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Soochow University (Taiwan)**CREATIVE DISSONANCE AS A MODE OF WRITING:  
THE CASE OF IVAN FRANKO**

*Ivan Franko (1856–1916) enjoys a lofty place in Ukrainian literature. He is remarkable for the breadth of his literary activity, richness of expression, the broad range of his interests, the many literary genres in which he wrote and his excellence as a literary critic. He played a major role in the spiritual evolution of his countrymen. He took inspiration from European Romanticism and played an active role in the socialist experiment in Galicia (1877–1897), ultimately becoming disillusioned by its failure to resolve national issues, especially national independence, to the realization of which he devoted himself until his death in 1916.*

*This paper focuses on the creative dissonance which characterizes Franko as a Slavist and literary critic, the influence of Eliza Orzeszkowa, his regard for and controversial attitude to the Polish Romantic writer, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) and his championing of the Ukrainian bard, Taras Shevchenko. Franko wrote a number of essays devoted to the Polish bard, most notoriously “The Poet of Betrayal” (1897), originally written in German at a time of Franko’s break with Polish socialists. An examination of Franko’s idea of betrayal puts into perspective contemporary and historical relations between Poles and Russians and Poles and Ukrainians in the years preceding World War I marked by increasingly strident nationalistic and chauvinistic tendencies and the attitude of both to Russia — its culture and politics.*

**Key words:** positivism, Ukraine, nationalism, Slavism, betrayal, chauvinism.

**Яницькі Дж. Творча розбіжність як метод творчості: на прикладі Франка.** Іван Франко (1856–1916) посідає визначне місце в українській літературі. Він відомий передусім обсягами своєї літературної діяльності, багатством вираження думок, різнобічними інтересами, великою кількістю жанрів, у яких писав, і своєю досконалістю як літературного критика. Письменник відіграв головну роль у духовній еволюції простого селянина. Його надихнув європейський романтизм, який активно відобразився як експеримент у Галичині (1877–1897), зрештою, ставши зневіреном провалом для вирішення національних ідей, а особливо національної незалежності, реалізації якої він присвятив своє життя до своєї смерті у 1916.

Ця стаття зосереджена на креативній противазі, яка характеризує Франка як славіста і літературного критика, впливу Елізи Ожешко, його суперечливому ставленню до польських романтиків, Адама Міцкевича, та його відстоюванні українських співиців, Тараса Шевченка. Франко — автор численних праць, присвячених польським бардам, одна з найбільш загальновідомих — «Поет зради» (1897) — в оригіналі написана німецькою мовою в часи Франкової боротьби з польськими соціалістами. Як випробування, Франкова ідея зради вміщує перспективну сучасність і історичні зв’язки між Польщею і Росією та Польщею і Україною перед I Світовою війною і відзначена все більше і більше скрипучими націоналістичними і шовіністичними тенденціями та відношенням обох до Росії — її культури і політики

**Ключові слова:** позитивізм, Україна, націоналізм, славізм, зрада, шовінізм.

**Janicki J. Twórcza sprzeczność jako metoda twórczości: na przykładzie Franki.** Iwan Franko (1856–1916) zajmuje istotne miejsce w literaturze ukraińskiej. On znany, przede wszystkim, objętością swojej działalności literackiej, bogactwem ekspresji myśli, szerokim kierunkiem zainteresowań, dużą ilością gatunków literackich, w których pisał i swoją doskonałością jako krytyka literatury. Pisarz odegrał główną rolę w ewolucji duchowej chłopca. Jego inspiracją był romantyzm europejski, który aktywnie

odzwierciedlał się jako eksperyment w Galicji (1877–1897), zresztą, został niepowodzeniem dla załatwienia idei narodowych, zwłaszcza niepodległości narodowej, realizacji której on poświęcił się do samej śmierci w 1916 roku.

Ten artykuł skupia się na twórczej sprzeczności, która charakteryzuje Frankę jako sławistę i krytyka literatury, wpływu Elizy Orzeszkowej, jego sprzecznym stosunku do polskich romantyków, Adama Mickiewicza, i jego popieraniu ukraińskich piosenkarzy, Tarasa Szewczenki. Franko napisał dużą ilość prac, poświęconych polskiemu bardom, jedna z najbardziej znanych „Poeta zdrady” (1897), w oryginale napisana w języku niemieckim, w trakcie Frankowej walki, z polskimi socjalistami. Jako wypróbowanie, idea zdrady zawiera perspektywną współczesność i związki historyczne między Polską a Rosją oraz Polską i Ukrainą pod czas Pierwszej wojny światowej i zauważalna większymi trzeszczącymi narodowymi i szowinistycznymi tendencjami i stosunkami obu do Rosji — jej kultury i polityki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *pozytywizm, Ukraina, nacjonalizm, sławizm, zdrada, szowinizm.*

*Spokojne myśli, pogodne czoło  
Miewam na co dzień jak i na święto  
–A cóż ty robisz, kiedy wokoło  
Krzywdę i zbrodnie widzisz przekłętą?—  
Gdy w krąg szaleją moce ciemności,  
Zdradzieckie serca, dusze obłudne,  
Śmieję się z gniewu, śpiewam ze złości.  
Jakież to łatwe. Jakież to trudne.  
(Leopold Staff)*

The present study is a modest attempt to pay tribute to Ivan Franko on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in 1916 as one of the most talented creative writers and literary critics in the Ukrainian, Slavic and European tradition. Franko's intimate knowledge of the Polish and Russian literary traditions makes him especially valuable in instilling an appreciation of Ukrainian culture and literature to those such as the present writer who are more familiar with Russian and Polish literature and history. His writings, especially his literary criticism, provide an excellent introduction to issues in Polish-Ukrainian and Russian-Ukrainian culture and to an appreciation of Ukrainian culture per se and in a broader European context<sup>2</sup>.

