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English “prism” for Ukraine: some historical features and background perception of Ukrainian literature in the UK

Abstract: The article deals with some of the historic roots of features and conceptual prerequisites perception of Ukrainian literature in the UK, which complicated its full reception in English. Among them we can highlight, in particular, such as different stages in the development of English and Ukrainian literature, the problem of "we" - "they", contextual phenomena of nature, and others.

Keywords: reception, literature development model, dualism, context, exotic, binary structuralization, nativism.

The reception of any national literature by any other national literature is not the same. Despite of its abundance the interliterature relationship world experience does not give any examples of universal receptive model. There are no two identical types of bilateral receptive relationship, and, obviously, they cannot exist in any case, although, of course, typologically similar variants are possible and they are even real. In some cases, a reception may take the form of cross-process (the first into the second, the second into the first), while others take the form mainly unidirectional process (the first into the second in a large volume, and, with notable consequences for perceiving literature; the second into the first in a minor amount, without any consequences). The reception of Ukrainian literature in the English-speaking cultural world belongs mostly to the second type: from there we get much more literary material than they do from us. On the one hand, the process of acquaintance of Ukrainian literature and culture with the English one, on the other hand, English literature with the Ukrainian without any doubt can be considered to be a movement in two directions, even the interaction; however this interaction is of a specific type. The opposite flows of the material are markedly unequal in volume in this interaction and, moreover, these flows differ from each other by its quality as well as the consequences. English "prism" for Ukraine and Ukrainian literature, keeping in mind the previous ideas and guidance on which British opinion upon the Ukrainians was formed, determined the nature of the reception of Ukrainian culture in the UK.

The “reception area” is proposed to be understood as a conceptual and functional guidance of the subject on the assimilation a foreign literary heritage and experience in one form or another, or using the term of American linguists G. Lakofer and M. Johnson, the “target domain” of the English literature and literature of other English-speaking countries. The Ukrainian literature gets into this “area”, on the one hand, quiet logically, on the other hand, somehow by accident. This is due to the natural overlap of two mutually independent processes: the expansion of the material perceived by the British and the English learners out

of non-English literature and culture and the gradual advancement of Ukrainian spiritual culture in general and the Ukrainian fiction. This happens in particular on the Common European scene, accompanied by growth of its international authority and interest in it.

English and Ukrainian literature have been developing not by the same or typologically close, but absolutely different models: the former with a strong and long tradition model of "normal" or advanced development which was the characteristic of many European literatures; the latter according to the "abnormal" model, which was usual for most of the Slavonic literatures and cultures. This "abnormal" model was the one that was not ahead of others, but rather behind them, eventually reducing the distance and compensating its negative effects, but despite its synchronization of its development with the development of others it still retained some traces of the historical "abnormality" and lag. This significantly complicated the proper functioning of the receptive discourse in synchronous mode, shifting the emphasis to diachronism. The latter, in its turn, affected the bilateral contacts and in particular the perception of the Ukrainian literature in the UK, as a rule, as a factor of restraining interest from the English towards Ukrainian writers and their works.

D. Chyzhevsky's thesis as for the influence of Western literature on Slavonic literature as one of the consequences of advanced development of the former versus the latter fully spreads to Ukrainian-English literary connections and relationships [1, p.35]. This fact, however, should not be seen as a confirmation of "superiority" of some literatures and "insignificance" of the others. Slavonic literatures represent obvious similarities and are developed in the same way as Western literatures (in particular, as English literature) with a little difference in the pace, with some kind of coloration. Recognizing this, D. Chyzhevsky states: "...the Slavonic literatures belong to the great unity of the Western literature, as well as the Slavonic people belong to Western unity (which often loses attention.) Therefore, we can argue about the natural influence of Western spiritual life, especially Western European literature on Slavonic one ... "[2, p.35].

In British perception Ukraine taken as a "new entity" - a sovereign state - has not been completely crystallized and, moreover, does not have a continuous historical tradition (the twentieth century falls out, and a "bridge" is thrown from Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka directly to modern Ukrainian literature of pro-European persuasion. "From Shevchenko to Zabuzhko" was called a literary party held in London in the Days of Ukraine in the UK, which took place in October 2013) and therefore does not rely on the foundation of its own national identity, requiring the introduction of borrowed identity - general European, that the united Europe offers to its "new" members, the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as members of the European Union's "Eastern Partnership" (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan).

