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Elite Trends in the Literary Scholarship of Post-Independence Ukraine

Elite Trends in the Literary Scholarship of Post-Independence Ukraine. This paper examines Ukrainian literary scholarship in the post-independence period and points to the methodological chasm that occurred between the younger generation of literary critics (the new elite) and the academic establishment (the old elite). It argues, however, that both elites, despite being methodologically apart, share the same concerns for the well-being of Ukrainian national culture.

Keywords: literary elites, psychoanalytical literary criticism, academic literary studies, post-Chornobyl library, post-independence Ukraine

Елітарні тренди в українському літературознавстві після незалежності. У цій статті розглядаю низку вибраних напрямів в українському літературознавстві періоду незалежності та вказую на методологічну розбіжність між молодшим поколінням критиків (нова еліта) й академічним істаблішментом (стара еліта). Однак, настоюю на тому, що незважаючи на факт, що обидві групи стоять на протилежних методологічних позиціях, й одні, й другі поділяють ту саму турботу за благополуччя української національної культури.

Ключові слова: Літературні еліти, психоаналітична літературна критика, академічне літературознавство, післячорнобильська бібліотека, незалежна Україна

The fall of the Soviet empire and collapse of the communist ideology brought about enormous opportunities for open-minded scholars to reassess their under-

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standing of the social role of literary work and enable them to revisit the established canon of Ukrainian literature. At the same time, from the very beginning, Western literary scholars of Ukrainian descent and literary scholars of the younger generation in Ukraine have been eager to introduce new reading strategies, from postcolonial to feminist theories, engaging with equal enthusiasm psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and identity politics. In fact, it is possible to discern a couple of distinct interpretive turns in the literary scholarship of the post-independence period, one being ‘postcolonial’, introduced first in the early 1990s by an Australian literary scholar with Ukrainian roots, Marko Pavlyshyn, and taken up later by an American scholar of Ukrainian extraction Vitaly Chernetsky, and the other turn being ‘feminist’, advanced tirelessly by Solomiia Pavlychko as early as 1991. While Pavlyshyn and Chernetsky represent Western reading strategies, Pavlychko and her female colleagues constitute a group determined to overhaul ideologized Soviet ways of interpretation from within the Ukrainian literary scholarship. Pavlychko’s article “Chy potribna ukrains’komu literaturoznavstvu feministychna shkola?” (“Чи потрібна українському літературознавстві феміністична школа?”), published in 1991¹, signaled a turn to feminism as a viable reading strategy and initiated a very productive critical paradigm, subsequently taken up by other female scholars, namely Tamara Hundorova, Vira Aheieva, and Nila Zborovska. Arguably, their propositions constitute the most interesting reading strategies in the post-independence period, especially for Ukrainian modernism and women authors.

While postcoloniality and feminism no doubt represent the two, perhaps best known, innovative interpretive approaches in Ukrainian criticism since independence, in this paper I want to focus on a few other elite trends within that realm, which have emerged alongside generational and ideological fault lines. On the one hand, there is psychoanalytical literary criticism, as championed by the late Nila Zborovska, and the postmodernist conceptualization of the post-Chornobyl library put forth by Tamara Hundorova; on the other hand, there is an academic literary establishment that by and large adheres to old ways of interpretation, although, admittedly, there are also a few notable exceptions, with Ivan Dziuba being the most conspicuous one. In fact, I argue in this article that despite being widely apart methodologically, Dziuba (the old elite) shares the same concerns for the well-being of Ukrainian national culture as his junior female colleagues, Hundorova and Zborovska (the new elite).

¹ This article appeared in the preeminent literary scholarly journal *Slovo i chas* (formerly known as *Radians’ke literaturoznavstvo*), 1991, no. 6, pp. 10–15, as part of a *Feminist Seminar*, in which two scholars other than Pavlychko participated, namely Tamara Hundorova and Vira Aheieva. Pavlychko’s article was posthumously reprinted in her book *Feminizm*, Kyiv 2002, pp. 19–27. *Feminizm* is a compilation of Pavlychko’s articles on feminism written between 1991 and 1999. It also compiles all the interviews and talks she gave to various newspapers, journals, and other media. Unfortunately, the editor of this anthology, Vira Aheieva, limits the bibliographical information to publication dates and does not provide the original sources of the reprinted material.