Ivan Franko is an iconic figure in Ukrainian culture; he has been institutionalized in the city named for him, the university in Lviv which he attended and the theater in the same city. The enabling conditions for this stature, in addition to his native genius and virtuosity as a writer, include his family background of mixed ethnic and social background; being born in a small town in Eastern Galicja near the oilfields of Boryslaw; attending a Polish lyceum taught by Basilian Brothers in Drohobych where the language of instruction was Polish and where he developed an appreciation of Polish literature and in particular a lifelong interest and deep knowledge of Polish Romanticism; undergoing his formative years and developing his intellectual interests in the aftermath of the 1863 Uprising which effectively marked an end to dreams of the revival of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and a concomitant more widespread emergence of national

<sup>1</sup> In Ze struny na strunę, 47.

<sup>2</sup> See Oksana Zabushko, *Ukraininski palimpsest. Kolegium Europy Wschodniej*. Wrocław, 2013.

consciousness among Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians. He also benefitted from his associations as a writer and critic in the city of Lviv, Lwow, Lemberg, with its vibrant multifaceted culture and the relatively liberal cultural life of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (in spite of being arrested three times by Austrian authorities). His intimate knowledge of the Austrian capital where he earned his doctorate at the University of Vienna, having written his dissertation in German, further broadened his outlook as a European intellectual, endowing him with a third language for writing that would extend his readership to non-Slavs.<sup>1</sup>

I. Lysiak-Rudnytsky provides a succinct summary of his life. Franko “led a productive, yet turbulent life that was marked by poverty, and especially during his last decade, by crippling illnesses. In his native Galicia, he encountered clashes with Austrian authorities which led to his imprisonment on three separate occasions. Having earned a doctorate at the University of Vienna, he suffered frustrations in his academic ambitions, and premature physical and mental breakdowns, succumbing to them at the age of 60. With his humble beginnings as the son of a village blacksmith, he was alive to creative impulse and responsive to the dynamic social and political movements of his times. The specific social conditions in Galicia together with the undeveloped state of Ukrainian culture and national consciousness nourished his literary activity. He served as mentor to two generations of Ukrainian writers and intellectuals in Galicia.” (Rudnytsky, 142)

A remarkable ambivalence, which we term as creative dissonance, characterizes Franko as a literary critic in Lviv writing in Polish and Ukrainian (and German) for Polish and Ukrainian journals and newspapers. This ambivalence provided him with unusual insight yet burdened him with divided loyalties until the late 1890s. This burden was attenuated by his great respect for learning that would ultimately transcend the increasingly polarized realities of fin de siècle politics yet provide no cure for competing nationalisms growing to monstrous proportions. Franko was engaged in one of the noblest endeavors and creative undertakings that could be applied practically to the exigencies of social life, giving vitality and direction to an emerging Ukrainian consciousness. The tensions, ambiguities and paradoxes apparent in his life eventually took its painful toll while he strove to maintain a consistency in his social principles and artistic values combined with an unwillingness to compromise that would force him into an untenable position--qualities that shed light on his creative and critical outlook.

His ambivalence can be seen in his attempts to combine and harmonize two opposing tendencies of a single temperamental critical/artistic nature involving great sensitivity to a culturally complex environment. These tendencies created, instead, a disharmony within the self and in his relationship to the rapidly evolving social and political world of the times. This relationship between temperament and creativity was exacerbated by his deeply embedded and highly emotional romantic metaphysics. To paraphrase the idea

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<sup>1</sup> Franko's German-language political articles, twenty-nine in all, published in the Viennese democratic weekly, *Die Zeit*, a regular correspondent from 1895-1905, writing on conditions and cultural and political developments in Galicia. Franko was “a political journalist of the first rank”... and his articles were “rich in factual detail, erudite, well-crafted style, use of irony and understatement, driven by his dedication in serving the needs and ambitions of his people, disciplined, objective, and lucid in the mode of presentation.” His topics ranged from electoral abuses, Austro-Polish administration to the Polish landlord class, Polish-Ukrainian relations, and peasant unrest. He won particular praise for “Poles and Ruthenians” (1897) and “Peasant Strikes in Galicia” (1902). (Rudnytsky 143-144)

of R. D. Laing, the author of *The Divided Self* (1960) the predominant characteristic of such an individual is to experience oneself as not at home in the world, with two selves interacting as if at a distance from each other. Instead one locates one's true sense of being in a realm of pure thought, one that is more real and more vital than the body or the external world, consequently, finding oneself to be at odds with one's self, with the customs and practices of one's society. (17)

Franko ultimately freed himself of this ambivalence, at least on a socio-political level, and emerged as a self-declared leader of his people, a conscience and a consciousness, through his writings developing a persona who sets off to lead them to the promised land of national independence, a hoped-for equality and dignity among the family of nations. In overcoming the ambivalences of his earlier years and his growing sense of betraying his own people by maintaining social ideals that no longer appeared tenable, he crossed the Rubicon in his decision to write the "Poet of Treason" (1897), thereby effectively cutting off relations as usual with Poles, distancing himself from the allure of Polish romantic poetry while championing Taras Shevchenko as a national poet of universal stature.