Concerning the historical tradition, the attention should be paid to the fact that an independent state Ukraine as the XXI century reality in the collective consciousness of the subordinates of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain is directly connected with neither Kievan Rus nor the "Cossack Ukraine", which are well-established categories and cultural and historical realities, well known to not only representatives of European intellectual and artistic elite, but also a large number of ordinary Europeans. It appears just as a new entity, whose relations with certain events of past ages have just to be identified and understood. Such revealing and understanding, though, is not the issue of the present. Currently more attention is paid to the fact that the new entity was once a part of other "entities", both governmental and civilizational. The attitude of the British to Ukraine as a part of an entity -

Russia, the Slavonic world, Orthodox civilization - and the attitude to Ukraine as a “new entity” – absolutely different. The transition from the former to the latter cannot be a momentary action like switching channels on the TV. This is a process internally contradictory, complex and lengthy, and prerequisites for this process to begin, has already been created. There are, to our mind, reasons to conclude that this process is now going on, speeding up, but the final look at Ukraine as a new entity in England and in the English-speaking areas still has not happened.

For the perception of Ukraine in England, America, Europe and the whole world Russian the post-Soviet contexts are relevant, retain their importance and influence. Ukraine still evokes interest in the English-speaking cultural area mostly not as a new entity, independent and self-sufficient, but rather as one of the pieces (again, not an entity, but as a part of the whole - the eternal damnation of Ukrainian fate!) of Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union world. In other words, the total area of the “bloody land” as it was called in the book “Transforming Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus. 1569-1999” by an American historian T. Snyder [3].

The value of the context and various circumstances of contextual nature is generally very large. Appropriate attention has been paid to the variety of international context of ancient Russian and Ukrainian medieval synergetic writing of the X-XV centuries and Ukrainian literature at the stage of its transition from medieval to modern times (XVI - XVIII centuries). “The former was a part of the Byzantine- Slavonic, primarily South and East Slavonic community as a single system with a homogeneous structure and identical (mostly superliterature) functions which stipulate the need for development of an integrated history of the whole system of ancient Slavonic alphabet in the future. Western Slavonic and Western European typological and contact relations of East Slavonic literature in this period were in the background. In the XVI-XVIII centuries Ukrainian literature has gradually been released from the scope of synergetic literacy, saying, has been emancipating as really a literature and becomes a new *all European* (emphasis added by Julia T.) cultural-historical community, in the area of which literatures of modern European type with a genre-style system were developed as a characteristic of modern times” [4, p.31].

The culture of Kyivan Rus in the Middle Ages was formed as a segment and as an integral part of the Eastern cultural area, the main important fundamental issue of which was orthodoxy, on the one hand, as a self-contained phenomenon, on the other hand, in its opposition to Catholicism and in constant competition with it. Interliterary relationships at this time are marked by regularity and fertility. Literatures come into active relations with each other, sharing experiences and achievements. “Literature of Kievan Rus is formed in terms of busy international economic, political, religious and cultural contacts and relationships” according to the words of V. Krekoten and D. Nalyvayko [5, p.33]. The peculiarities of contacts between different literatures at that time happened primarily due to the historical development of a nation, its place and role in the global cultural community and the global hierarchy of cultures. Thus intra-regional relations, involving literatures, which belonged to the same cultural and historical community, became significantly quicker and more effective than the inter-regional relations, which included literatures from different communities.

“The literature of Kyivan Rus in the context of the Greek Slavonic cultural community together with Southern Slavonic literatures created some kind of subsystem, the entry to which affected the peculiarities of Russian culture, its ethnic relations. Firstly, it

meant that the relationship of ancient culture with other spiritual communities occurred mainly within this community; its international context was typically Byzantine and South Slavonic. Christianity was the determining factor in the formation of medieval philosophy, spirituality and ideology. Its rules were philosophical basis for politics, culture, and morality. Moreover, Christianity also defined the geopolitics of medieval cultural and historical community "[6, p.15].

Although, according to V. Krekotnya and D. Nalyvayko's opinion, which is hard to disagree, in XVI - XVIII centuries "...typological convergence and contact links of Ukrainian literature with West Slavonic (mainly Polish) and Western literature moved to the forefront" [7, p.31], the relationship with the English literature and the English-speaking cultural area literatures it had almost no affect. Some revitalization, intensification, filling with new energy and dynamics concern the literatures of continental Europe, primarily French and German.