Psychoanalysis and the Post-Chornobyl Library

In the second edition of *Dyskurs modernizmu v ukrains'kii literaturi* (*Дискурс модернізму в українській літературі*, Kyiv 1999), Pavlychko augments her study by adding two chapters, one on the psychoanalytic discourse and the influence of Sigmund Freud on Ukrainian letters in the first three decades of the twentieth century, and another on the émigré poetic phenomenon of the New York Group. Her analysis of Ukrainian modernist discourses, impacted by psychoanalysis, is novel but still rather sketchy. Pavlychko aims first at tracing Freud's impact on literary production in *fin de siècle* Ukraine and then shortly after the revolution in the 1920s, and second, she aims at introducing readings of literary works from that period by critics who fully incorporated Freud's theoretical premises in their interpretations. Pavlychko's inroads into the history of psychoanalysis in Ukrainian modernism constitute but a historical outline of its beginnings. It was never her goal to conceptualize Ukrainian literature from a psychoanalytical perspective, although, as her articles attest, she was quite supportive of this approach as one of many possible new productive interpretative methodologies². Engaging psychoanalysis as a reading strategy was taken up most consistently by Nila Zborovska in her monumental study of modern Ukrainian literature, entitled *Kod ukrains'koi literatury: Proekt psykhoistorii novitnoi ukrains'koi literatury* (*Код української літератури: Проект психоісторії новітньої української літератури*, Kyiv 2006).

In her monograph, Zborovska contends that in the space of postcoloniality Ukrainian modern anticolonial literature³ lends itself especially well to investigations from the psychohistorical point of view (p. 3). She further elaborates that while the standard history of literature focuses on textual manifestations of national character as they evolve through various epochs, psychohistory, on the other hand, takes as its main task the problematization of such an evolution by underscoring the psychological motivation behind historical events, including creative endeavors (p. 10). And since her whole conceptualization of Ukrainian literature hovers around its anticolonial premises, her main goal is to grapple with the issue of colonial corruption in the development of national character (p. 11). Zborovska agrees with the Indian scholar M. Ramamurti that only by scrupulously studying the past one can be cleansed of conscious and unconscious complexes that hinder the development of a national spirit (pp. 10–11).

² See her articles "Feminizm iak mozhlyvyi pidkhid do analizu ukrains'koi kul'tury" ("Фемінізм як можливий підхід до аналізу української культури"), [in:] *Feminizm*, p. 32, and "Metodolohichna sytuatsiia v suchasnomu ukrains'komu literaturoznavstvi" ("Методологічна ситуація в сучасному українському літературознавстві"), [in:] *Teoriia literatury*, Kyiv 2002, p. 487.

³ It is understandable from the context that Zborovska considers all Ukrainian modern literature as anticolonial, that is, the literature that has as its starting point the publication of the epic poem *Eneida* (*Енеїда*) in the vernacular by Ivan Kotliarevsky in 1798 and continues up to the present.

Methodologically, the critic relies on the motivational analysis of historical events as developed by an American social thinker Lloyd deMause. However, whereas deMause in his psychohistorical studies concentrates on the impact of child rearing practices (or child abuse to be more precise) in the formation of the human psyche and subsequently nations⁴, Zborovska applies his model to the birth of Ukrainian modern literature. In addition to an intense concentration on motivational analysis, she also utilizes ideas developed by psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, mainly the latter's insistence on the importance of the maternal function in the development of subjectivity and access to culture and language. Zborovska contrasts Klein's vision of the significance of the maternal function in the constitution of subjectivity with that of Freud's, for whom it is the paternal function that becomes the predominant force as far as entrance into the social realm is concerned. The distinction between maternal (which takes the form of the permissive and the supportive) and paternal (characterized by the aggressive and the authoritarian) modes of domination in literary production lies at the heart of Zborovska's conceptualization of the psychohistory of Ukrainian literature.

She differentiates three distinct periods in its development: classical, modern, and postmodern. In the classical period she includes works of Ivan Kotliarevsky, who introduced the vernacular language into Ukrainian letters, as well as romantic and realist authors of the nineteenth century. The second period comprises works of modernist writers and the third period, the postmodern, is made up of works and activities of two literary generations, that of the 1960s and that of the 1980s. The inclusion of the so-called *shistdesiatnyky* (the generation of the 1960s) in the postmodern period comes as a surprise but because her classificatory criteria go beyond aesthetic concerns and concentrate instead on the psychological motivation, such a slippage appears to be justified within the proposed model.