The validity and unique value of Franko's writings lay in his peculiar perspective undertaken at a key point of development of Ukrainian culture in a broad sense. Given its underdeveloped nature, the various levels of cooperation he undertook with Poles and the Polish publishing establishment fostered an inborn ambivalent state of mind that made him more sensitive and endowed him with keener insights into the competing and interrelated literary traditions and added to the purposefulness of his contributions to the Ukrainian literary legacy. His early pursuits, especially in the 1870s and 1880s guided by socialist values in a positivistic intellectual environment led to an overly unified conceptualization of his world that would later result in futility and disillusion, an increasingly frustrating internal-external tension for such a highly creative, industrious and idealistic individual.

The psychological and the artistic development of a great thinker; his distinctive cultural formation and personality rooted in the dual Ukrainian-Polish cultural outlook, and the critical thought refracted through this perspective are all worthy of consideration. His intellectual concerns are bound up with the ideas (and ideals) of his milieu, ideas the concreteness and emotional immediacy of which appealed to him. His literary criticism in particular allows him to identify and champion inherent Ukrainian values and place them in a broader Slavic context. In spite of his Ruthenian (Ukrainian) identity, he devoted a significant portion of his writing to Polish issues—he has over 1000 publications to his credit in the Polish language (Kuplowski 61) — he was extremely knowledgeable of Polish literary history with intimate knowledge of many of its works; he presented talks on Polish-Ukrainian literary relations including one in Lviv in 1894 in which he declared: „W całej Słowiańszczyźnie nie ma dwóch narodów, które by pod względem życia politycznego i duchowego tak ściśle zrosły się ze sobą, tak licznymi połączone były węzłami, a mimo to tak ciągle stroniły jeden od drugiego, jak Polacy i Rusini. („Wzajemny stosunek literatury polskiej i ruskiej” (in Kozak, ed., *O literaturze polskiej*, 291).

In characterizing Franko's intellectual outlook, Tamara Hundarova refers to his eclecticism in terms of which he combined elements of the sociological, the psychological,

the lyrical and the didactic in both his creative works and his criticism. She also provides an outline of the dominants of his literary outlook throughout his artistic career from the early idealism of his twenties (1870s) to the naturalism of the 1880s, the psychologism of the 1890s and ultimately his broad humanism characteristic of his most mature years in the 1900s. (91)

Schmid, on the other hand points out the dual strands of individualism and nationalism (*individual'nist'/narodnist'*)<sup>1</sup> in Franko's creative and intellectual outlook, the national tradition intricately intertwined with the distinctive originality of the poet's artistry which served to elevate his vision to the global. Franko, thus, was receptive to artists such as Mickiewicz and Shevchenko who were able to capture the essence of a historical period and transcend its temporal limitations through their evocative powers as lyricists and artists of genial proportions. (50ff.)

In examining Franko's critical writing in the light of his personality, cultural formation and life experience, the present study focuses on three affinities he nurtured in the persons of Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841–1910), Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) and Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861). The congenial nature of socialist thinkers and writers such as Orzeszkowa serves as a basis for understanding and appreciating his social values and liberal ideals while his unique appreciation of Polish literature helps provide insight into his contributions as a critic to both Polish and Ukrainian literary traditions, and the usefulness of these insights into his writings on Shevchenko. The influence of the Polish literary tradition on him and on Ukrainian literature and his ultimate intellectual liberation from that tradition through his ostensible yet highly dramatic rejection of the Polish cultural hero Mickiewicz at a time of his national glorification and his replacement as the leading light in the Slavic pantheon by Shevchenko allows one to place both Shevchenko and Franko as stars of the first magnitude in the European firmament. Franko thus demonstrated his ability to transcend the central elements of his psychic constitution by fleshing out the existential and psychological ramifications that were pervasive and foundational.

### Orzeszkowa

Todorov writes of the Idea and practice of toleration in its relation with freedom and equality, a view that sheds light on the commonality of Orzeszkowa and Franko: humanism and mutual respect serve to provide a solid basis for toleration especially for those who share common borders. "Faith in the universality of humanity and in the essential equality of individuals is the basis of classic *humanism*." (142) For Todorov, writing of the humanist Montaigne, the 16<sup>th</sup> century discovery of new worlds gave fresh impetus to toleration which takes into account human diversity as opposed to the self-denying and ultimately

<sup>1</sup> Narodnist' is a key concept in the artistic and ideological definition of "Ukrainianness" in the 19th century. Does Ukrainian literature have a right to exist? Do the Ukrainian people have a right to a sovereign nation? The question of legitimacy shifted to Galicia in the post-1863 era when tsarist Russian authorities denied this right. Franko affirmed that Ukrainian literature should be written in Ukrainian, that the language was not a dialect of Russian but an independent language suitable for all purposes, (See Literaturni pys'ma) a view culminating in his "Istoriia ukrainskoi literatury" (1909) (Schmid 50)

destructive process of assimilation. As opposed to the distrust and misunderstanding that brought violence and eventually massacres in its wake, both Orzeszkowa and Franko insisted on the natural rights of all human beings though their insistence came to be rebuffed by the exclusiveness and intolerance of populist politics of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

Orzeszkowa was born in the traditional borderland city of Grodno. A writer, publicist and social activist, she was Franko's senior by 15 years. A student of philosophy, sociology and economics in addition to literature, she was well acquainted with the works of J. S. Mill and Herbert Spencer. She sought to understand the decline of the Polish gentry and its inability to adapt to modern economic realities. She perceived the dangers of traditional patriotism by the very nature of its intolerance as nurtured and propagated by the gentry to be dangerous for the newly emancipated peasantry. She saw the gentry as crippled by its anachronistic dogmatic view of the world, blinded by its prejudices and moral shortcomings, lacking the will, the energy and the moral courage to undertake the measures to create a modern society.<sup>2</sup> She was a champion of the marginalized, of women, of Jews, of Lithuanians; she herself took up the study of the daunting Lithuanian language in her later years. In the words of Hipolit Korwin-Milewski: „Mieszkała wówczas w Grodnie pani Eliza Orzeszkowa, ogólnie uznana kapłanka jednocześnie patriotyzmu i płacziwej demokracji”<sup>3</sup>.