For Ukrainian-English and English-Ukrainian literary contacts and relations dualism was a characteristic feature with the same plan, which took place in the demarcation of masculine - feminine or human - natural. Namely that predicted, on the one hand, a clear distinction between the two opposites, on the other hand, giving one of them the pronounced status of "superiority" and the other - "insignificance". The scholars have obviously the right that see in this approach not purely English "invention", this is not a specific British distancing from anything that seems different from your own "I", followed by the request as stronger and better protecting themselves against possible claims from the "Other". This is the echo of all European rationalist philosophy with all its branches. The historically conditioned conceptual system of ideas was evolving and eventually had evolved in Europe over the centuries; that created the dominant Western European concept of the mind as a domain rule, and woman's, natural or something else as vastly different subordinate "other" not such as "I" and then once and forever subordinated to me, inferior than myself.

The qualities of Ukrainian literature and culture in England at some point perceived as a priori "insignificant" compared with the corresponding features and qualities of the English literature. Some interest to all Ukrainian arose on the basis of where the element "superior" - "insignificant" was not only presented, and played a very prominent role. Equally important in this regard was also the element of division between "us" and "them."

The problem of "we" - "they", "our" - "not-our" concerning our theme has one more dimension to which you should pay special attention. People's attitudes to the outside world and to some of its manifestations and expressions exist, as it is known, only through their relation to one another, moreover, both at the individual level and at the level of the group, the collective one. From the very first moment of existence of the phenomenon of human society based not on the biological and the social element, since the first appearance of words and language as such the world and the universe appear clearly divided into two parts: "we" - "they", "our" and "non-our" that is, the space where there is no "we", "not-our" but "they", "not-our", "other", "alien". The second part is in opposition to the first one, is opposed to it. The combination of these two parts into one entity just is not possible in the representation of members of "our" as the end of the world.

From a biological point of view all living creatures of one species are the same, they do not have sufficiently clear identified, visible to the naked eye symptoms, which could serve as distinguishing unit of one community from another and / or others. At the biological level, various species of animals countervail to each other biologically and recognize each other in appearance, odor, due to instincts. On the social level, where a great-person was

ascended at the stage of approval of the division "we" - "they", external biological differences are absent. Biologically a horde of men did not differ from each other. New, social opposition, which replaced the biological opposition, could find the identity and objectiveness only in certain symbols. These symbols, according to scientists, were first worked out socially sound systems, first words. They signified somehow exactly the same what we now express with the words "we", "our", opposed to "non-we", "our-not" (the concept of "I", "me" at that time could be of no question). In these early social- symbolic sound systems that have adopted community – horde, cognitive point was inseparably linked to the estimated-emotional point: "our" meant "good", "not-our" at the same time meant "bad".

The combination of, on the one hand, the cognitive, and, on the other hand, the evaluation beginning, though undergone significant changes and modifications, survived to the present day. Its reflexes are able to be seen with all brilliance and clarity in the reception of Ukrainian literature in England and in the English-speaking environment. However, not they define the nature and features of this and other similar processes to it. In this respect fundamentally important meaning acquires the fundamental conclusion of D. Nalyvayko as for "Own" and "Alien", "Own" and "Other" in Modern imagology act as interconnected and interpenetrating worlds, here "other" is not only the opposition of "own" but the manner and form of its existence in the world "[8, p.15].

"So - the scientist goes on in his understanding - binary structuralization of the world happens on his and others' space, his own and a foreign culture, but it is important to emphasize that (here D. Nalyvayko quotes R.Shukurova – Julia T.) "the representation about other cultures (i.e. alien) completely centered on their own culture, which in these representations performs both the role of the central factor, and the base model, which contributes the coordinate system to the "Alien" space, unusual to him" [9, p.15]. For the understanding of the nature and characteristics of Ukrainian-English literary relations, this conclusion is crucial, the reception material of Ukrainian literature in the English-speaking cultural area confirms this almost completely, without any significant objections or even exceptions.

Another feature of the reception of Ukrainian literature in Great Britain and in the English-speaking world is a clear and consistent disposition of the perceiver, to the perception mostly of the works of writers, facts, phenomena that are directly related to the country where they came from, namely Ukraine. In other words, focus on the geographic point. Ukrainian artists' thoughts on universal themes and the eternal problems of the British, though, are of no interest. At least they have not detected any special interest, they are not given due attention.

Closely linked to geography and its exotic predefined, focused on the representation of the domestic reader audience of mostly only those inonational samples that are nationally specific and exotic, have no analogues anywhere in the world, a kind of "natyvizm", which had been traditionally expected from Ukrainian writers in England, formed with the first steps of acquaintance with Ukraine and Ukrainian literature retained its importance to nowadays. We believe it is too early to talk about the complete "literary independence" of Ukrainian fiction in the perception of British and English speakers, but indications of the fact that a shift in this regard may be about to happen becomes more and more obvious every year.

