

# NATIVISTS VS. WESTERNIZERS: PROBLEMS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN UKRAINIAN LITERATURE OF THE 1990s\*

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The debate about Ukrainian culture's orientation changed in regard to subject and discourse after Ukraine gained its independence in 1991. This significant shift occurred primarily between 1997 and 1999. At the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first century the debate on orientation came to divide Ukrainian intellectuals. This was due to the political and social atmosphere in Ukraine after President Kuchma's second term, according to my preliminary impression. The diversity of cultural and intellectual life previously seen in the late 1980s to the early 1990s was replaced by a simpler picture. Intellectual circles became highly polarized. Some of them attempted to dominate the debate by making use of an old device of Soviet propaganda: a black-and-white picture which allows the exclusion of "the ugly" and the search for an "internal enemy," who is blamed for one's lack of success. The old oppositions of modernizers vs. traditionalists and East vs. West proved applicable to this new situation.

It is customary to speak of two main political and cultural orientations in Ukraine, or even two poles: the European or pro-Western, and the pro-Eastern, which most participants in the debate regard as equivalent to pro-Russian. The nature of this division has been discussed many times over the last ten years by researchers, journalists, and other experts.<sup>1</sup> Every general scheme, however, particularly regarding the East-West division, tends to stereotype. In actuality, neither the pro-Eastern orientation nor the pro-Western is homogeneous. One can distinguish many different attitudes or ideolo-

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\* An earlier version of this article was presented during the 2001/2002 academic year at two seminars organized by the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto.

1. I provide a general review of the different approaches to this problem in *Farewell to Empire. Ukrainian Debates on Identity*, particularly in Chapter 5, "Between East and West" (231–84). In my essay "Neither in the East, nor in the West" (Hnatiuk 2005), I have suggested that a new approach toward the issue of Ukraine's cultural and national orientation should be developed, because the old scheme no longer works.

gies within the so-called pro-Western cultural orientation. There also exist other orientations which cannot be defined as either pro-Eastern or pro-Western, such as one of the most popular approaches, the *nativist*. I define *nativism* in the Ukrainian case as opposing the fear of acculturation and assimilation and advocating the re-establishment of old values. It differs from traditionalism, and from chauvinism. Ukrainian nativism is hostile not as much toward Russian culture (the threat of russification), as toward Western (modernized) patterns. Of course, Ukrainian nativist discourse<sup>2</sup> is far from homogeneous. Within it, one can distinguish several directions, among them neopaganist, millenarist, anti-occidental and neoslavophilic. They are often neatly intertwined with other outlooks. In this paper, I will trace the appearance and proliferation of nativist discourse in the mid-1990s, and, more precisely, I will discuss the new face of this orientation as it was revealed during the 1990s debates among Ukrainian writers born around 1960.

My earlier investigations have shown that there are links between the traditionalist and modernist approaches, as is apparent in the debates on Ukrainian cultural identity between writers of the so-called Zhytomyr and Stanyslaviv Literary Schools (Hnatiuk 2003, 126–28). In this paper, I will focus on several *minorum gentium* writers and literary critics and their comments on works by better-known authors. Their considerations have a generalizing character, and are closely related to the old issue of the Europeanization or westernization of Ukrainian culture, as well as to the effort to (re)construct Ukrainian cultural identity. I will show that, while the nativist arguments are very well known from nineteenth-century Russian and Ukrainian debates, and can be recognized as typical of traditionalists or of populists (*narodnyky*), the origins of these arguments are rather unexpected: they are rooted in Soviet propaganda discourse.

Arguments made by critics and writers during the past decade often refer to a discussion that began over one hundred years ago between the *narodnyky* and the “modernists,” a discussion that—with some interruptions—has continued to the present day. One hundred years ago, at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century, during an era of Ukrainian nation-building, the issue of modernization was very strongly linked to the idea of the desirability of “Europeanization” or “westernization” of one’s own culture. “Europeanization” (or modernization, in sociological terms) usually means acculturation, i.e. the

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2. I treat this notion of discourse as the practice of imposing meanings in the Foucaultian sense (Foucault 2002). In other words, I regard the literary text (in this case, essays, literary criticism, and interviews with writers) as part of a larger framework of texts and practices. Most of the authors to whom I refer in my paper believe that they are resisting domination while yielding to it, or that they are supporting their own domination. I search in texts for articulated hierarchies of value and for connections between the text and its wider context (mainly ideological). I also trace the direct or indirect impact of the text on intellectual debates, and especially on shifts in meaning (or, as Foucault termed it, the political unconscious behind the text).

process of cultural mixing or borrowing that occurs between individuals and groups representing different cultural systems. Ukrainian *narodnyky* declined the project of modernization, which had reached Ukraine in Russian form during the nineteenth century. However, they were **not** anti-occidentalists *per se*. Mykola Riabchuk claims that they were “westernizers despite themselves” (Riabchuk 66–102). Ukrainian *narodnyky* differed from their Russian counterparts in their attitude toward Western culture. However, their contemporary heirs are, in fact, both anti-modernizers and anti-occidentalists. Despite their claims of fidelity to Ukrainian nineteenth-century tradition, their anti-Western orientation instead resembles that of the nineteenth-century Russian Slavophiles, or *pochvenniki*.