Orzeszkowa's personal views and theoretical principles derived from works by the English sociologist, Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), especially for the years 1879–1883 as reflected in her works, including the novel *Widma* (1881), and in letters and essays from that period influenced by Spencer's essays on progress, education, his *Principles of Sociology* (1874) and *Introduction to Sociology* (1873). Orzeszkowa's writings on Jews and the Jewish question, patriotism and cosmopolitanism reflected those views, and found in him an affirmation of her own views, which armed her to deflect leftist attacks. Her original views were based on her observations of Polish reality in the post-1863 political and social landscape and in her attempts to rebuild Polish cultural and social infrastructure destroyed by the pacification of the uprising. Her efforts to strengthen and unite society, to cure social ills, stimulate new growth, foster healthy attitudes, revive vital resources, and champion the value of hard work, intellectual and otherwise, found resonance in the young Franko. Her model of revitalizing the nation after a defeat that threatened the very existence of the nation through an engaged literary activity and the creation of literary heroes who would embody her positivist ideals finds its counterpart in Franko. She championed doctors, engineers, scholars, those who build and nurture life and the development of the individual in preparation for taking on such a lofty social task. (Detko 84–98)

Franko's ideal of unity and harmony among peoples, groups and nations was characteristic of the underlying socialist idealism of brotherhood. His concern for the common

<sup>1</sup> A secular humanist who attempted to understand and appreciate the other at a time when nationalist sentiment was taking on the color and passion of a religion, Montaigne (1533–1592), as seen in his essay entitled “Vanity” was an eloquent spokesman for universality and toleration—the suffering provoked by religious wars had their counterparts in the pogroms of the 1880s: “I believe all men to be my compatriots, I embrace a Polishman as I would a Frenchman, transferring this national liaison to the universal and the common.” (142)

<sup>2</sup> Halina Floryńska-Lalewicz, Eliza Orzeszkowa Pisarka, publicystka, działaczka społeczna lipiec 2007, aktualizacja SW, lipiec 2013

<sup>3</sup> Zbigniew Florczak (Pelican), “W kontekście polsko-rosyjskim, 29 in Kultura (Paryż) Nr 7/622–8/623, 1999, 26–38.

man, his support for a liberal-democratic form of government, his pro-reform mindset was opposed to the growing radicalism of the political and social state of affairs. Eschewing participation in the underground conspiracies prevalent at the time, he offered no support for violent revolt in Galicia. He was an evolutionist à la Orzeszkowa. He co-authored a socialist manifesto for socialists in Galicia (*Program socjalistów galicyjskich*, 1881; wrote for the Ukrainian Enlightenment Society (*Prosvita*) and penned brochures to elevate the spiritual life and improve the minds of his people. In the 1870s and 1880s he proved to be a staunch fighter for progress, liberty and justice through steady work in a positivistic sense. He had high hopes for Ukrainian independence and as an equal partner in the brotherhood of nations: “Glorious Mother-Ukraine will rise happy and free/ from the Kuban to the Syan River, one, indivisible.” (1883) At the same time his intimate knowledge of Polish literature allowed for the penning of critical essays on Polish writers and correspondence with contemporary Polish cultural figures such as Orzeszkowa, the younger modernist writer and poet, Kazimierz Tetmajer (1865–1940) and the poet and playwright of the Young Poland movement, Jan Kasprówicz. (1860–1926)<sup>1</sup>

Herself a reader of Ukrainian literature, in a letter of encouragement to Franko Orzeszkowa apprised him of his task to add depth and breadth and psychological insight to his works. She praised Franko’s *Zakhar Berkut*, a historical romance depicting the life of the dwellers as well as their system of government in the Carpathian Region of the 13th century, noting the common features and overlapping cultures of Poles and Ukrainians. Her encouragement gave impetus to his own artistic principles. In “Literatura, jej zadania i najważniejsze cechy” (“Literatura, jii zawdannia i najwazniszi cichy,” 1878) he established his own criteria of literature and aesthetics in terms of which a work of art is to be seen in its relation to reality, that literature is a reflection of the life, work and thought of a given period; that it has a strongly didactic function in exposing the virtues and vices characteristic of the times so as to have a moralizing effect on readers, and in serving as an active force to addressing the social and political conflicts of a given epoch.

Franko in turn praised Orzeszkowa for her depictions of the Polish peasant and the nurturing land. He appreciated the deeply felt sensitivity she exuded in conveying her poetic vision, and her ability to enter the spirit of the Polish folk and their folk songs and to capture their rich melodies and motifs. Franko established contact with Polish socialists in 1879 — attempting to work with them on equal terms; his poem “Lyakham” “Let’s be brothers as equals/ but not as lords and subjects.” Like Orzeszkowa, he was a fighter for progress, liberty and justice through steady work in a positivistic sense.

