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The Reverse Side of the Socialist Realist Canon: the Experience of Ukrainian Literature

Although the concept of literary canon originates from a completely different tradition, it turned out to be surprisingly organic for description of what has been formed for a long time through totalitarian state mechanisms, in particular, in Ukrainian Soviet literature. Such canon is extremely structured, but not frozen because it experienced transformations depending on changes in the "party line". The totalitarian nature of this canon meant that nothing could exist outside of it. What was outside these limits was either forbidden or condemned (and often it was not in the metaphorical, but quite literal sense of a word). This is exactly what we mean by the flip side of a socialist realist canon.

The collapse of the totalitarian state, with all its supervisory and punitive mechanisms, seemed to lead to the fact that the reverse side would automatically turn into the front side. At least as a research object it's worthy of due attention. It is about the comeback from oblivion of forbidden and undeservedly marginalized authors and texts. And we have been observing such processes for the last thirty years. At the same time, the work of once "canonical" authors is undergoing a regular reconsideration. In it, the emphasis shifts to the same reverse side, which was previously branded as certain deviations from the only correct path. In both cases, two demonstrative examples of the poets Pavlo Tychyna and Vasyl Stus can be given. On the other hand, we can state a certain vitality of the Ukrainian socialist realist canon in various guises until our time. As the latest studies show, it is impossible to fully understand its reverse side without a thorough study of this phenomenon.

The total dominance of socialist realism over a long period of time has resulted in the fact that at the time of its historical end it ceased to arouse the least interest on the part of those who had kept to it before. This is clear from the research carried out by Valentyna Kharkhun, who, as of 2004, managed to find "no more than ten Ukrainian publications of the post-Soviet period that were focused on the issues of socialist realism" (2009, p. 8). The scholar points out that "the reluctance of Ukrainian humanities to understand the phenomenon of social realism was noticeable" and attributes this to "the lack of an optimal discussion field for scientific reflection" (p. 8). Obviously, at first, the necessary distancing for an objective assessment of the

phenomenon had not yet taken place. In addition, a lot of attention was required to comprehend everything that had been banned so recently.

However, in the early 2000s, the situation began to change. There were published a number of monographs that, in one way or another, dealt with the phenomenon of socialist realism (Захарчук 2008; Роготченко 2007; Свербілова 2011; Хархун 2009), not only in literature, but also in the visual arts, theater, architecture, etc. There were even textbooks (Яременко 2001) and dictionaries (Клековкін, 2021) on the subject. Apart from various types of comprehensive studies, it is also essential to lay a particular emphasis on numerous studies devoted to the work of individual writers in terms of socialist realism (Коломієць 2016; Коновалова 2016; Куцевол 2012; Пізнюк 2002).

Since socialist realism as a method and style was largely an artificial formation, contemporary Ukrainian researchers prefer to avoid such definitions. On the other hand, even when they argue that "'socialist realism' is a dead end in the history of literature" and admit that it "has become by no means the best page in the history of Ukrainian literature", they must agree that this page "unfortunately cannot be eliminated" (Ковалів 2009:. 29). Therefore, Ukrainian studies apply such concepts as socialist realist discourse (Коновалова, 2016), paradigm (Коломієць 2016), and canon (Куцевол 2012; Федорів 2016; Хархун 2009).

All these concepts are justified and efficient in their own way. Nevertheless, we would like to dwell in more detail on the category of canon, which is perhaps most closely related to the category of memory. Today, there are at least two thorough studies in this respect: Valentyna Kharkhun's "The Socialist Realist Canon in Ukrainian Literature: Genesis, Development, and Modifications" (2009) and Uliana Fedoriv's "The Socialist Realist Canon in Ukrainian Literature: Mechanisms of Formation and Transformation" (2016).

It is important that the very issue of comprehending and rethinking the socialist realist canon in Ukrainian literature was tackled in 1991 by the Australian literary critic of Ukrainian origin Marko Pavlyshyn in his article "Aspects of the Literary Process in the USSR: The Politics of Recanonization in Ukraine After 1985". This work described the situation during the glasnost period. It was later published in Ukrainian in the journal "Svito-Vyd" under the title "Canon and Iconostasis" (1992) and later reprinted in a book of the same name (1997). Even then, it outlined many issues that have not lost their relevance to this day.

