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UKRAINIAN RENAISSANCE OF 20-YEARS: A VIEW OF THE WEST

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The article is devoted to the problem of studying the works of Western Ukrainians, which is relevant for modern literary criticism. The paper notes that the experience of Western Ukrainian studies is insufficiently studied in the mainland science of literature.

Analysis of the works of Western Ukrainian literary critics related to the history of Ukrainian literature of the twentieth century. First of all, we mean the Ukrainian renaissance of the 1920s. The author tries to appreciate the contribution of Canadian literary critic Oleg Ilytsky in understanding the specifics of Ukrainian futurism, to give it the opportunity to realize itself in its history, theory and works.

Key words: national culture, futurism, avant-garde, text, avant-garde, period, periodization.

УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ РЕНЕСАНС 20-х РОКІВ: ПОГЛЯД ЗАХОДУ

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Стаття присвячена актуальній для сучасного літературознавства проблемі вивчення праць західних україністів. У роботі відзначається, що доробок та досвід західного українознавства недостатньо вивчений у вітчизняній науці про літературу. Аналіз праць заокеанських літературознавців-україністів, пов'язаний з історією вітчизняної літератури ХХ століття. Мова йде про

український ренесанс двадцятих років. Автор має на меті оцінити та проаналізувати вклад відомого науковця Олега Льницького (Канада) в осмисленні специфіки українського футуризму.

У дослідженні зазначено, що велика кількість літературного доробку цього періоду було вилучено з усіх друкованих після 30-х років антологій літератури, а твори визначних письменників, які були репресовані режимом Сталіна, надійшли до так званих спецфондів. Зрозуміло, що ці літературні надбання неможливо було вивчати в радянському літературознавстві, а їхні імена і твори згадувалися лише як взірці буржуазно-національної ідеології в літературі.

Література футуризму творилася в контексті багатьох мистецтв. У дослідженні відзначено, що український футуризм дебютував тоді, коли українське суспільство ставило перед собою питання про те, якою має бути нова національна культурна норма. Науковці, вивчаючи цей період, дійшли висновку, що поряд із авангардом, тріумфованим у Москві й Санкт-Петербурзі, в Україні існував свій авангард, який свідомо захищав власні національні особливості. Зосереджений переважно в Києві та Харкові, він не став належним об'єктом зацікавлення Заходу і був сприйнятим як «російський» чи «радянський», а не власне український.

Ключові слова: національна культура, футуризм, авангард, текст, авангардизм, період, періодизація.

Relevance of research. Futuristic literature was created in the context of many arts. Ukrainian futurism made its debut when Ukrainian society questioned what the new national cultural norm should be. «The search for one's own literary identity is a significant and constant process. The discussion about the new status and new quality of the Ukrainian science of literature is not exhausted or finished, but from time to time flares up with new force. Some scholars provoke its development, others point to the repetition of arguments, others act as representatives of Ukrainian opportunism and call for an end to all literary disputes, as they distract the writer from the main thing – writing texts» (Chobanyuk, 2019, p. 151).

Researchers studying this period discovered that, along with the avant-garde that triumphed in Moscow and St. Petersburg, there was a separate, parallel avant-garde in Ukraine that consciously defended its national characteristics. Concentrated mainly in Kyiv and Kharkiv, it has never been as interested in the West as it is in Russian avant-garde. And even when it was noticed, it was perceived as «Russian» or «Soviet» rather than actually Ukrainian.

Analysis of recent research. The Ukrainian avant-garde was a stimulus for Yu. Lavrinenko's literary studies («The Shot Revival: An Anthology 1917-1933»), Yu. Sherekh («Thoughts against the flow»), Yu. Lutsky

(«Reflections on VAPLITE»), O. Ilnytsky («Excommunication from Futurism»), G. Grabovych («Symbolic Autobiography in the Prose of Mykola Khvylovy»), M. Shkandriy («Ukrainian Prose Avant-Garde of the 20s»), M. Pavlyshyn («Squaring the circle: prolegomenos to the assessment of Vasyl Stus») and others.