The often tense social and political events in Galicja soon began to impact his views, his critical articles written in Ukrainian and German and published in Ukrainian and German journals becoming more piquant, his criticism more pointed and more ironic than articles written in Polish, which tended to be more balanced, less satirical, with more carefully weighed words (See Kuplowski, 32). By 1891 he had come to a crossroad where he was forced to admit defeat of his socialist program. He began losing his faith

<sup>1</sup> Franko had high praise for Kasprówicz’s volume *Z chlopskiego zagonu* which he characterized as “full of the strength and energy of the folk spirit, free of the decadent tendencies rife in much modernistic verse of the times.” (*Z literatury polskiej*) In his article “Współczesni poeci polscy” (1899) he was more critical of Kasprówicz for a lack of sincerity and a loss of his former simplicity of expression in “Poezje Jana Kasprówicza” *Kurier Lwowski*, 1889; later *Suczasiński polski poeta*, *Literaturno-naukowy wistnyk*, 1899, t. 5, kn. 3.

in the realization of equitable existence for his people as a nation and society. He became more sensitive to modernist sensibilities, to cultural and literary currents that reflected the psychological and the individual. This tendency was intensified by Franko's criticism of his kinsmen for their pettiness, pompousness and narrow egoism. (Kuplowski 55)

The turning point in Franko's writerly career was provoked by a crisis that broke out between Franko and Polish socialists shortly after the publication of the 1896 edition of *Ziviyale Listya* (*Withered Leaves*), leading to a break of national and political relations stemming from elections held in March 1897 in Galicia. Franko had been nominated as a candidate by the Ukrainian Social and Radical Party for the imperial and provincial legislatures. Kasimir Felix Badeni (1846–1909), a long-time enemy of Franko, was serving as Minister of Internal Affairs in Vienna and gave secret instructions to the administration in Galicia not to allow the Ukrainians to be elected to either the imperial or the provincial legislatures. Intimidation, terror, and falsification were employed against the Ukrainian constituents. The blatant manipulation of the elections led to Franko's defeat: "The hardest and the most terrible events that touched me deeply and personally like a thunder, like an unexpected illness, were the bloody 1897 elections. All the malice and contempt for ordinary people, deeply concealed contempt for law and legality by the Polish bosses in Galicia, came like oil to the service of water at that time." (Kuplowski 57–58)<sup>1</sup>.

The incidents of intimidation and the arrests perpetrated by the Polish authorities in Galicia in connection with the elections and the suppression of all reports of violence and unfair tactics brought Franko's vision of harmony to a brutal end. The gulf separating Franko from his erstwhile close Polish friends proved to be a permanent impasse. The impossibility of serving as a bridge connecting the two ethnic communities led to his firm decision to nurture Ukrainian soil while examining the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations that reached back to the reign of Yuri II d. 1340 and the annexation of Ruthenian lands by Casimir the Great. (d. 1370)

After the debacle of his electoral defeat in 1897 Franko condemned the brutality and antagonisms which became essential elements of a new political dogmatism based on hatred and class struggle. An erstwhile proponent of humane socialism and the brotherhood of man, he now felt it his primary duty and responsibility in tending to the spiritual needs of his own nation.<sup>2</sup> (BN XLVIII))

Franko's frustration was vented in an article appearing in a May 8, 1897 edition of *Die Zeit*, a German language weekly published in Vienna. The article was entitled "Der Dichter des Verrates" (translated as "The Poet of Deceit" or "The Poet of Treachery") and published two months after the election. It was soon translated into Polish by "a Polish Patriot," eliciting a storm of indignation among Poles. The article identified the moral shortcomings of Poles and the source and the roots of Polish deceitfulness and treachery in the mentality and works of its greatest poet and national hero, Mickiewicz. He viewed Poles as a captured, subjugated nation whose only weapons to wield in their captivity were deceit and subterfuge. In examining the dark side of patriotism he made

<sup>1</sup> For background information, see the discussion on the theme of nationalism and hatred presented in Brian Porter's study *When Nationalism Began to Hate* (2000).

<sup>2</sup> See his articles in *Naprzod*, 1904 and an edition of his political essays ed by B. Krawcew, NY, 1966.



the assertion that “Mickiewicz glorified deceit as something ideal since it is inspired with the highest spirit of patriotism.” (Franko Poeta, 13)

Stemming from this state of affairs were sad times and a sorry national malaise when its people unreservedly were forced to consider such a poet its highest national hero and continue to nourish its coming generations on the poisonous fruits of his spirit (16) He was summarily dismissed from his post at *Kurier Lwowski* where he had spent “ten years of serfdom” (1887–1897) and his cooperation with fellow Polish journalists and socialists came to an abrupt end. Thereafter he devoted himself exclusively to the task of national independence in cooperation with Ukrainian intellectuals.

### Mickiewicz and The Poet of Treason

“Ein Dichter des Verrats” (1897) was not included in Franko’s collection of German writings, an indication that the work was atypical of his writings. (Rudnytsky 140) In the article, Franko depicts Mickiewicz as a teacher in political perfidy, its publication creating a stir in Polish circles, and elicited numerous responses in the Polish press.<sup>1</sup> The Polish reaction was largely vociferously negative as an attack on Polish character and the greatest source of national pride. “The Poet of Betrayal” became a turning point in Franko’s life. His break with his Polish colleagues and friends, democrats and populist sympathizers, was abrupt. It resulted in the summary loss of his position with *Kurjer Lwowski*, where he had served as a member of the editorial board for ten years. Franko, a man with a puritanical streak and of great integrity, was obsessed by the twin-issue of loyalty and treason, an issue projected onto his presentation of Mickiewicz that reflected the current status of Polish-Ukrainian relations.<sup>2</sup>

The essay emerges from a period of perceived impotence and frustration for Franko. His dark portentous utterings reflect a sense of powerlessness and portend great difficulties for future Polish-Ukrainian relations. They also imply the urgent need to redirect his focus. It can be perceived as an anti-treatise in which he envisions a separation from his former identity, a retreat to an integrated inner state, one that would free himself of the vain yearnings and illusions he had hitherto harbored. The life of knowledge as a hope for happiness and harmony had disintegrated and he was intent on removing himself from dependence on a refractory milieu, from dependence on an external world that proved all too treacherous and independent of his will. The writing proved to be an all-too-successful gambit to render himself independent of fate, and redirect himself to a task and an aim that required renunciation of what he could not control.