Similar phenomena and situations happened in the past. If to recall, for example, "romantic natyvizm" - the movement of American writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, aimed at the development and mastering of national wealth and its display by means of art expression (V. Irvinh , J. Fenimore Cooper etc.). Basing on the cornerstone principles

and postulates of such "natyvizm", American writer of the first third of the nineteenth century J.K. Poldinh in his essay "National Literature" drew attention to the fact that "the American author has to become free from the habit of imitation, have the daring to think, feel and express his feelings in his own way". At the time when the appeal was heard, it was seen weird. Later, something that Poldinh appealed to, has become the norm, commonplace. From the display of the American national identity and exoticism, that is something that distinguished their world from the world of Europe, the U.S. writers moved to the description something that united the two worlds that are equally worried the people on both sides of the ocean. To something similar in the performance by Ukrainian artists British public is not ready, although some common ground has already begun to appear.

The problem in question, must not be seen as something specifically Ukrainian, inherent to the perception of Ukrainian literature in English-speaking environment. Not only the Ukrainians faced it and continue to face. In terms of linkages between national and regional literatures of different specific gravity and authority on the global level, it constantly reminds about itself, with surprising regularity. During his time H.L.Borhes paid his attention on something similar concerning the writers of Argentina and Latin America and the perception of them outside the continent. Commenting on the situation, I.Hassan wrote: "If I had one sentence to express the essence of Borges' position, I would do it like this: "Amigos, do we Argentine writers, so silent, deprived of the talent and primitive that can only write about the wandering shepherds?". Of course, Borges implies much more and expresses it more sharply and gracefully... For Borges natyvismous thing really needs no additions such as elements of national colors... Borges is quite right when he wrote: "I think we Argentines and Latinos in general ... can write on any European topic without prejudice" [10, s.435].

Natyvizm plays a positive role at some stage. However, when this step is completed, it as global experience shows exhausts its possibilities, turning from the driving force that adds some dynamics to the overall process, into a burden. In this case it is better when it is pushed aside on time, refusing artificially maintenance. When natyvizm as a factor that hinders the further development, is overcome, its strengths are worth preserving as a part of a national literary tradition. In the area of reception of Ukrainian literature in England and English-speaking cultural area this milestone is still to be conquered.

English literature of the nineteenth century, according to some researchers, almost did not try to argue with the concepts of "subordinate" or "inferior " peoples and cultures which were spread in social and political discourse at that time. No "cultural balance of power " (K.Hirts) between "own " as " higher " and " alien" - "lower " could be of the question . In the face of such writers as T. Karlayl, J. Raskin , Ch. Dykens , V.Tekerey etc, this balance expressed in artistic expression such views on colonial expansion of Great Britain, the relationship between the inhabitants of the metropolis and the colonies, which fit into the framework of the dominant at that time both in the policy of British political elite and in the public consciousness of imperial ideas. Understanding of Ukraine as one more exotic land from global periphery, attitudes to it from the part of native English speakers who have expressed interest in it by placing it in a variety of content and form of entries and comments, was identified by features that resulted from the basis of European approach model, specific to that era relations between the Modern Western European metropolis as a recognized "center of the world" and its outlying areas, lacking its own identity and history, doomed to inferiority and the role of the eternal student, insolvent to learn the lesson as it should be.

The global model of imperial culture and historical experience of the British Empire worked perfectly well in this case. For the perception of Ukraine and Ukrainian culture the key approach proved to be the same that E.Sayid describes in these words: "Being a British or French in the 1860s, you would see and perceive India and North Africa as something familiar and distant, but never as something separate and sovereign" [11, p.23]. The peculiarities of Ukraine was the fact that it was usually seen as something distant, not very familiar, and, moreover, quite separate, something that does not belong and is unlikely to belong to "us". In this case we are dealing with the fact that one of the authors of the collection "New approaches to history writings" qualifies as "overseas history" [12, p.112], the focus of the reception is done primarily on what determines its exoticism.

Exoticism thus was interpreted as comprehensive and self-contained, one that does not require any additions and corrections. Look at the Ukrainians, which was based on it, did not foresee that they as exotic subjects have some particularized identity, and even had no idea of the possibility having something like that. There was no attempt to talk about the Ukrainian style as being a European one, Ukrainian culture to be understood as a phenomenon of European type, to see at least a rudimentary status of that discursive way of national cultural values construction, which has a decisive impact on the nation and the nation-making processes in the English-speaking world at the time referred to. The English interest to the Ukrainians was focused on the former's "recognition" of the latter, that is, distinguishing them from the masses of exotic nations and nationalities. At the same time, any "comparison" was of no question.

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