In the late 1990s, the East-West controversy became one of the main subjects of literary debate. This was not true five years earlier, in the late 1980s to early 1990s, which was a period of great fertility in themes, figures and approaches. At that point, the literary debate was particularly intense, with the onset of a certain cultural re-evaluation, combined with a rehabilitative process—both real and metaphoric—of the cultural works of art repressed by the previous regime. This was all accompanied by an extraordinary vitality in literary life; it was at this time that young writers, as well as writers who had previously been banned or censored in Ukraine, were publishing their works for the first time.<sup>3</sup> Over a period of just a few years, many writers of different generations who were opposed to official Soviet socialist culture entered the literary scene. As Ernest Gellner (316) wrote, the effect of this kind of concentration, which would normally be distributed over a much greater period of time, is such that it becomes impossible to dissect, and any attempt to do so would be artificial and pedantic. Thus, substantially different attitudes can sometimes coexist within the same time frame, something that would be impossible under different circumstances.

In that time period, the variety of literary phenomena was so huge that it seemed improbable that the heated discussions about literature could boil down to issues from the past, including the one-hundred-year-old opposition between modernists and traditionalists, or “westernizers” and new *narodnyky* (neoslavophiles). But this did indeed happen; the controversies of modernization and Europeanization were once again picked up and made the central point of the debate. It turned out that these issues were very contemporary and relevant. In the late 1990s to early 2000s, this discussion was held in several arenas, ranging from journalistic discourse, publishing and literary criticism, to scholarly research. The fact that contemporary intellectual elites have picked up aspects of this century-old discussion should not be perceived as unnatural; this discussion had simply been interrupted by Stalinist repression. However, no matter how important the central issue may be, the greater pic-

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3. For further discussion of this issue, see Hnatiuk 2003, 128–29.

ture should not be distorted by treating other critical issues as subordinate. Issues such as the need for de-Sovietization of the culture, and the debate concerning state policy in culture, have been replaced by a “safer” controversy. The complex problem of modernization and Europeanization has become simplified into an East-West polarization.

There is another way in which today’s debate about cultural identity resembles that of a century ago.<sup>4</sup> Those who stress the uniqueness of Ukrainian culture and oppose foreign influence are more inclined to be extremist in their perception of reality, as compared to those who favor modernization. The fact that supporters of traditionalism refer so readily to the opposition of extremes is surprising, considering that in the early 1990s, when faced with the choice first posed in 1925 by Khvylovyi as “Europe or Prosvita” [Europe or enlightenment],<sup>5</sup> the common answer was “Europe!” In the period of *perestroika*, the notion of *Prosvita*, expanded by Khvylovyi to include mass literature as propagated chiefly by the Communist Party, had a clearly negative connotation. Over a period of just a few years, however, a significant change occurred, namely that the concept of *Prosvita* gained a positive connotation within a nativist group of intellectuals. This group succeeded in introducing into contemporary discussion a category regarded as secondary by the rest of the participants in Ukrainian literary life: the one-hundred-year-old opposition between occidentalism and *narodnytstvo* [populism] (also known as *pochvennichestvo* in Russian,<sup>6</sup> or *gruntivstvo*<sup>7</sup> in Ukrainian). Paradoxically, toward the end of the 1990s this opposition was imposed by the writers who identified themselves with this nativist group. Eventually, other participants in the discussion started to use it as well. It was a “return” of old categories, which are inadequate not only for Ukrainian culture, as demonstrated by Riabchuk, but also for the contemporary situation at the end of the twentieth century. The debates about postmodernism that were still so heated in the middle of the previous decade began to lose momentum, and the circle of supporters of that trend diminished. Some leading writers, considered to be postmodernists, gradually changed their orientation to traditionalist. Voices claiming that postmodernism was a threat to Ukrainian culture became louder. The concurrence between the appearance of a new generation sharply

4. A comparison of some aspects of identity discourse at the turn of the nineteenth and the turn of the twentieth centuries can be found in Pavlychko 2002, 653–62.

5. On the Ukrainian Literary Discussion, especially on Khvylovyi’s pamphlets, see Shkandrij 1992; see also Shkandrij 1986 and 2001. The bibliography on this issue is so extensive that it is not possible to list even the major papers here; see the bibliographies in Shkandrij’s books.

6. Russian *pochva* means soil; *pochvennichestvo* was a nineteenth-century socio-literary movement connected with Slavophilism; a *pochvennik* believed in the power of native soil as an inspiration for *organic writing* (based on *narod* and native soil and treated by these writers as the opposite of literary works based on elitist culture).

7. Ukrainian *gruntivtsi* is a direct translation of the Russian notion of *pochvenniki*. It appeared only in the mid 1990s during the debate analyzed here.

criticizing its predecessors and of this phenomenon does not seem to be purely accidental. The decentralization of literary life also had significance here, and the emergence of new literary phenomena on the periphery, as compared to the previous situation, attracted the attention of the entire literary public. This focus on certain "marginal" writers was probably painful for the "center," as well as for other "peripheries," particularly since these authors gained popularity abroad as well.