At this point Franko was at odds with himself, with his role as critic and writer, with the culture and practices of his society. He had paid tribute to Mickiewicz for the past thirty years, from his adolescent fascination for the Polish poet to his full intellectual maturity. His veneration for Mickiewicz as a representative of European Romanticism was a testament of the power, ability, and lofty expression of the poet-visionary and his

<sup>1</sup> Kuplowski presents an impressive array of reactions to Franko’s article.

<sup>2</sup> (see Alfred Berstein, “The Figure of Mickiewicz in Ivan Franko’s Life” in the *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U. S.*, VI, No 3–4 (1958) 1372–1380.

capacity through his poetic genius to valorize the culture of his people and thereby to justify their right to exist as a nation. He appreciated Mickiewicz's ability to endow his countrymen with an incisive moral consciousness and a penetrating world view and knowledge of reality that transcended time and space. He and his countrymen knew Mickiewicz's poetry well--from his ballads, Crimean sonnets and historical poems to the exalted vision of *Forefathers' Eve* (1832) and the epic scale of *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), in which the poet presented the life, society and aspirations of his countrymen in language both vivid and uplifting --at once so localized and so transcendent. He was one of the artistic and intellectual giants of the age, together with Byron, Goethe and Pushkin. (Kuplowski 18–20) As Franko knew all too well, Mickiewicz's writing had exerted an irresistible appeal on three generations of Ukrainian intellectuals. His writings had helped unite the Ukrainian circle of writers centered in Kiev who formed the secret Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius including such illustrious figures as Shevchenko, Panteleimon Kulish and Mykola Kostomarov. Significantly, one of the important writings of the group was entitled *The Book of Genesis of the Ukrainian Nation* (*Knyha buttia ukraïns'koho narodu*), which portrayed the Ukrainian nation as a historical victim of both Poland and Russia. The work was modeled after Mickiewicz's *Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage* (*Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (1832)).<sup>1</sup>

The beginning of 1897 was an inauspicious time for Franko as he experienced grief on various fronts. He temporarily lost his vision due to overwork and exhaustion. He was forced to rest in a darkened room for weeks on end which intensified his sense of isolation and estrangement in a deeply existential manner. He finished his collection of poems entitled "Moi Izmaragd". Around the same time Ukrainian political activists in Lviv, especially workers, were routinely plagued by police persecution and hostility from reactionary Polish circles at the time of the Austrian parliamentary elections: the nationalist position held by Polish liud and also by Polish and Galician social democrats led to the removal of Franko's candidacy who did not receive the necessary minimum number of votes. For Franko, this was a terrible disappointment totally unexpected and all the more crushing because of his close relationship with revered members of Polish society: "Я увидел, как вокруг меня валится весь тот мир идей или иллюзий, над реализацией которых я работал» (Літературно-науковий вістник, 1906, т. XXXIII, book 1, p 157–158, quoted in Bass 266).

Franko's attempt to wound the Polish reactionaries in the most sensitive aspect of their national pride and expose what he viewed as their treachery and treason was powerfully successful. He intentionally titled his work "The Poet of Treachery" even though the contents of the essay did not support this broad judgment. He made use of the subject matter of the poem as a an expression of protest so as to expose the moral decay and treachery in the power politics of the time. This elicited a reaction of outrage among the Polish intelligentsia and resulted in the blackening of his name, making of him an instantaneous and unforgivable enemy of the Polish nation, in spite of his long years as collaborator with Polish intellectuals and his profound understanding of Polish culture. Indeed, as remarked above, Franko had always cherished a great love and respect for the

<sup>1</sup> See Taras Koznarsky, "Heroes and Villians in the Historical Imagination: The Elusive Khmelnytsky" 89ff. in Glazer (2015)

works of the great Polish poet, and knew that he had given cause for the attack on him which reactionary circles were all too willing to comply. “Down with Franko!” became a rousing popular catchword. Nationalist newspapers and journals published articles that in their harshness and stridency and unstinting and brutally insulting calumny aroused widespread attention. The reactionary press attempted to stir up the entire nation against a man who had revered Polish literature and the Polish people throughout his life: “Just as before this incident as afterwards, I have never felt the least bit of hatred for the Polish nation—rather, I have admired what is beautiful, noble, ardent and genuinely humane in it.” (*Literaturno-naukovii Vistnik*, 1906, t. XXXIII, kn. I, str. 158.) (Bass, 267)

Konrad Wallenrod was written in the late 1820s, a time of a prevalence of secret societies and conspiracies: in the aftermath of the Decembrist revolt and in anticipation of the November 1830 Uprising. According to M. Janion, the officers and leaders of the uprising were influenced by their reading of Mickiewicz’s historical poem, with its profound social and psychological effect.<sup>1</sup>

Franko alludes to the sharply biting remarks of K. Kozmian out of context, without mentioning the cultural battles between the classicists and young romantics that were being waged at the time and the shifting of aesthetic norms in the 1820s. Kozmian, after all, clearly perceived the threat to political realities under the influence of romantic revolutionary thought: a threat to spiritual political and aesthetic norms exacerbated by the anomalous abnormal situation of post-partition Poland. Though persecuted as persona non grata and banished from any appearance in the press by N. Novosiltsov, the tsar’s Council of State in the Kingdom of Poland, Mickiewicz enjoyed place of pride among his countrymen and excited a burgeoning Polish patriotism (KW CXIX) and in turn fostered a concealed yet increasingly widespread enmity toward Russians and the Russian government.