Zborovska also compares Russian and Ukrainian literatures and comes to the conclusion that whereas in Russian letters the paternal mode of development prevails, in Ukrainian letters, by contrast, the maternal dominates. The way the critic frames her argument, it seems that the whole project of the decolonization of the Ukrainian literature should consist of recapturing the lost code of paternal bravery, which in its ultimate manifestation should lead to the reestablishment of statehood. Thus, the critic contends that because the male (paternal) component was often corrupted due to the colonial status of Ukraine, it comes as no surprise that Ukrainian women were invariably forced to be carriers of male bravery⁵. In literatures of healthy nation-states maternal and paternal components are balanced, in nations with a colonial past this balance is destabilized.

In many ways Zborovska's turn to psychohistory is not surprising considering that in her feminist writings she had already displayed a penchant for the subjective

⁴ See especially his *The Emotional Life of Nations*, New York 2002.

⁵ Oksana Zabuzhko's *Pol'ovi doslidzhennia z ukraïns'koho seksu* (Польові дослідження з українського сексу, Kyiv 1996) fits this paradigm especially well.

and the personal. For one of the distinctive features of psychohistorical approach is a reliance on the emotional and subjective sensibility of the observer. DeMause put it quite explicitly:

Like all sciences, psychohistory stands and falls on the clarity and testability of its concepts, the breadth and parsimony of its theories, the extent of its empirical evidence, and so on. What psychohistory *does* have which is different is a certain *methodology of discovery*, a methodology which attempts to solve problems of historical motivation with a unique blend of historical documentation, clinical experience and the use of the researcher's own emotions as the crucial research tool for discovery⁶.

Kod ukrains'koi literatury represents the critic's very personal take on the development of Ukrainian literature from the late eighteenth century to the present, a development in which the dynamics between the national and the imperial are constantly invoked and framed in psychoanalytical terms. What is clear from Zborovska's major and final work is that her position becomes increasingly conservative and quite critical of contemporary attempts at postmodern experimentation. The importance of national self-awareness and self-identification and the emphasis on the aristocratic, if not elitist, (in the spiritual sense) aspirations of a new national literature put Zborovska's stand somewhat at odds with her contemporary literary scholars. As a feminist critic she used to analyze postmodern texts in positive terms⁷, often underscoring their innovative qualities, but as a psychoanalytic and psychohistorical critic she dismissed postmodernist experiments as unproductive, imitative, and supportive of the imperial dominance (pp. 496–497). Volodymyr Danylenko aptly observes that in *Kod ukrains'koi literatury* Zborovska “повертає українську літературу від постмодернізму до внутрішнього світу людини, висуваючи на передній план такі категорії, як совість, мораль, відповідальність, почуття співпереживання та громадянського обов'язку” (“turns away from postmodernism toward the inner world of man, foregrounding such categories as conscience, morality, responsibility, feelings of empathy and civic duty”)⁸. Moreover, he also intimates that the critic questions current parameters of the literary process and alludes to the necessity of looking for new critical paradigms.

In contrast to Zborovska, Tamara Hundorova embraces the Ukrainian literary postmodern, even though she also points out its weaknesses and inconsistencies⁹. In *Pisliachornobyl's'ka biblioteka: Ukrains'kyi literaturnyi postmodern (Післячорнобильська бібліотека: український літературний постмодерн, Київ 2005)*¹⁰ she presents her own assessment of contemporary literature in the form of

⁶ L. DeMause, *Foundations of Psychohistory*, New York 1982, p. 90.

⁷ See especially her essays on Andrukhovych in *Feministychni rozdumy: Na karnavali mertvykh potsilunkiv*, Lviv 1999.

⁸ V. Danylenko, “Variatsii na temu kolonial'noi psykhoistorii (Варіації на тему колоніальної психоісторії)”, *Slovo i chas*, 2007, no. 2, p. 84.

⁹ The critic especially underscores the kitsch qualities and tendencies in the activity of the Bu-Ba-Bu group. See her *Kitch i literatura: Travestii*, Kyiv 2008, pp. 235–248.

¹⁰ The second revised edition was published by *Krytyka* in 2013.

essays on the most representative texts, trends and discourses from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s, foregrounding the issue of chronology. Her innovative reading strategy is rooted in the fact that she uses the Chernobyl catastrophe of 1986, rather than independence of 1991, as a starting point for the conversation on the new literature and the new literary epoch. Chernobyl in Hundorova's text becomes a powerful metaphor for a postmodern, apocalyptic and hybrid culture that emerged in the early 1990s from the ashes of the catastrophic event, manifesting itself in a series of various transformations — social, environmental, and national. In this context, the post-Chernobyl library refers to that cultural production, which simultaneously entails an existential threat, brought about by the nuclear age and its transcendence. Or, to put it differently, it refers to a production that exists in the interstices of the past and the present, the imaginary and the real, the playful and the apocalyptic (p. 8). But the critic also underscores positive moments of the catastrophic event — Chernobyl, after all, has become a civilizational symbol that helped instigating the birth of a new postmodern consciousness in Ukraine, which reveals itself most conspicuously in the re-reading of the national culture, stressing its polyphonic, multilingual and intertextual attributes (p. 9).