### *The center and the peripheries*

Let us trace the development of a phenomenon which accompanied the decentralization of literary life in Ukraine: the success of one group of writers, and the rebellion or *fronde* of another group. A single literary organization, the Union of Ukrainian Writers, had existed in Ukraine up until the late 1980s and early 1990s, and then numerous literary groups representing unofficial literary life emerged. These included *Bu-ba-bu*, the Lviv group *Luhosad* [Meadow Orchard, actually the first syllables of the members' names: Luchuk, Honchar and Sadlovskiy], the Kyiv group *Propala Hramota* [Lost Document, the name of a Gogol short story], the Zhytomyr group centered around *Avzhezh* [Indeed] magazine, and the Kharkiv group *Chervona Fira* [Red Wagon]. These groups, which were rather diverse in their programs and artistic approaches, had one thing in common: distaste for official cultural life. At first, this was not a protest against the Writers' Union (some of the writers in these groups had just recently been accepted as members of the Union of Ukrainian Writers). The young writers from those "informal" groups, as they were labelled at the time, did not so much oppose major cultural activities as strive to create an alternative to official culture. It was only later, about a year after Ukrainian independence, that these writers began to manifest a considerable dislike for the Writers' Union as an institution symbolizing the enslavement of Ukrainian culture. Serious accusations were levelled, as for example in the title of Ievhen Pashkovskiy's address in 1992: "Literatura iak zlochyn" [Literature as a crime]. In the mid-1990s, a polarization occurred within the writers' circles which were called "independent," or more often "informal." The roots of their negative attitude toward the official cultural situation were the same, but the paths of the two new camps now diverged. Some of the writers, such as Pashkovskiy and Viacheslav Medvid, who at first firmly rejected the possibility of any cooperation with the circles of established writers from the Union of Ukrainian Writers, decided just a few years later that such cooperation was not only needed, but crucial; they joined the Union of Ukrainian Writers, assenting to the hierarchy of values adopted in official cultural life, even accepting the Shevchenko State Literary Award, sharply criticized by many writers from this generation.<sup>8</sup> These writers, con-

8. See the writers' discussion on the Shevchenko State Literary Award ("Vision") in *Literatura Plus* 28. 3 (2001): 1, 8–9.

sidering the Writers' Union to be completely discredited, left it and in 1997 founded the Association of Ukrainian Writers (AUP), a trade-union-type organization whose objective was the protection of writers' interests. Although neither of the two associations had a literary program, the Writers' Union, as evidenced by the attitudes of its members, was associated with traditionalism and nativism, while the AUP had a pro-Western orientation. Thus it was in the mid-1990s that a division between the informal literary groups that had first emerged at the end of the 1980s became noticeable. To a considerable degree, this situation resulted from the groups' relative success.

Writers labelled in the mid-1990s as the "Zhytomyr School" (Pashkovskiy, Medvid, Volodymyr Danylenko, Zakusylo, and others) were well known, but did not gain in popularity. Their works were not translated into foreign languages (later it was claimed that these works were untranslatable because of their original Ukrainian soul, while works which were translated into foreign languages were not truly Ukrainian, only Ukrainophone—"ukrainskomovni"). "Zhytomyr School" writers did not have grants from foreign foundations in Ukraine, nor did they participate in international conferences and cultural events. In contrast, the *Bu-ba-bu* group achieved great literary and media popularity, featuring such writers as Yuri Andrukhovych, Oleksandr Irvanets, and Viktor Neborak, all of whom were linked more or less to Lviv and Halychyna [Galicia]. They were well known in Ukraine, and their works (especially Andrukhovych's) were translated into foreign languages. They were invited to participate in various events abroad. (In 1995, however, this group gradually began to fall apart, and its members went down their separate literary paths). At the same time, some writers from a younger generation, as well as some coevals, accused *Bu-ba-bu* members of the *carnivalization* of Ukrainian literature, and coined the term *bubabism* as a synonym for infantile and epigonic literature (Zborovska 1998) and for postmodernism, which was treated with hostility as being part of a liberal ideology (Kvit 1998).

In their discourse on shaping cultural identity, modernizers such as Andrukhovych use a different language than the nativists, and appeal to different values. Their statements carry entirely different connotations. While both modernizers and nativists use one common term, postmodernism, their understanding and evaluation of it diverges. Their mapping of literary Ukraine also differs. The nativists concentrate on Kyïv (although they live in Kyïv, they prefer to appeal to Zhytomyr as a symbol of pure Ukrainian culture), and delineate the culture very clearly. Their vision is center-oriented. The modernizers, in contrast, avoid borders; their vision is polycentric. If they distinguish any territory, it is a more regional one.