The purpose of our research is to analyze the works of Western Ukrainian literary critics, related to the history of Ukrainian literature of the twentieth century. First of all, we mean the Ukrainian renaissance of the 1920s. We know that a lot of literary material of this period was removed from all printed after the 30th year of literary history, and the works of prominent writers repressed by the Stalinist regime were removed to the so-called special funds. It is clear that their work could not be studied in Soviet literary criticism, and their names and works could exist only as examples of bourgeois-national ideology in literature [6]. That is why Ukrainian literature of the 1920s and 1930s, which Yu. Lavrinenko called the “shooting revival,” became a priority research topic for American Ukrainians. Special attention of Western scholars is focused on the figure and work of Mykola Khvylovy, on the organization of VAPLITE, the literary discussion of 1925 – 1928, the avant-garde of the twenties of the last century. O. Pahlovska believes that the diaspora has managed to be “a medium between Ukraine and the world in the most terrible times” (Pahlovska, 2002, p. 18).

O. Ilnytsky, according to R. Gromyak, belongs to those diaspora Ukrainians, thanks to whom a «new view of Soviet literature» was created (Gromyak, 1997, p. 51). In his scientific works, the literary critic mainly studies the literary process of the 1920's and 1930's in Ukraine. «Ukrainian Futurism (1914 – 1930)» – doctoral dissertation (1979 – 1993) O. Ilnytsky, written under the guidance of Professor J. Grabovych. This work, later substantially revised and expanded, became the basis of the book of the same name. The theme of the book «Ukrainian Futurism (1914 – 1930)» is the story of a little-known avant-garde, which appeared in literature. The scientific exploration of the Canadian literary critic, which became the object of our study, is devoted to a detailed analysis of the artistic breakthrough made by M. Semenko, G. Shkurupiy, O. Slisarenko, L. Kurbas and others and thanks to which for the first time in several centuries Ukrainian culture European artistic life. R. Gromyak, F. Pogrebennyk, L. Skoryna sporadically addressed this problem.

Oleg Ilnytsky believes that Ukrainian futurism grew out of the early currents of modernism in Ukraine in 1900 – 1910 and was a response to them. The fact that this avant-garde, which had been spreading among Ukrainian society since 1914 and demonstratively resisted merging with imperial currents, was only one of many signs that finally confirmed the

long process of breaking with the imperial cultural stream and gradually manifesting Ukrainian itself. In 1917 it went through a political attestation – the proclamation of Ukraine’s independence from Russia.

F. Pogrebennyk believed that «the basic principle of the new culture was the rejection of populism and provincialism (the brand of Ukrainian colonialism in the empire) and the recognition of Europe – especially in its traditionalist and classical version – as the primary cultural model» (Pogrebennyk, 1990, p. 12). It is clear that the intelligentsia of that time reacted anxiously to the sudden emergence of a radical artistic movement that rejected the tradition and idea of «national» art, while admiring the charms of everything exotic, exceptional and new. Ukrainian «virtuous» society immediately struck at futurism as a foreign encroachment on the national and tried to purge itself of it in the name of good taste and high art. Livshits recalls that “the futurists appeared as Martians, unrelated to any country, nationality and, in general, to this planet ..., eternal abstractions” (Shkandriy, 1995, p. 143).

Trying to conceptualize Ukrainian futurism, one must realize that the very name of the movement does not exhaust its essence. Given both theory and practice, this Ukrainian phenomenon, according to M. Shkandriy, does not fit into any, say, «classical» interpretations of futurism, such as Italian or Russian.

Working on his scientific research, O. Ilnytsky set himself the goal of giving Ukrainian futurism a chance to realize itself in its history, theory and works; to place it in the context of the European and Russian avant-garde and to capture, at least in general, some of the most notable ideological and artistic features that make it similar to contemporaries and immediate predecessors. According to the scientist, Ukrainian futurism is a heterogeneous avant-garde movement on a broad basis. However, strictly speaking, «it is not about style or mannerism, but about a certain understanding of art» (Ilnytsky, 2003, p. 377). Its «aesthetics» – novelty and the ability to surprise. Against the broad context, the movement is part of the twentieth-century response to naturalism, realism, and the representative art of the twentieth century. Ukrainian futurism, formalistic in nature, is fully aware of its own techniques and methods. In place of the metaphysics of modernism, it put rationalism. Ukrainian futurists believed that they would be able to combine art and life.