Inscribing Chernobyl as a classificatory marker and a period divider within a critical discourse allows Hundorova to view Ukrainian literary postmodernism in broader rather than narrower terms¹¹. Hence, according to her, the post-Chernobyl library refers not only to the postmodernism of the Bu-Ba-Bu group in its carnivalesque edition, but it also includes the so-called Kyiv 'ironic underground', neomodernism and neopopulism, and gendered voices. In other words, all Ukrainian literature of the 1990s, according to Hundorova, belongs to the postmodern, post-Chernobyl epoch, even though some of its singular manifestations display other than postmodern characteristics. She recognizes that whereas in the first half of the 1990s the main literary discourse hovered around the issue of artistic freedom, in the second half, the focus shifted to the diversity of aesthetic positions and to various understandings of the role literature should play in society.

Hundorova's reading of the new literature stands uniquely apart for two other reasons. First, she rightly observes that the post-independence literature is not only by necessity pluralistic but also bilingual; and second, she convincingly explains the politics of canon formation in the 1990s, pointing out the existence of its multiple varieties, official and unofficial. The critic also sheds her light on the fact that popular literary genres become increasingly important and that eventually they will need to be recognized and accommodated in the new canon. The critic invokes the Writers' Union of Ukraine and the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and identifies them as the institutions responsible for the creation of a new official national canon, yet she does not venture to evaluate

¹¹ In fact, in her *Foreword* the critic presents a rather surprising chronology, in which she sees the beginnings of Ukrainian postmodern experiments as early as in 1946 when the first almanac of the Artistic Ukrainian Movement was published (p. 7).

their effectiveness in this regard. The fact is that many authors, who came to prominence in the early 1990s, have not been readily acknowledged and/or embraced by the old academic literary elites. However, Hundorova looks on the bright side of the equation and sees progress nonetheless: “the process of decanonization has become increasingly evident and has been accompanied by the emergence of new canons — every anthology that came out in the 1990s represented a distinctive canon of contemporary literature”¹². Interestingly, her proposition of the post-Chornobyl library as an apt lens for viewing contemporary Ukrainian literature has not received sufficient academic support but was embraced by younger critics nonetheless¹³.

The Academic (Ir)relevance

The formation of canons is a measure of strength or weakness of institutions responsible for literary studies and artistic production. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was an urgent need to revisit old presuppositions as far as the literary canon was concerned. As already indicated, many female literary scholars who turned to feminist theory and, at least initially, were affiliated with the T.H. Shevchenko Institute of Literature¹⁴, took upon themselves precisely that task. Yet, George G. Grabowicz in his polemical article “Literaturne istoriopysannia ta ioho konteksty” (“Літературне історіописання та його контексти”), aimed at the Ukrainian academic establishment, argues that not enough has been done in terms of reevaluating the past by such prominent institutions as the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and its Institute of Literature¹⁵. He criticizes most of literary scholars affiliated with that institution for failing to find new approaches when it comes to reading strategies, especially when presenting new authoritative histories of literary periods. Judging by “Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury 20 stolittia” (“Історія української літератури ХХ століття”), a collective work under the general editorship of Vitalii Donchyk, published first in 1993 and reissued with some revisions in 1998, that pays more attention to Ukrainian writers of the Soviet period than to those debuting in the glasnost and post-independence periods, there is some justification in Grabowicz's criticism. According to him, Donchyk's incomplete and clearly biased treatment of the new literature must be exposed. Interestingly, in his 2011 critique of

¹² T. Hundorova, “New Ukrainian Literature of the 1990s”, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 2001, vol. 26, p. 257.

¹³ See B. Matiash, “Seriozniy postmodern, abo ‘literaturoznavstvo bez bromu’ (Серйозний постмодерн або літературознавство без брому)”, *Znak*, 2005, no. 10, p. 4, and R. Kharchuk, “Khranytel'ka pisliachornobyl's'koi biblioteki (Хранителька післячорнобильської бібліотеки)”, *Kur'ier Kryvbasu*, 2006, no. 4, pp. 181–186.