### *The Stanyslaviv phenomenon*

The label "Stanyslaviv phenomenon," which was applied to the local writers grouped around the almanac *Chetver* [Thursday] under the leadership of

Andrukhovych and Izdryk, surfaced around 1991 and became increasingly popular by the middle of the 1990s, reaching its peak in 1997–98. According to the participants, by that time it was no longer just “the Stanyslaviv phenomenon,” but the “legendary phenomenon” or the “legendary writers.” Some literary critics began to place the phenomenon on the literary map of Ukraine.<sup>9</sup> That is when the *Mala ukraïns'ka entsyklopediia aktualnoi literatury* [Little Encyclopedia of Current Ukrainian Literature] was published—a peculiar manifesto of this circle that went beyond strictly literary boundaries. It was a cross between an anthology and a true encyclopedia, with brief articles on contemporary Ukrainian writers and concepts. The authors of the *Little Encyclopedia* have tried to change the literary canon by imposing their own patterns—new texts and a new interpretation of the Ukrainian literary process.<sup>10</sup>

Among the literary critics outside the *Chetver* almanac circle, its popularity produced irritation rather than interest. Unfavorable reviews of the *Little Encyclopedia* provide proof of this irritation, both on the part of peers, such as Ihor Bondar-Tereshchenko (16–18), Ievhen Baran (2000), and Andrii Kokotiukha (1999), as well as of the older generation (Hryhorii Shton, Bohdan Boichuk). For them *Little Encyclopedia* with its imposing of a new literary canon would change their recognized position. They answered with accusations of cosmopolitanism (Baran, Shton), *ignorantia* (Boichuk), or even irresponsibility. None of them had treated the *Little Encyclopedia* as an invitation to discuss the real problem, namely, the coexistence of two different canons, the Soviet and the patriotic one, and the need for creating a new, modern one.

The *fronde* had already been started in 1997 by Ievhen Baran, a prolific critic from Ivano-Frankivsk. After the publication of the *Encyclopedia*, he stated that “there is no Stanyslaviv phenomenon, just as there is no Ukrainian city by the name of *Stanyslaviv*” (2000, 108). According to this critic, the *Little Encyclopedia* was somewhat interesting, but on the whole was rather harmful, because “if no more [works of this type] appear, the literary process of the 1990s will be assessed through the cosmopolitanism of Ieshkilev-Andrukhovych as partly positive, but in that particular case as terribly primitive” (106). In the same review, Baran states that the Stanyslaviv phenomenon is a myth created for purely local benefit.<sup>11</sup> The reader’s attention must be called to Baran’s characteristic accusations of cosmopolitanism. Considering the

9. For a discussion on contemporary literary life, see esp. Natalka Bilotserkivets and Solomiia Pavlychko’s statements in “Ukraiïns’ka literatura pislia 1991 roku” [Ukrainian literature after 1991].

10. See my detailed analysis of the *Little Encyclopedia* as a literary manifesto in my 2003 book, 152–60.

11. “A man usually does not have enough money. If one calls this lack of money a ‘phenomenon,’ then how poor must his soul be!” (109).

usage present in all post-Communist countries, this constitutes a reference to the language of propaganda and anti-Semitism.

The neatly phrased negation of the phenomenon itself calls for further comment. Stanyslaviv is the old name of a Ukrainian town and it is used to this very day in Polish. The name was changed to Ivano-Frankivsk in 1961. The purpose of this change was clear—to erase the *signum* of the old Polish tradition from the Galicia region—and it was part of the Sovietization program for this region. Nevertheless the name *Stanyslaviv* or *Stanyslav* is still used in Ukraine by a small circle of people deeply connected with this town who attach significance to the town's multi-cultural past. This is not always accompanied by an acceptance of Polish culture; users of the old name are more likely to refer positively to Austro-Hungarian times than to the Second Republic of Poland. In the eyes of these intellectuals, the Austro-Hungarian past of Stanyslaviv (and the entire Halychyna region) is a sign that Ukraine belongs to Central European history (Hnatiuk 2003, 184–230). When Baran writes that “there is no Stanyslaviv phenomenon, just as there is no Ukrainian city by the name of *Stanyslaviv*,” he opts for sterilization of the present and the past, and the removal of any foreign elements. He also rejects the European history of that city and of the entire region of Halychyna. Translating the meaning of this statement into the language of social-anthropological concepts, this is counter-acculturation, a categorical rejection of foreign cultural patterns and an opposition to any attempts to introduce them into the mother culture.

### *How does a literary school emerge?*

Despite Baran's comments, a counterbalance to this phenomenon exists. In the mid 1990s, before the appearance of the *Little Encyclopedia*, a few rather large anthologies were published which were to play a similar role as literary manifestos, usually for a particular generation. The Smoloskyp publishing house printed *Molode Vyno* [Young Wine], *Teksty* [Texts], and *Imennyk* [Noun]; Medvid's own anthology was published (1995), as was a peculiar manifesto called *Ukraïna Irredenta*,<sup>12</sup> edited by Serhii Kvit (1997). In addition, over the course of just the year 1997 several anthologies of contemporary Ukrainian prose were published, in particular a three-volume anthology, the literary project of Ukrainian TV channel 1+1 (at that time a relatively independent, and therefore very popular, channel; only beginning in 1999 was it influenced by the Kuchma regime). Volodymyr Danylenko headed the project, although at the time he appeared to be a very marginal figure in Ukrai-

12. Originally, *Ukraïna irredenta* was the title of Iulian Bachynskyi's manifesto of the Ukrainian independence movement, published in 1895. The title was based on the name of the Italian independence movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (*Italia irredenta*). Kvit's book presented fifteen Ukrainian intellectuals who, in Kvit's opinion, were the new face of independent Ukrainian literature.



nian literary life.<sup>13</sup> The subtitle of the anthology volume *Vecheria na dvanadsiat' person* [*Dinner for Twelve People*], which features a selection of texts by authors connected in one way or another with Zhytomyr,<sup>14</sup> contains the phrase "the Zhytomyr School of prose," defined on the book's cover as "a laboratory of contemporary Ukrainian prose, where experiments are conducted to counteract foreign cultural aggression." On the surface, this seems to be just one of many anthologies; however, its significance in the development of events on the literary scene was enormous, and not only for literary reasons, i.e. as a proclamation of the Zhytomyr School of prose. It played a huge role in altering the essence of the discourse.