Ukrainian futurism was a movement created not only by the futurists themselves. It (the movement) emerged under the influence of various political courses, to which it also owes some of its traits. O. Ilnytsky notes that Ukrainian futurism as a movement had a certain mission – to change the orientation of Ukrainian literature and still introduce it in the twentieth

century, even against its will. This explains its short-lived focus on massism, constant controversy with tradition and its preoccupation with concerns about the spread of «influence» in the cultural arena. This is also how O. Ilnytsky explains the Lykneп character of the «New Generation»: the magazine was destined to present such a face of Europe, which would not be able to show either VAPLITE or neoclassicists.

According to the Canadian scientist, Ukrainian futurism was not so much studied as involved in comparisons. Comparative studies invariably revealed its «anemia» and called it a timid echo of some much more original, perfect proto-movement. Focusing on the name itself, critics did not notice in it almost anything that would not be indicated by something else's source («Shkandriy, 1993, p. 52).

According to the literary critic, the diverse and, at first glance, contradictory literary practice of Ukrainian futurism owes its consistency and unity to one important «founder» – the experiment, that is, it is a «captivity of novelty.» Contrary to the demands of the times, and again due to cultural and political circumstances that led to the belittling or even masking of the basic principle, the movement was still guided by it, literally, to the end. In 1930, Mikhail Semenko insisted: «... we say that we must take care not only of today but also of tomorrow, and this requires certain tests and experiments, that is, in practice – successful and unsuccessful experiments» (Ilnytsky, 2003, p. 251).

The Canadian scholar sums up the significance of Ukrainian futurism as follows: first, it was one of the main historical events, without which it is impossible to comprehend and understand the most important periods of Ukrainian culture in the 1910s and 1920s; secondly, it is an original literary phenomenon, which left behind works of «inalienable» value and attractiveness. O. Ilnytsky's research shows that Ukrainian futurism was not insignificant, uncommon (especially by the standards of the avant-garde), unpatriotic. We have before us one of the most important movements of his time – and any history of literature, which neglects its ideology and aesthetic positions, gives an incomplete and distorted picture of the literary process.

History testifies to its energy, determination and unconquered spirit. It fought opponents from almost every stratum of Ukrainian society and constantly demonstrated its independence, acting as an exceptional force in the fight against cultural stagnation. In 1914, M. Semenko was ahead of his time, touching on many of the problems that arose during the great literary discussion, among them the issue of artistic quality and the humorous («sincere») nature of Ukrainian literature was especially important. For

this he deserves the same respect as the members of VAPLITE. Like them, Semenko's organizations helped fight the influence of such vulgar literary groups as Plow and VUSPP. As avant-garde, that is, one that is always «ahead», futurism, of course, had a limited number of potential supporters, but its influence, according to O. Ilnytsky, in the cultural arena was greater than critics admit. The futurists surprisingly successfully recruited followers and turned writers to their cause. The impetus they gave spread, of course, without their participation. It was thanks to radicalism that futurism helped pave the way for other innovative writers and made a significant contribution to maintaining the spirit of constant discovery that was well felt in Ukrainian culture at the time. Undoubtedly, he influenced the general atmosphere – and accelerated the flowering of free poetry and experimental prose.

The works of writers Yuri Smolych, Mike Johansen and Yuri Yanovsky cannot be considered without paying attention to the ideas of «left» prose. In order to understand the significance of the achievements of the movement, there is no need to admire all futuristic works or every futuristic writer. Of course, in this group, as in any other, you can find mediocrity. However, this is not a reason not to take it into account at all. The movement was successful and failed. However, it is impossible to describe futurism by reducing the phenomenon to the work of one author or to the analysis of one work. The repertoire of futurism is rich in style, subject matter and key. Agitation is not typical of the movement at all, as are some of Semenko's intimate and gloomy poems. Sometimes – simplification; sometimes – an extreme complication. We see a deliberate desire not to be «pressed against the wall» (Ilnytsky, 2003, p. 379). Not only a significant criticism of Ukrainian reality, but also a projection of its decisive alienation from its society is an unusual case in the history of Ukrainian culture. In the context of these reflections, O. Ilnytsky concludes – and it is difficult to disagree with him – that this was in fact one of the strangest movements of the 1920s, because of which it earned a reputation as an «inorganic» phenomenon of Ukrainian culture. Ukrainian science and criticism were unprepared to accept the challenge of the avant-garde. The passion, ideology and aesthetics of futurism remained distant and alien to them. According to the scientist, critics and scholars were mostly conservatives and inclined to populist or modernist beliefs. For them, futurism was an insurmountable barrier. It is clear that there was no mediator between the Ukrainian avant-garde and the public. Criticism, which is entrusted with such a role (which the formalists in Russia succeeded in), failed to take this place and in fact moved to the side of the «uninitiated» public.