While what Franko writes about Kozmian was effectively true, namely that in his words Mickiewicz was “a literary and moral Satan, an antichrist of the Polish enlightenment and a hellish spirit,” (CXX) he and other classical critics refrained from publishing attacks on Mickiewicz at the time of the poem’s publication. Kozmian’s attack only appeared in his memoirs and not in the heat of literary polemics. (KW CXX)

Franko notes the dark influence of German Romanticism on Polish poetry — on Mickiewicz in particular as a wild Lithuanian. Treachery as a means of fighting against the enemy posits the hero as terrorist. Fighting against the enemy from within was completely opposed to the historical Polish ethos and its most recent heroes of Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Prince Jozef Poniatowski characterized by outstanding leadership skills and courage combined with positive virtues of sensitiveness and selflessness.

Franko also enlisted the Polish romantic poet, Juliusz Slowacki (1809–1848) as an ally against Mickiewicz. Slowacki was a longtime rival of Mickiewicz and had an axe of his own to grind against the Polish bard who had made pejorative statements of his poetry and his step-father. For Slowacki, Mickiewicz blurred the line between patriotism and dreaming. In Beniowski (1841) he warns the poet: “who begins with treachery, dies like a dog” (“konczył jak pies, kto zdradę zaczynał”) “Dziś zdrajcom łatwiej” the argument that the traitor/collaborator is only wearing a mask:

<sup>1</sup> See M. Janion. O genezie “Konrad Wallenroda”, *Pamiętnik Literacki*. R. XLVII: 1956.

Wallenrodcyżność, czyli Wallenrodyzm/ Ten wcale zrobił dobrego — najwięcej!/ Wprowadził pewny do zdrady metodyzm/ Z jednego zrobił zdrajców sto tysięcy.” (Ben V-225–228)

Slowacki pointed out the moral danger of choosing to don the mask of a traitor as one who would be condemned to eventually compromise himself. The nature of the hero and martyr Wallenrod as “niepolski” alien to the Polish tradition: He who works for Poland with the Russians is powerless to do anything substantial. Mickiewicz had a strong sense of guilt, having lived for five years where his brilliance became legendary in Moscow, Odessa and Petersburg salons, thriving with his gracious and generous Russian hosts and fellow poets and in their debt for extending his fame. Mickiewicz’s poem seeks to show Poles the best way to attain freedom while highlighting the hero’s ultimate self-sacrifice and selflessness. While Franko became disenchanted with Polish society with respect to its generalized insensitivity to the dignity of Ukrainians and their desire for nationhood during the elections of 1897, he also identified with “the poet of treachery” as he was all too aware of his collaboration with the “enemy.” At the same time he remained all too aware of Mickiewicz’s power to create heroes who represented an ideal and were capable of inspiring lofty patriotism. Yet one can only betray one’s friends and countrymen, not one’s enemies. Franko choose to purge himself of any scent of deceit in his professional life.

Franko’s work attacking the concept of Wallernrodism was written when Poles hoping for and expecting the official approval of the Russian Tsar Nikolai II for the erection of Mickiewicz’s statue in Warsaw. Franko discerned the hypocrisy of Poles in their craven attempts to whitewash Mickiewicz before the Russian authorities by downplaying his anti-Russian tendencies. He exposed the art of gaining the trust of one’s opponent while hiding one’s own hatred, all the while preparing that enemy for his own destruction (Franko BN CXXVII) or at least delivering a blow where it hurts. The apotheosis of treason and vengeance are displayed as means to such an end that are sanctioned and sanctified Mickiewicz’s own attitude—condemned and warned against such an attitude; the death of Wallenrod as one deserved from an ethical point of view. Franko despised the hypocrisy of good Christian Poles incapable of such treacherous acts in the warm loyalty they donned for the Tsar’s pleasure.

### Franko and Shevchenko

Franko’s view of the Polish poet became colored by his bitter disappointment in the decline of Polish-Ukrainian relations and the upsurge of a blind Polish nationalism whose view of Ukraine was dismissive and proto-colonialist. The nationalism that Mickiewicz gave rise to had led the nation astray by what Franko declared as his ‘tainted spiritual works’ “seinen giftigen Geistesprodukten” in “The Poet of Treachery.” (12)

This disparagement of Mickiewicz provided Franko with the opportunity to elevate the stature of Shevchenko as a national poet in the tradition of Dante as an embodiment and spokesman of the deepest aspirations of the Ukrainian people (svitla indifidual’nist’) as expressed in the *Istoriia ukrains’koi literatury* (1909) where Franko reiterated the need

for the national bard to embody the harmonic development of the individual in his humanity and in the nation in its aspirations.<sup>1</sup> (Schmid 49) Yet, with the cunning wisdom of the wise serpent, Franko, in celebrating Shevchenko's achievement reveals Mickiewicz's indispensable role in that arrival to the poetic pantheon.

At the peak of his intellectual powers in the decade from 1895–1905, Franko's writings reflect his philosophy of Ukrainian nationalism, his championing of Shevchenko as the embodiment Ukrainian cultural and artistic independence. While yielding somewhat to the individualistic allure of modernism Franko always remained committed to the social function of literature, he shifted his focus to the artistry of Shevchenko as a resolution of the dichotomy of the individual vs the nationalistic in his poetry that makes use of and transforms popular culture into individual works of art.