Danylenko begins the foreword to this work (1: 5) by comparing the birth of the Zhytomyr School of prose to the phenomenon of Provence or Latin American literature. In the eyes of the editor of that anthology, Valerii Shevchuk, Ievhen Kontsevych, and translator Borys Ten became the "fathers" of this School, while Ievhen Pashkovskiy, Mykola Zakusylo, and Viacheslav Medvid were their worthy successors. In his foreword, Danylenko pits the "First world" against Ukraine, cosmopolitanism against the national spirit, modernism against traditionalism, and the "Halychyna School" against the "Zhytomyr School." Beneath this discussion, which is seemingly about contemporary literature, glares a dislike of the "alien," the "other," to whom the author attributes all evil, all actions damaging to the Ukrainian culture and nation before the destruction of the Soviet Union. According to Danylenko, this is the source of all illness and lack of moral principle, and can be traced to the ideas of the Russian Slavophiles. So how does that author define this "us," as opposed to the hostile "alien"? "We" is defined in a very narrow way, in short, as the "Zhytomyr School."

A defining feature of this "School" might be traditionalism; at least, this word [традиціоналізм] appears in the foreword a few times, and always in a positive context. At the same time, the author just as often, and just as positively, uses the word "experiment" [експеримент]. But in the literary context, "experiment" is an antonym to traditionalism. For Danylenko, however, "experimentation" or experiments presently underway, lead to serious concerns:

13. During the first half of the 1990s, V. Danylenko lived in Zhytomyr. He was a postgraduate student at the Institute of Literature in Kyiv and the editor of the independent Zhytomyr almanac *Azhezh* [Indeed]. After 1995, he moved to Kyiv, where he worked as the Associate Editor of *Slovo i chas* [Word and Time], the Academy of Science's journal of literary studies. He received public recognition as the editor of the anthology. Afterwards, he headed other significant TV projects, like the programs *Koronatsiia slova* [Coronation of the Word] and *Zoloty Babai* [The Golden Sprite]. At one point he worked as a journalist for ICTV (a TV channel founded before the parliamentary elections of 2002 in order to help win those elections; Victor Pinchuk, Kuchma's son-in-law, was its owner).

14. Zhytomyr is the capital of the Zhytomyrska Oblast, part of historical Polissia, 130 km (80 miles) northwest of Kyiv. The Polissia region is considered to be the site of the most archaic culture in Ukraine. This provided a reason for treating Polissia (and Zhytomyr) as more "authentic," more "organic," more "Ukrainian" than other, more urbanized regions.

In **healthy** nations on the borderline between resistance to traditionalism and the **expansion of aggressive** cultures, a **mutant** has always developed, which, formally speaking, becomes like the culture of the **aggressor**, but remains within the **spirit of its own** culture. In contemporary Ukrainian prose, it is the Zhytomyr School that took upon itself such a line of resistance; there the confrontation between **foreign-language** cultural **expansion** and Ukrainian traditionalism comes very close. (1: 7; boldface mine)

Thus any further attempt to clarify what this “us” means is fruitless, since “us” exists only in opposition to the enemy; it is, as the author says, a “mutant” which takes its form from the enemy, but is filled with a different, healthy spirit. This constitutes a stage in building one’s own identity through conflict with the “other.” On an irrational basis, this conflict lifts “us” above the “other,” maintaining this “us” in a state of war with the surrounding world, because only such a war guarantees the integrity of this “us.” Among the best-recognized enemy formations of “us” are modernity and rationalism, and in culture these are postmodernism and formalism. Danylenko places the “soul” in opposition to the “mind,” clearly having little regard for the mind. He indicates that the “Halychyna School” is guided solely by the mind. These are echoes of a discussion that has been in progress for two centuries already and concerns the heritage of the Enlightenment that is discarded by the traditionalists. This issue has produced a huge reverberation among Russian Slavophiles and contemporary neoslavophiles in their accusations of rationalism and soullessness in Westernizers and the West. The inclination to view problems in radical extremes, characteristic of the ideology of the New Right, unveils itself here with great clarity.

### *The East-West controversy and the language of propaganda*

In stereotyping this problem, Danylenko links the West with the mind, and the East with the soul. It is not difficult to detect where he places the Zhytomyr School in this binary opposition: “as far as the ‘East-West’ vector goes, the Zhytomyr School is **more eastern** than western” (10, my boldface). Let us note that this is the first such open stance favoring the eastern option in Ukrainian culture since 1991.

