the earlier traditions of realism and modernism, or even more narrowly—of the interaction of the 19th century in origin rustic, and modern aesthetic outlooks. We regard the pivotal opposition of the rustic to the modern to be one of the central problems of the formation of the literary canon.

The process of modernism in Ukraine, still in progress, has touched upon many of the fundamental socio-political and morally-aesthetic principles of the very existence of literature in this part of Europe, and is therefore uniquely dramatic in many of its aspects. Many, often diametrically opposed practices in Ukrainian literary thinking must now reach consensus.

Indeed, M. Khvylovy's "Eurasian Renaissance" and some aspects of VAPLITE (Free Academy of Proletarian Literature) are paralleled by the consequential national mythmaking of the Prague and Warsaw circles of poets. A. Holovko's and S. Tudor's realistic prose is countered by the avant-garde prose of D. Buzko (*Holland*, 1929), H. Shkurupy (*A Door into the Day*, 1928) and M. Yohansen (*Doctor Leonardo's Journey...*, 1930), which is being restored to its rightful historic place, and is representative of the restoration to its rightful place of an entire approach, as is the case with the literary avant-garde of the 20s and 30s. Many writers and critics find it strange that the socially aware writings of the "sixties generation", one of whose main contributions was the preservation of the living Ukrainian language, coincides in time with the autolectic searches of the New York Group and the aesthetic self-sufficiency of the Kyiv School. Or that these latter phenomena deserve at least as much attention on their own merits as does the "sixties generation". The realistic-psychological paradigms of Hryhor Tiutiunnyk, A. Dimarov, B. Blyznets, V. Minialo, V. Drozd and others decisively challenge the dissemination of Ye. Pashkovsky's stream of consciousness, O. Lesheha's and Yu. Izdryk's surrealist modeling and post-modern scattering of sense, which in turn undermine the ontological truth of the post-war epic novel (O. Honchar, M. Stelmakh).

These, of course, are not alternatives, but normal aesthetic-stylistic divergences, on whose richness the full-bloodedness of literature depends. But the point is that these and other forms of the literary self-expression of the individual and of society are still understood as oppositions, as alternatives. Average critical opinion continues to be bound by the illusion of the "most appropriate", "most useful", and "most productive" style. For

whom and for what is it the most?

Here is where the entire complexity of the modern re-accentuation of methodology, and correspondingly, the reordering of the literary canon, appears. It is necessary to accept the fact of the limited life-span of works, that the literary catalogue contains a section entitled “The Historical Heritage”, which in no way duplicates the section entitled “The Canon”. T. Adorno was correct in saying that “if art were to free itself of the once comprehensible illusion of immortality, if it were to interiorize its temporality in sympathy with ephemeral life, it would better correspond to a conception of truth imagined not as something abstractly lasting, but with a realization of its temporal nature” (cited in **T. Adorno**, *The Theory of Aesthetics*, Kyiv: Solomia Pavlychko’s OSNOVY, 2002, p.46).

We are extrapolating this idea onto the sphere of the reception of literature with the intention of showing that the formation of the contemporary literary canon directly depends on new ideas about the temporality of literary phenomena. The above mentioned diversity of approaches and styles is **but the background** against which this process of methodological reorientation occurs. Thus, the socialist-realist novels of O. Honchar or M. Stelmakh, the poetic scribblings of V. Shvets, P. Doroshko, I. Muratova, N. Tykhy, the dramaturgy of I. Mykytenko, M. Zarudny, or O. Levada (not to mention O. Korniiichuk) in all certainty belong to the historical heritage, and with equal certainty do not belong to the literary canon, as they are not today (and perhaps never were) subjects of the formation of national aesthetic thought.

The second reason for the fragmentation of the canonic picture of 20th century Ukrainian literature that was imposed upon society by Soviet criticism and the entire secondary and post-secondary education system is the cardinal change in ideology, which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. It would seem that everything here is sufficiently clear as to not warrant commentary—the Soviet totalitarian epoch slides into the past and takes along with it its useless iconostases. M. Mavlyshyn clearly saw and wrote about this back in 1992. (See M. Pavlyshyn, “The Canon and the Iconostasis”, *Svito-Vyd* (1992) V. 3, No. 8, pp. 69-81). However, in regard to genuinely artistic works, and not the literary fluff of P. Panch or I. Le, everything is not quite so clear. First, let us separate the artist and his/her tolerance of the political system from the product of his/her literary efforts. A typical example from our neighboring and close Polish literature is served by J. Iwaskewicz, who the current literary establishment prefers not to mention in positive terms. At the same time, no attempt is being made to eradicate his novels of the 1930s (*The Birch Forest*, *The Mill Over the River Loss*, and others) from the 20th century Polish literary canon—for the reason that they represent potent philosophical-psychological

prose, whose aesthetic “radiation” is ongoing.