Above all, Pavlyshyn draws attention to the interest that the consideration of the processes of revising the socialist realist canon (not in its central, Russian hypostasis) may cause. "In Ukraine, as in other non-Russian republics of the USSR,

the general relief had two main dimensions: in addition to general political liberalization, there were certain shifts in the hierarchical definition of relations between Russia and non-Russia as between center and periphery, metropolis and province, capital and colony. Consequently, consideration of processes far from the center may be more useful in getting to the heart of the matter than the more traditional focus on the culture of the former metropolis" (Павлишин 1997: 184). This remark obviously refers to the fact that Western Sovietology has largely been a predominantly Russian studies and has ignored other research objects.

Although Pavlyshyn uses the term "canon" (because it "originated from Western literary studies"), he makes an important clarification: "In Eastern Europe, the object of honor in literature was often not so much a text as a person, or, more precisely, the totality of a writer's biography, works, and historical role (...). Literary canonization in the Soviet Union took on forms that in some ways resemble the canonization of a church saint. A writer (an individual text!) takes a place in a series of similar individual texts, which is more useful to regard not as a canon but as an iconostasis" (p. 191). According to Pavlyshyn, the perestroika period has made it possible to build up a new vision of the literary canon. The latter vision presented two options, both of which turned out to be utopian: "a radically new canon that would simply reject almost all socialist realist production, preserving only certain works from it, marked (by chance) with attributes that would fit into some new scheme of values. In this way, it would be possible to define a new family tree of worthy works that would grow through the modernism of the 1920s and 1930s, through certain domestic and diaspora writers and poets of the 1960s, to the present day, where such a tradition could become both a logical beginning and a canonical reference point for contemporary literature. (...) the second option is to do away with the concept of the canon altogether, at least temporarily" (p. 188). Instead, "the Ukrainian literary discussion (...) did not choose the path of iconoclasm (...). It has led to the addition of a new layer of newly canonized icons to the iconostasis. The old icons remained in almost the same hierarchy as before. Sometimes, those who have found a place in the iconostasis may possess previously unnoticed attributes symbolizing heretical ideological inclinations" (p. 192).

Pavlyshyn claims that "criticism (somewhat unbridled by publicity) had enough energy to return to the canon the texts that had been banned until recently. (...) But it was not enough to thoroughly thin out the canon that emerged after 1934 in compliance with the formula of socialist realist literature" (pp. 187-188). The mechanism of the formation of the new canon resembled the previous period in many ways. Earlier, "the history of literature was restricted to the eternal return of

the story of how (...) an ideologically oriented author writes (...) an ideologically oriented work", later, there emerge "already new biographical motives that signal a positive assessment of a critic or historian (books banned by censorship; prohibition to be published; deformation by editors; conflicts with the authorities and the KGB, even imprisonment)" (pp. 191-192). In other words, the reverse side of the socialist realist canon is emphasized, which, however, does not in any way cancel it.

Thus, both the socialist realist canon and its reverse side continue to coexist, except that they have changed places. This coexistence results in a very bizarre product, which is true not only for the early 1990s, but also for the rest of the time. It is hardly possible to completely agree with Olena Voshchenko that "the collapse of the Soviet Union and the release of the humanitarian sphere of independent Ukraine from direct imperial administration was marked by the curtailment of the socialist realist project and its replacement by a national counter-discourse in the status of one of the official discourses" (Вощенко 2021: 7).

Pavlyshyn's criticisms of the formation of a new canon of Ukrainian literature are made largely from a postcolonial point of view. Ivan Dziuba objected to this, insisting that "in the field of culture, we are still far from finally overcoming the colonial condition (...). At best, overcoming this colonial condition will take a whole historical era" (Павлишин 1997: 24). Although history often accelerates certain processes (actualizing, for example, the decommunization that was not properly carried out at the time), even today, in the face of a new colonial threat, many issues remain far from being finally resolved. This is about Ukraine's Soviet heritage: is it primarily Soviet, or is it primarily Ukrainian?