The experience that provided the uniting factor for this “School”—the only one mentioned in the foreword—was something that the author described as the “Chornobyl factor.” He has in mind not so much the Chornobyl catastrophe, or the social effects of this disaster, but Chornobyl as a sign of the end of days, the “beginning of the apocalypse.” If we add the phrase “world of ruins” that he mentions slightly earlier in his text, then it turns out that the author treats the “new order” that emerged from the collapse of the Empire as the apocalyptic “final times.” This makes it possible to view Danylenko’s text against the background of the integral traditionalism represented by the general views of René Guénon. The style of Danylenko’s thinking can be placed within the realm of nationalism in its aggressive form. He erases the differ-

ences between literature and ideology, regarding aesthetics as a secondary feature that does not determine the essence of the “spirit” but that is infected by the disease of postmodernism.

After providing a rather chaotic description of the “Zhytomyr School”—a description which is not very helpful even to a person convinced of the school’s existence, since its internal cohesion is presented as shaped by a hostile outside world—Danylenko moves on to the “Halychyna School” as its extreme opposite. Just as with the “Zhytomyr School,” Danylenko assumes the existence of the “Halychyna School” as a certainty, although it is he himself who seems to have first introduced both of these concepts in opposition to one another.<sup>15</sup> While the “Zhytomyr School” is presented in the anthology as a positive phenomenon, the writers from Halychyna are portrayed as a factor that is destructive of Ukrainian culture. When dealing with the “Halychyna School,” the author points to two figures who, in his opinion, are central: Yuri Vynnychuk and Yuri Andrukhovych. These two perform “the organizational polarizing roles of an ideologist and a sterilizer; the ideologist carries out the sublimation of regional values and creates around them a Halychyna-centered coloring, while the sterilizer, by applying aesthetic copies from foreign literature, castrates the national spirit. And so, in the Halychyna School, one end is Halychyna-centric, and the other is Europe-centric” (8).

Both citations (7 and 8) contain references to laboratory work and have clear military connotations. While the objective of the Zhytomyr “lab” is defensive in nature, the goal of its “Halychyna” counterpart is aggression. These references lead us straight to the Soviet propaganda language of the Cold War, which spoke of various hidden and masked enemies on the inside, performing very specific roles, and of the duty to uncover and neutralize them. In applying this type of speech, Danylenko addresses the reader using the language of hate. Its sources were precisely recognized and ironically described by Kostiantyn Moskalets:

Academician Danylenko will receive the St. George’s Cross from the hands of the dear and beloved First Secretary, while gulag prisoners Andrukhovych, Izdryk and Vynnychuk (“a ferocious ideologist of Halychyna regionalism”—that is how the new history of Ukrainian literature will describe him) will be smoking fags on the freshly cut stump of a Siberian cedar during their break from work. (17)

Most critics applauded the appearance of the *Dinner for Twelve People* anthology. Characteristically, the SPU’s (Union of Writers in Ukraine) weekly *Literaturna Ukraïna* [*Literary Ukraine*] published sizeable texts devoted to

15. It was not possible to find any earlier examples of the use of these notions in literary publications, nor in any books published. It seems quite certain that these designations did not yet exist prior to 1995. The literary discussions at that time focused on the literary circles in different cities around newly established journals and almanacs.

Danylenko's anthology in two consecutive issues.<sup>16</sup> This was the beginning of the "reunion" between the post-Communist establishment in the Union of Writers, and formerly non-official writers. From then on, it became fashionable to speak of the existence of two Schools in new Ukrainian literature. Articles were published in all of the more important literary journals and in many newspapers which stressed this polarization, although, as mentioned above, before the appearance of this anthology different descriptions had been used to point to the existence of this division.

*Towards organic, or true, national literature*

I will focus on one very characteristic publication. In his 1998 article in *Literaturna Ukraïna* entitled "Kanon ta prystrast" [The canon and the passion], Serhii Kvit discussed the series "Modern Ukrainian literature," which at that point consisted of six published books. Kvit focused on three of them, those written by Andrukhovych, Pavlyshyn and Lutsnyi (Luckyj). A reference to the ideological discourse underway appears in this article in a rather unexpected place—not when discussing Andrukhovych's prose, but in examining the Ukrainian translation of George Luckyj's book *Between Gogol and Shevchenko*. Kvit, who is a literary historian and the chief editor of the journal *Ukrainian Problems* for the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, considers Luckyj's book to have "extensively addressed the problem of cultural dualism and choice, or using the more updated terminology, *postmodernism* and *narodnytstvo*" (1998, 6). Kvit proceeds to present the series on contemporary Ukrainian literature in opposition to the three anthologies published as a literary project of the 1+1 Channel, and he expresses his satisfaction that the notion of the "Zhytomyr School of prose" was entering literary thought as a legitimate concept. He does not object to the ideological aura around the *Dinner for Twelve People* anthology. The author notes, however, the presence of bubabism, postmodernism and liberalism in the three books discussed. His criticism of "non-organic style" (meaning artificial and not national), and of the surrender to ideology of which Andrukhovych is accused, appears relatively insignificant in comparison to his condemnation of Marko Pavlyshyn, an Australian researcher who, in Kvit's view, applies a new post-colonial methodology, "ergo, a new type of totalitarianism," in his studies devoted to contemporary Ukrainian literature. In Kvit's opinion, postmodernism is an ideology that constitutes an extreme threat to Ukrainian culture.