¹⁴ Tamara Hundorova is the only one who still works at the Institute and heads its Department of Literary Theory.

¹⁵ This article was originally published in *Krytyka*, 2001, no. 12 and later reprinted as “Pisliamova” in his *Do istorii ukrains'koi literatury: Doslidzhennia, esei, polemika*, Kyiv 2003, pp. 591–607. I am referring to the latter edition.

the Ukrainian literary scholarship, Taras Koznarsky also characterizes this history as a product that is “transitional, hybrid [...], where the contours of the Soviet literary canon glare through new ideological scaffolding”¹⁶.

As one of its post-independence undertakings, the Shevchenko Institute of Literature came up with a grand project of publishing the authoritative academic edition of the *History of Ukrainian Literature* in ten volumes by 2008¹⁷. Presumably, such a comprehensive approach would alleviate any imbalances or partiality displayed in already published histories of various periods, like the one by Donchyk. However, this edition still awaits its full realization, and, taking into account that the person responsible for the overall publication of this multi-volume set is again Donchyk, one might have some doubts as to whether or not a truly new approach to writing a history of Ukrainian literature has been adopted. While it is impossible to evaluate a publication that is still in progress, it makes sense to underscore its one bright aspect, namely the fact that at least one volume of the history will be written by a single author rather than by a collective. That author, Ivan Dziuba, responsible for the history's volume dedicated to the oeuvre of Taras Shevchenko, can easily be labeled as a representative of the 'old' elite but, surprisingly, he manages to imbue his writings with fresh insights.

Dziuba, a leading *shistdesiatnyk*, dissident author, public intellectual, and now also an academician, proposes interesting concepts of cultural paradigms relevant to the Ukrainian context. His three-volume publication, entitled *Z krynytsi lit* (*З криниці літ*, Kyiv 2006–07), comprising his contributions from various sources (published and unpublished), is a case in point. In the second volume there are two articles, written just five years apart, which underscore the need to conceptualize the national culture comprehensively and holistically. In his 1987 essay, titled “Chy usvidomliuiemo natsional’nu kul’turu iak tsilist’?” (“Чи усвідомлюємо національну культуру як цілість?”) Dziuba expresses the need to understand culture as a system of integrated and interdependent interactions in which one can discern several hierarchical levels of such reciprocal interplay. At the very bottom of these interactions lies the need for personal contacts and openness to various cultural products. The next level concerns the nature of cultural stimuli, which each artist or writer supplies for his/her own creative consumption. The subsequent two levels underscore the need for cultural syncretism, including hybridization of genres and various demonstrations of artistic symbiosis as generated, for example, by theatrical productions or motion pictures. The fifth level marries all cultural manifestations to specific aesthetic and stylistic tendencies at any given time, and finally, the sixth level of interactions entails a thoroughly functioning national culture. In other words, the interrelationship of all the above

¹⁶ T. Koznarsky, “Ukrainian Literary Scholarship in Ukraine Since Independence”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 2011, vol. 53, p. 442.

¹⁷ Originally, this authoritative history was conceived as a ten-volume publication but has since been expanded to become a twelve-volume edition.

levels constitutes a coherent whole of what Dziuba conceives as a national culture, that is, not just high art and literature but culture that reveals itself in all walks of life and with all its interactions. He readily admits that Ukrainian culture of the 1980s lacks such a functional fullness. He laments the neglect of the Ukrainian language and emphasizes the importance of its utilization in all spheres of social life, although he warns against 'purists' who advocate 'Ukrainian only approach' and frame national culture in exclusionary rather than inclusive terms. However, it is clear from this narrative that the main task of all those who are responsible for cultural production and its reception is to restore a systemic wholeness for Ukrainian national culture, undermined first by Soviet totalitarianism and more recently by its neocolonial offshoot.

Dziuba's second essay on the subject, "Do kontseptsii rozvytku ukrains'koi kul'tury" ("До концепції розвитку української культури"), written in 1992, i.e., at the time that coincided with his tenure as the Minister of Culture (1992–94), continues his deliberations on the importance of achieving completeness in a newly liberated cultural sphere. But he also envisions for that space a specific role — that of a consolidating factor in the nation-building process. According to him, developing a new conception of the national culture assumes taking into account theoretical and contextual aspects. In the latter sphere, the critic discusses issues as they relate to cultural phenomena at various levels — globally, within the post-Soviet space, and nationally. He understands that the Ukrainian postcolonial cultural situation offers new opportunities to incorporate the cultural experience from many different sources, and, at the same time, insists on developing its own national approach. Dziuba believes that culture not only plays an important consolidating role in the nation-building process, but is also the site of historical memory and national self-awareness. The cultural politics should therefore facilitate the development and self-realization of each individual, as well as promote the consolidation of democratic principles in an independent state. Only a state with a full-fledged democracy can secure the free development of a national culture and aid in the promotion of its achievements in the world. The critic many a time debates the question of whether or not cultural politics should take as its base an ethnic or civic principle. Without hesitation he stresses and chooses the latter.