Anyway, the very existence of the socialist realist canon opens up a very interesting field of research of not only its essential parameters, but also of what we have labeled as its reverse side. These are not only the forbidden texts and authors, but also the transformation of the canon itself, when its front side turned into the reverse side; these are different editions of texts; these are textbooks in literary history, and the changes they underwent; counter-discourse in "samizdat" and the diaspora, etc. The normativity of the socialist realist canon only contributes to the reconstruction of its reverse side.

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რომან ძიკი, ლილია შუტიაკი
(უკრაინა)

სოციალისტური რეალიზმის კანონის უკანა მხარე: უკრაინული ლიტერატურის გამოცდილება

რეზიუმე

საკვანძო სიტყვები: სოციალისტური რეალიზმი, ლიტერატურული კანონი, სოციალისტური რეალიზმის კანონი, უკრაინული საბჭოთა ლიტერატურა, უკრაინული ლიტერატურა.

მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ ლიტერატურული კანონის კონცეფცია სრულიად განსხვავებული ტრადიციიდან იღებს სათავეს, ის საოცრად ორგანული აღმოჩნდა იმის აღსაწერად, რაც ტოტალიტარული სახელმწიფოს მექანიზმების საშუალებით ჩამოყალიბდა, მათ შორის, უკრაინულ საბჭოთა ლიტერატურაში. ასეთი კანონი უკიდურესად სტრუქტურირებულია, მაგრამ არ არის გაყინული, რადგან მან განიცადა ტრანსფორმაციები „პარტიული ხაზის“ ცვლილებების მიხედვით. ამ კანონის ტოტალიტარული ბუნება იმას ნიშნავდა, რომ მის გარეთ ვერაფერი იარსებებდა. ყველაფერი, რაც ამ საზღვრებს მიღმა არსებობდა, ან აკრძალული იყო ან დაგმობილი (უმეტესად, არა მეტაფორული, არამედ ამ სიტყვის სრულიად პირდაპირი გაგებით). სწორედ ამას ვგულისხმობთ სოციალისტური რეალიზნის კანონის მეორე მხარეში. ტოტალიტარული სახელმწიფოს დაშლამ, მთელი მისი ზედამხედველობითი და სადამსჯელო მექანიზმებით, ერთი შეხედვით, თითქოს მიგვიყვანა იმ ფაქტამდე, რომ „უკანა მხარე“ ავტომატურად გადაიქცა „წინა მხარედ“. ყოველ შემთხვევაში, როგორც კვლევის ობიექტი, ის სათანადო ყურადღების ღირსია. საუბარია აკრძალული და დაუმსახურებლად მარგინალიზებული ავტორებისა და ტექსტების „დავიწყებიდან დაბრუნებაზე“. ჩვენ ბოლო ოცდაათი წელია ვაკვირდებით ასეთ პროცესებს. ამავდროულად, ოდესღაც „კანონიკური“ ავტორების შემოქმედებაც რეგულარულად განიცდის გადაახედვასა და გადააზრებას. აქცენტიც გადაინაცვლებს საპირისპირო მხარეს, რომელიც ადრე შეფასებული იყო როგორც გარკვეული გადახრა „ერთადერთი სწორი გზიდან“. ორივე შემთხვევაში, შეიძლება მოვიყვანოთ პოეტების პავლო ტიჩინისა და ვასილ სტუსის მაგალითები. მეორე მხრივ, ჩვენ შეგვიძლია დავაფიქსიროთ უკრაინული სოციალისტური რეალიზმის კანონის გარკვეული სიცოცხლისუნარიანობა ჩვენს დრომდე, სხვადასხვა ჰიპოსტასებით. როგორც უახლესი კვლევები აჩვენებს, შეუძლებელია მისი საპირისპირო მხარის სრულად გაგება, ამ ფენომენის საფუძვლიანი შესწავლის გარეშე.