It is worth taking a closer look at the way in which he tries to add credibility to his statements and to the values that he invokes. Disregarding the reader's potential concerns about the random use of different concepts and notions (postmodernism, totalitarianism), the author states the following:

16. *Literaturna Ukraïna* 24, 25 (1998) (4.06.1998 and 11.06.1998), by Mykola Sulyma and Serhii Kvit, respectively.

"And what is postmodernism? Perhaps only the word 'democracy' is equivalent in its degree of haziness and lack of clarity." Then, fighting the two "ideologies" simultaneously, the author offers several short sentences that are evocative of Biblical style: "This [postmodernism and democracy] is the new Tower of Babel. It can be brought to ruin only by self-definition. The soul lives with a sense of terror. Art as passion belongs to eternity, art incorporated in styles, art itself is eternity" (Kvit 1998, 6). In the paragraphs that follow, the author returns to his normal style of long, usually rather complicated sentences. Hence, the paragraph cited stands in clear contrast to the rest of the text. The sentences create the impression of being out of context and unrelated. In this way, the author tries to imitate a prophetic style, to create a sense of apocalypse, as well as a perspective on eternity. In the same paragraph, the critic calls upon Dontsov's<sup>17</sup> authority, and that is why it is not difficult to discern his message of voluntarism, i.e., his treating the will as superior to the intellect and emotions. The text communicates a sense of renewal of one's own cultural tradition, and opposition to modern culture as something alien, as is typical of the nativist approach. The pathos used by the author to defend Romanticism, his prophetic pose, and his appeal to Dontsov's authority leave no doubt as to the source of his attitude: this is revolutionary conservatism, which is hostile toward modernity and close to fascism.

Kvit reduces the dispute about contemporary Ukrainian literature's status to the opposition between postmodernism and *narodnytstvo*, pushing new problems into old frames. In this way, the dispute between artistic circles, or between "regions," is transformed into an ideological controversy. It is precisely at this point—the rejection of the modernization project—that Kvit's nativism meets with Danylenko's counter-acclturation attitude.

In May 1999, at a seminar for creative young people organized by the Smoloskyp publishing house in the town of Irpin, Ivan Andrusiak from the Stanyslaviv group the "New Degeneration" led a roundtable discussion entitled "The Literary Press in Ukraine: 'occidentalists' and '*gruntivtsi*'" (the latter signifying contemporary populists who are trying to create an organic style, rooted in Ukrainian *soil*). Andrusiak, who belongs to the circle of young writers connected to Smoloskyp, which is hardly friendly towards "postmodernist experiments," considered it his duty to present the ideological division that exists in new Ukrainian literature. There is no doubt that it was the *Dinner for Twelve People* anthology that provided the source for such a perception of the literary map of Ukraine. The dispute between these circles of writers, which can be considered a collision of traditionalist and modernist attitudes, took on a shape different from its initial one, however.

Let us recapitulate. At first, the differences between the writers' circles

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17. Dmytro Dontsov (1883–1973) was a Ukrainian politician, critic, journalist and publisher, as well as the creator of the ideology of Ukrainian integral nationalism.

were depicted only from an ideological point of view. Later, as illustrated by Kvit's review, the discourse shifted to the arena of cultural formations, labelled *postmodernist* and "*narodnyk*." The debate organized by Smoloslryp shifted this still further, in time as well as space, namely to the nineteenth century and to Russia (as I have mentioned, *gruntivtsi* as a notion appeared only in this debate, and it is a term modelled on its Russian nineteenth-century equivalent, *pochvenniki*). It was in the nineteenth century that the dispute between Slavophiles and occidentalists, or—if Slavophilism is to be perceived in a wider view—between *pochvenniki* and occidentalists, constituted a controversy that was of fundamental importance for Russian culture. The very few Ukrainian Slavophiles and the numerous *narodnyky* differed in substance from their Russian counterparts, in that their activities had no anti-Western thrust. Openness to a few select patterns of western European culture was a significant part of their program. There were no genuine Ukrainian occidentalists in existence at the time: the nationalist agenda came before one of modernization. Thus, contemporary references to the controversy between the Slavophiles, or *pochvenniki*, and the occidentalists as part of the Ukrainian national tradition are an unconscious use of a conceptual cliché taken from Russian culture. Paradoxically, standing for tradition and originality, for the uniqueness of Ukrainian culture, for *Ukraina irredenta*, as Kvit named the phenomenon, has led to a rather unsophisticated imitation of Russian patterns in the debate over the East-West issue.

We may conclude from this analysis that it was the anthology *Dinner for Twelve People*—not so much its texts but the manner in which the editor placed them within an ideological framework—that played a special role in polarizing the writers' circles, with the mass media helping to popularize this project by introducing it to a wide audience. The TV 1+1 program presenters, among them Kostiantyn Rodyk and Yuri Makarov, actively participated in propagating the project as well as the ideas of its editor. The TV program was repeated a number of times, making it possible to speak of the existence of two Schools in Ukrainian literature: the Zhytomyr School and the Halychyna School, with a focus on the former as a School of "national and not regional significance."<sup>18</sup> A few years later, on the fifth anniversary of TV channel 1+1, the anthologies edited by Danylenko were mentioned again as a great cultural achievement (see Lobanovskaia).