It is similarly necessary to differentiate M. Bazhan, Soviet academician and author of the highly socialist-realist “poem” “By the Tower of Assumption” from the poet M. Bazhan, author of “The Blind”, one of the 20th century’s most powerful poems. Such considerate, thoughtful, and careful review of the literary heritage of the 20th century is a continuing concern needing time and considerable intellectual effort. At the same time, an anthology of 20th century Ukrainian poetry (*A Hundred Years of Youth*, 2001, edited by Olha Luchuk and Mykhailo Naidan), in which the lion’s share of poetry was translated especially for this edition, has appeared in the U.S.. It is a good book with a panoramic outlook. It is commendable that enthusiasts came together to publish it. A. Malyshko, unfortunately, is absent from this panoramic view of the 20th century. We are well aware of all of the contradictions regarding this figure, but are no less convinced that it is precisely in his later work, in the lyrics of his “second” and genuine incarnation (the collections *The Road Under the Maples*, 1964, *The Red Rue*, 1966, *The Blue Chronicle*, 1968, *The August of my Soul*, 1970) that the conflict of official ideology and national morality found a uniquely rich and artistically potent procedural resonance.

Were the editors not interested in the question of whether during the span of “a hundred years of youth” (automatically set against “a hundred years of loneliness”) “the poetic Ukrainian soul” was at any time actively opposed to asinine Soviet ideology? Not with works, examples of which are thankfully abundant, but “within works” — procedurally? And if they were in opposition, than how, and from what vantage points is this evident? And were the ramifications of this artistic collision of ideology and morality always painful for art, as all of us have come to think? Probably not. The editors did not follow the matter through, because all of the answers are to be found in the later Malyshko, who because of his earlier declarative Sovietness is totally absent from this anthology. Instead, M. Orest is present in five poems, “dead, precise poems” (Yu. Sherekh). Also present is M. Miroschnyenko, whose palindrome is not recreated here in English, K. Moskalets, thankfully, is present here (if only in one poem as compared to R. Baboval’s six), but no Malyshko with his later “heavenly flute”. Perhaps in time, when we are capable of reading the later Malyshko, we will dedicate a minute out of “a hundred years of Ukrainian youth” to him...

In addition, the entire problem of a comprehensive review of the national literary heritage of the 20th century features two inseparable aspects: the cleansing of the image of literature of **socialist-realist rubbish** (which is absolutely necessary and timely) goes hand-in-hand with the return into its womb of tabooed names and works, where

everything is far from being of equal merit and artistic accomplishment. There is nothing strange about the fact that new iconostases are being brought into the Ukrainian house of being—ideologically correct, but of low artistic merit. The poetry of M. Orest can serve as an example, as can Yu. Klen's literary heritage ("The Cursed Years", and "Ashes of the Empire"), which has undeniable historical publicistic value, but cannot stand alongside Bazhan's "The Blind", T. Osmachka's "The Poet", or Lina Kostenko's "Marusia Churai".

We would like to remind the distinguished audience that in the 1930s alone, almost 250 active Ukrainian writers were physically liquidated, a number that almost equals the entire membership of the Ukrainian Writers' Union at its founding in 1932 (See Yu. Iavrinenko, "The Assassinated Renaissance", Paris: *Biblioteka Kultury*, V. 37 (1959), pp. 11-12). In 35 post-war years, new ranks of persons were eliminated from literature, and not infrequently—from life itself (V. Stus, M. Kholodny, the entire "Kyivan School"...). Thus, this return into literary circulation of tabooed names and works (which in turn foresees "internal aesthetic selection", is natural, although its time is yet to come) changes in full sight the *entire horizon of reader expectations*, breeds new criteria in the approach to the predictable "domestic consumer", and heightens the discerning capability of the critical ocular. Indeed, V. Domontovych's intellectual prose certainly displaces from its first place position the romantic webs of Yu. Yanovsky (having in mind his *Horsemen*) and M. Kulish's dramaturgy forces us to see the work of M. Zarudny, O. Kolomiets, and Yu. Mushketyk in a different, ironic perspective. Nevertheless, following this scheme, V. Dibrova's absurdist dramaturgy and O. Lesheha's philosophical dramaturgy are more highly appraised. And so on.

The third factor is the supra-national literary context—international literary thought, which is now used to gauge great achievements of Ukrainian writing. For example, in 2000, the "entire" St.-Jean Pers was published (Kyiv: Univers), translated by M. Moskalenko. The rustically smart-aleck poetry of M. Shevchenko or O. Lupiy cannot compete with the inquisitive luminescence of Perse's poetry, although V. Kordun's mythological verse enters into a dialogue with it on equal footing. The prose of G. Fowles, P. Susskind, M. Pavych, M. Kundera practically conditions the ironic reception of O. Syzenko or Hryhory Tiutiunnyk, whereas the writings of V. Medvid, V. Portiak or Yu. Andrukhovych naturally fall into the gravitational field of these and other artistic masterpieces.