The above postulates argue in favor of the active engagement of the state in helping to promote the development of national culture because, in the final analysis, this secures and strengthens its newly achieved independence. In other words, such a policy is in the state's own self-interest. Yet, however attractive and even commonsensical Dziuba's vision has been, he faced opposition and was unable to seriously advance his cultural policies while still being part of the Ukrainian government in the early years of independence. His later writings, particularly those dealing with the language issue, are not overly optimistic, as they reflect facts on the ground, including the situation in which the Ukrainian language is increasingly being squeezed

out from the cultural space, mainly by mass products coming via Russian TV programs, or popular Russian books in the form of cheap pulp fiction¹⁸.

Viewing Ukrainian not only as a communicative tool but, more importantly, as a differentiating factor working for the strengthening of Ukrainian cultural distinctiveness, Dziuba's initial focus on the completeness of culture shifted eventually to issues of identity. He realized that the national culture as he envisioned it is unachievable as long as the sense of national belonging or national identity is so poorly developed. According to Dziuba, for all practical purposes, culture and national identity are inextricably linked: "національна культура нагадує про себе як про базову умову національного самоздійснення взагалі" ("a national culture emerges as a fundamental condition for national self-realization")¹⁹. Later, in the same book, he becomes even more explicit about this connection: "Культура стає способом вираження національної ідентичності та виявлення сенсу буття народу" ("Culture becomes a means for expressing national identity and for providing a *raison d'être* for a nation's existence")²⁰. This holistic approach to culture in which the fates of the nation and the individual are fused is also evident in Dziuba's approach to literary scholarship, especially to his studies on Shevchenko. It is necessary, the critic believes, to provide not only a broad context for the poet's creative activities but also to present him in such a way that his oeuvre acquires utmost relevance for the post-independence circumstances. Marko Pavlyshyn, in his insightful paper on Dziuba, "Defending the Cultural Nation Before and After 1991: Ivan Dziuba", sums it up beautifully:

In his book on Shevchenko Dziuba brought into play the two devices that had always served him well: the broad presentation of context, based on profound erudition and research; and detailed attention to the words of texts. At the same time, Dziuba avoided giving rise to the impression that his treatise belongs to the narrow field of literary scholarship. The implied reader is the ordinary person, armed with common sense and a curiosity about things of contemporary importance. Likewise, the implied author does not for a moment conceal his political engagement behind a mask of scholarly objectivity. He writes about Shevchenko because, from his perspective, the narrative of the maker of a unifying Ukrainian national identity is a narrative of the twenty-first century no less than of the nineteenth²¹.

Examining a literary phenomenon, in this case the work of Taras Shevchenko, from the perspective of its future cultural implications is one of the strategies Dziuba pursues most vigorously. For him, cultural goods that bear national significance and constitute an integral part of a fully developed national culture should ideally become inscribed in the memory of world culture. Dziuba's longing for completeness and wider relevance for its own cultural heritage betrays defensive mechanisms against prolonged colonial oppression and imperial hegemony. It seems that

¹⁸ In light of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2014–15, this situation has been partly corrected.

¹⁹ I. Dziuba, *Spraha*, Kyiv 2001, p. 113.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²¹ M. Pavlyshyn, "Defending the Cultural nation Before and After 1991: Ivan Dziuba", *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 2010, vol. 44, pp. 42–43.

his initial optimism was gradually replaced by a stoical resignation. Yet, his belief in the need to advocate policies strengthening national identity at the state level has remained unchanged.

The factors that I underscore as the most influential in the construction of literary canon(s) in post-independence Ukraine are language choice, ideology, and institutions responsible for literary production as well as its evaluation and dissemination. As things stand today, all three areas display considerable weakness and uncertainty. Perhaps one might find some consolation in the fact that as a new generation of literary scholars matures, the old Soviet ideology will disappear. And the institutions, as they grow younger, especially those contributing to the production and maintenance of literary value, will gradually shed the remnants of the corrupt past and entrenched traditions of Soviet ways.