Initially, the division in contemporary Ukrainian literature into camps of occidentalists and *gruntivtsi*, or postmodernists and *narodnyky*, or (to use more accurate terminology) modernizers and nativists, was an artificial creation. The milieu was not homogeneous. However, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s these writers belonged, if not to the underground, then to unoffi-

18. This quote of words from Kostiantyn Rodyk comes from the book cover of *Dinner for Twelve People*.

cial culture. This milieu had common aims and presented much the same attitudes (Hnatiuk 2003, 61–120). Ten years later, this milieu was polarized into two groups. The first recommended itself as the public defender of “true Ukrainian tradition.” The second was labelled (although not on its own initiative, of course) as “westernizing” and was accused of attempting to destroy Ukrainian tradition. Nevertheless, such a division has indeed occurred. At the end of the 1990s, modernizers began to refer to themselves in the nativists’ terms, as “westernizers,” and this was a significant victory for the nativists. They managed to shift the modernizers to a marginal position. Moreover, they succeeded in labelling the modernizers in old Soviet propaganda terms as “internal enemies.”

As I have shown, the language used by two of the authors examined here (Danylenko and Baran) is fully dependent on the language of anti-Western Communist propaganda. The third author, Kvit, appeals to the ideology of integral nationalism, which exalts one’s own nation, mythicizes its past and history, and demonizes its enemies. The use of clichés and stereotypes has become a very common phenomenon in current Ukrainian literary discourse, but very few participants in literary life have noticed it and recognized the origins of such language. I would call this phenomenon a post-totalitarian syndrome (in contrast to the post-colonial syndrome posited by Riabchuk).

### *Conclusions*

So far, the authors who have played a central role in the debate on Ukrainian cultural identity in the mid 1990s have been treated by other participants in the debate, especially by the modernizers, as marginal. Most Ukrainian scholars and writers were convinced that contemporary Ukrainian intellectuals would simply return to a Western orientation after the proclamation of Ukraine’s independence. This really did happen for a while, in the early 1990s, when the rhetoric of returning to Europe dominated identity discourse. By the end of the 1990s, however, this changed.

As I have demonstrated, the marginal figures, *minorum gentium* writers, mostly “nativists,” played a crucial role in changing the type of discourse (although *Literaturna Ukraïna* and some of the *shestydesiatnyky*, or the “sixties generation,” also played a role in pushing back the modernizers). By the second half of the 1990s, the nativist approach towards Ukrainian culture had become mainstream in the identity debate. It could be termed “a retreat from European identity.” One can recognize in this phenomenon an echo of Kuchma’s words, “no one is waiting for us in Europe,” and in the slogan “seeking a ‘third way’.” In fact, this “third way” was a path towards isolation, which would allow Ukraine to be pushed back towards authoritarianism.

It turned out that the nativists provided good support for Kuchma’s regime. They pointed at the external enemy, the West, and in particular the United States. They also unmasked the internal enemy, the “westernizers” who

wanted to modernize their culture and country, and therefore were potentially dangerous for that regime. However, the change in the political situation after the presidential elections and the Orange Revolution at the end of 2004 revealed that Ukrainian society had strong hopes for European integration. On December 15, Yuri Andrukhovych gave a speech at the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council in Strasbourg that expressed such a hope, and the desire he voiced was supported by many EU members: Europe would not be whole without Ukraine.

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### Резюме

Ола Гнатюк

Нативісти контра ліберали: дискусії про культурну ідентичність в середині 1990-их рр.

Темою цієї статті є дискусія довкола спроб переосмислення української ідентичности, яка почалася напередодні здобуття незалежности. Увагу зосереджено на одному з важливіших моментів цієї дискусії, а саме на середині 1990-их рр., коли на літературній сцені починали змагатися за першість різні групи літераторів генерації, яка дебютувала в середині 1980-их, на хвилі перебудови. Претекстом до цієї дискусії стала поява антології "Вечеря на дванадцять персон". Її упорядник у передмові проголосив виникнення нової літературної школи (Житомирської прозової школи) та різко протиставив презентовані тексти іншій, ним же проголошеній Галицькій школі. Це протиставлення було вписано в протистояння двох орієнтацій української

культури: прозахідної, відкритої культури та вірної власній, самобутній та неповторній традиції (закритої культури). У трактуванні автора цієї передмови представники галицької школи зорієнтовані на чужі та ворожі українській культурі зразки, натомість репрезентанти житомирської школи, занурені у традицію, водночас шукають нових самобутніх моделей, які за означенням сприяють розвитку цієї культури. Довкола цієї антології почалася жвава дискусія, учасники якої поділилися на два протилежні табори. Прихильників відкритого типу культури у ході цієї дискусії було названо за давньою традицією “західниками”, натомість поборників самобутності—“грунтівцями” (поняття запозичене з російського “почвенники”). Таким чином літературне протистояння перенесено у сферу ідеологічного протистояння столітньої давности. Оскільки протягом XX століття воно підживлювалося советською пропагандою, ворожою до західних цінностей, учасники дискусії скористалися готовими штампами, несвідомо повертаючи дискусію про нову українську ідентичність у старе русло.