Ukrainian literature has rid itself of imperialistically imposed "provincial lowerings of standards" and the "special privileges" absolutely necessary in terms of so-called Soviet

literature, or in the singular form—literatures of the nations of the USSR. Today, it self-sufficiently presents itself on the world literary stage—and this presentation foresees no handicap factor. Consequently, phenomena and tendencies of world literature—in its universally accepted examples, that is—the supra-national context, exert a determining influence on the Ukrainian literary canon. After the first two decades of the 20th century, which were followed by a national genocide, both physical and cultural, Ukrainian literature is for the first time returning into a relationship of dialogue with what in comparativistics is traditionally termed world literature. And the everlasting ramifications of this dialogue will result in the universally evident dynamic of artistic greatness. The dramaturgy of Lesia Ukrainka, V. Vynnychenko, and M. Kulish are being confirmed in their canonic quality, while the dramaturgy of I. Korniiichuk is irreparably losing its position.

This openness to the world, renewed in the 1990s, complicates the process of the stabilization of the image of literature with a fourth factor, namely—post-modern ill-will, and more precisely—the absolute post-modern refusal to accept any canon whatsoever. Nevertheless, a way out of this quandary is proposed by J.-P. Leotard, who rightfully distinguishes the despised by the post-modern consciousness notion of consensus (“all say ‘yeah’”) and the idea of fairness, implicitly implanted into the concept of the canon: “Consensus has become a tired and suspect value. It is quite something else with fairness. It is thus necessary to arrive at an idea [...] of fairness, which would not be associated with the notion and practice of consensus” (cited in Josef Syczynski, *The God of the Postmodernists*, Lublin: KUL (2001). P. 18). Ukrainian cultural practice, however, especially in its young wing, has not heard of this, and instead toys with “overthrowing from the pedestals of the present” everything that carries weight, thereby creating the desired racket during the fall.

*The Return of the Demiurges/Pleroma 3'98/A Small Ukrainian Encyclopaedia of Relevant literature* (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileia NV, 1998) serves as a typical example. Any serious criticisms of this “encyclopaedia” are neutralized by its playfully-ironic character, which instantly re-addresses any critical seriousness to the addressee as a sign of her/his own inadequacy. This post-modern self-defence mechanism could nevertheless have worked, if only the editors had been more consequential by *shirking* the notion of consensus. But they *fail to shirk* it—consensus screams out about itself in every article, demanding the recognition of the overblown, like a hot-air balloon, “Stanislav Phenomenon”— and the belittling of everything that is not. This strays very far from Leotard’s idea of fairness.

In a broader field of critical publications (I. Bondar-Tereshchenko, V. Yeshkilev and others) a similar total “acentrality” often becomes simply nihilistic superiority and snobism, which introduces new commotion into an, even without it, disputable critical discourse about 20th century Ukrainian literature. Such a manner of boorish subjectivism in the area of the formation of thought about the national literary heritage has been exhaustively characterized by the aforementioned Josef Zycynski, who notes the following: “there is no doubt that it is possible to find an entire category of people, who in a delyonosian manner feel themselves to be uprooted from history and will not be able to define any substantial goals in their life’s topography. No reasons can be seen, however, which would conspire to make this kind seem indicative of the species *homo sapiens*” (Ibid. p. 58).

And now the final and fifth, and perhaps most unbearable reason for today’s decomposition of the 20th century literary canon. We have in mind the amorphy, perfunctoriality, and haphazardness of the social existence of Ukrainian literature in the form of stable book publishing, the press, critical reception, interaction between literary production and other art-forms, etc. Apart from other things, the canon is a subject, and requires the ability to drive artistic impulse—successful and unsuccessful, productive and sterile, experimental and polemical—all kinds, as long as it is uninterrupted and perpetual. The canon *thirsts for the word*.

In the absence of cultural policies in the country, which would aid such perpetuity and frontality, the literary canon ceases to imminently declare itself. It becomes transcendental towards every cultural phenomenon *hic et nunc*, which conditions its functional lack of presence. This may not impede the literary professional in his/her work, but the canon is least of all addressed to the expert—its living, creative function is orientated towards society in general.

Thus, for the reasons outlined, the Ukrainian literary canon, especially of the 20th century, is open, and finds itself at the crystallization stage. A first step was the publication of the last *Academic History of Ukrainian Literature of the XX Century*, edited by V. H. Donchyk (2nd. Printing, 2 vlms., Kyiv: Lybid, 1998), the goal of which was to portray the literary heritage as fully as possible—sans any, and premature for the 1990s—pretenses regarding the establishment of a canon. Strangely, some literary scholars did not want to understand this. Close to 200 literary personages were highlighted in all of the fullness of their creative heritage, many of them *for the first time*. Is this not a path to an aesthetically hierarchical picture of the century? Is it not fair to first of all list everyone essentially partaking in the creation of the 20th century Ukrainian

literary context, and to render judgment only after that?

Will the history of the entirety of Ukrainian literature, planned by the NUAA Institute of Literature arrive at canonic consensus? Without doubt no, as this would contradict the nature of the genre of historico-literary research, which by definition should highlight *various* phenomena and *various* magnitudes. This, however, in no way hinders us, in the case of practical need, to reduce the complex picture of the national literature with functional category—that, which we could present to the world with a light heart, if even without societal consensus, but in keeping with national historical fairness. In the words of V. Vynnychenko, by being honest with ourselves.