The futurists themselves compensated for the lack of time in the best way, albeit to the best of their ability, by trying to explain their tasks on their

own. In short, the sad fate of futurism in Ukrainian literary history cannot be considered a certain assessment of the meaning and value of the movement itself, in fact, its fate is the result of neglect of literary criticism.

Today M. Semenko returns to literature, criticism restores him to the rights of a poet. In his scientific works, O. Ilnytsky urges us to look at Semenko as an organic avant-garde. «I have no doubt that any attempt to understand his life and work outside this context will be a futile effort» (Skorina, 2002, p. 41).

In his literary work, M. Semenko never pretended to be a complete futurist, he did not even strive for it, because he believed that in this way he would restrict his freedom of creativity. He did not seek the canon, but rather the search. Critics expected a futuristic aestheticism from him. For M. Semenko, the practice, improvement of even the «futuristic» style stood in the way of literary play and formal experiments. It is impossible not to notice that throughout his career he was in a constant literary movement: he constantly changes in the field of genre, stanza, rhyme, line, language, intonation, even changes the psychological posture of the lyrical hero. This also explains the genre uniqueness of most of his works. We find in him «command», visual poetry, sound poetry, the so-called «found», or «ready» (found, ready-made) poetry, (his famous «Monday, Tuesday ...»), and much more. All this is tested, but not for long. Sometimes the test is unsuccessful, sometimes it reaches a high level of art, but he does not return to the subject. He is constantly looking for some new approach, storming the boundaries of what is allowed, achieved, defended both in his own work and in literature in general. The lyrics make up the largest part of his work, but it is also constantly changing and eventually rejected. His work is so diverse that «it is often difficult to recognize Semenko in Semenkov» (Ilnytsky, 2003, p. 42).

Thus, M. Semenko is an avant-garde with his unusual approach to literature and literary creativity; O. Ilnytsky believes that M. Semenko is avant-garde with his consistent inconsistency. To understand it correctly, it is not enough to focus only on individual works, to understand the originality of its rhyme, syntax, language, etc., because Semenko was not a reformer or innovator in the traditional sense of the word – it was a dialogue with art, with literature as such. According to O. Ilnytsky, M. Semenko by his «trial» denies the traditional «great» literature and even the very title of «poet». This complicates the traditional relationship between the writer and the reader, who has a responsibility to navigate in entirely new forms and styles.

Conclusions. The future researcher will once note that Ukrainian literary criticism has gone through three stages in the interpretation of futurism and

the work of Mykhailo Semenko. The first is denial: they are harmful and dangerous to Ukrainian culture. In the second stage, futurism was still a negative phenomenon, but the first attempts to rehabilitate Semenko began. Finally, the third came to a full understanding of futurism and the role of this trend in the work of the leader. Conclusions. The future researcher will once note that Ukrainian literary criticism has gone through three stages in the interpretation of futurism and the work of Mykhailo Semenko. The first is denial: they are harmful and dangerous to Ukrainian culture. In the second stage, futurism was still a negative phenomenon, but the first attempts to rehabilitate Semenko began. Finally, the third came to a full understanding of futurism and the role of this trend in the work of the leader.

Prospects for further research. Contemporary Ukrainian culture is enriched not only by the forgotten names of Ukrainian literature, such as Mykhailo Semenko, who return to literature, but also by interesting, original, deeply scientific studies of their work, such as O. Ilnytsky's monograph «Ukrainian Futurism (1910-1930)». The Ukrainian avant-garde of the 1920s, as well as the scientific intelligence of Western Ukrainians, deserve the attention of young scientists.

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