Shevchenko's poetry, his volume *Kobzar* (1840) in particular, helped him identify social responsibility combined with widespread directness of appeal as the writer's most vital aspect of literary creation. Franko was impressed by the range of emotions and abstract ideas Shevchenko developed and combined in his poems: suffering, sorrow, motherhood, sin, isolation, freedom, fate, and the Ukraine's past. He admired Shevchenko's rootedness in cultural conditions and history. He placed Shevchenko at an earlier stage in cultural development from himself and saw the need to address a readership in concrete historical terms that would speak to those cultural conditions of the present of each generation of readers.

The transmutation and elevation of folk literature by individual genius Franko perceived as the essence of romantic poetry. The romantic genius of the poet intuits the deep strata of the collective psyche and synthesizes disparate fragments of folk culture and historical elements, his figurative poetic language revealing the essence of the Ukrainian idea in its time and beyond its time. The poet through his artistic development arrived at a synthesized holistic vision of his people and their ideals. In this way Franko recognized Shevchenko as creating poetry and assuming the role of visionary bard for his nation akin to that of Pushkin and Mickiewicz for theirs.

In his introductory essay, "Forward to Shevchenko's 'Perebendia,'" Franko addressed the question of the genesis and evolution of Ukrainian literature. He called to attention the Russian ukaz of 18 May, 1876 by which the Russian imperial government declared that Ukrainian literature was separatist and therefore, "for reasons of state, ought not to exist." (96) Akin to Shevchenko, Franko deplored the dependency of Ukraine vis-à-vis the Russian state and threat to its artistic and linguistic integrity, either by means of forced Russification of its writers or provincialization, Ukraine being reduced to a no-man's land between east and west. Franko instructs the reader in the possibility of understanding fully the nature of Shevchenko's poetic genius through the study of the Ukrainian tradition, Polish influence, and to a lesser extent, Russian influence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See also the essay *Iz sekretiv poetychnoi tvorchosti* (1905).

<sup>2</sup> . (See Pypin, A. N. in *Vestnik Evropy* Feb, 1887, 664 ff. for a Russian defense of Ukrainian literature as a proof of Russian power and as a non-threat to Russian unity. with A. N. Pypin, author of a biography of Belinski. From the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 1979:

Franko's literary criticism and aesthetics continued the traditions of the Russian revolutionary democrats and of Russian realistic literature. Franko also translated and popularized the works of K. Marx and F. Engels. He was the first Ukrainian writer to interpret literature and art in the light of socialist ideals, and his own works adhered to some of the principles

Franko's commentary on "Perebendia" reveals a poem in which varied influences come together and are shaped into a beautiful and fully integrated whole. "Perebendia" was written soon after Shevchenko's personal emancipation, sometime between 1838–1840, and was published in the 1840 edition of *Kobzar* (1840 ed.). The poetic persona created by Shevchenko in the figure of Kobzar is a composite figure: "a social outcast and a social necessity, father of poetry, a wise man, a teacher, a truth-teller, a Christ-like figure who teaches in parabolic fashion on aspects of everyday life." (98) The romantic poet is both of the community and isolated from the community, imprisoned and artistically free; yet that very distance from the community provides the poet with a highly perceptive critical and creative distance.

The poet as individual genius breaks the bonds of society and its restrictive rules. One of the models for this, Franko points out, is Mickiewicz and his poetic personas, especially the "Great Improvization" of Konrad in *Forefathers' Eve, Part III*. Poetry is pure inspiration, "a clairvoyant vision of what is sacred and immortal": *Taka pieśń jest siła, dzielność. Taka pieśń jest nieśmiertelność.*" (98) In spite of his genius as one who has been chosen from among the many, he wishes to serve the masses, to lift them up so as to transform them: *Chcę go podnieść, uszczęśliwić; Chcę nim cały świat zadziwić.*) Franko reiterates his identify with the nation as an entity: "He is at one with the people, full of empathy, his misery is their misery, he suffers for the nation": "Nazywam się million, bo za miliony kocham i cierpię katusze." Taking on the role of revolutionary messianist, the poet embodies the political and redemptive aspirations of his people. The poet wants them to be simultaneously enlightened and fulfilled, to see clearly the path that lay before them; otherwise, blind and abandoned they would be left to their aimless historical wanderings. Those that would be are redeemed through the strength of his emotional outpourings, in so doing becoming the nation's messiah, prophet, and redeemer.

Franko's essay attempts to show that Mickiewicz's "Improvisation" influenced the main idea of *Prebendia*. Shevchenko's highly appreciative view of Mickiewicz's poetical works mirrors that of Franko himself. He sees the two poetic visionaries/speakers as far superior to those around them who are too limited in their understanding. This lack of understanding is symbolized in the persona Shevchenko creates of a blind Ukrainian kobzar, such a contrasting figure to the Polish counterpart of a cosmopolitan bard: "No one in the world welcomes him" ("Ioho na sim sviti nikhto ne pryima"); "One amidst the people, like the sun above" (*Odyn vin mizh liudmy, iak sontse vysoke.*) "The people know him for the earth bears him"; (*Ioho znaiut liudy, bo nosyt zemlia*) The people see him treading the earth, incapable of seeing into his soul or sharing his secret thoughts.

The opening lines: *Perebendia staryi, slipyi, khto ioho ne znaie?*" (Perebendia, old and blind, who does not know him?") Mickiewicz's poet as Shevchenko's Kobzar, has an all-encompassing knowledge of the world, (*vse znaie, vse chuie, shcho more hovoryt, de sontse nochuię*); "he knows everything, feels everything that the sea has to say, where the sun spends the night") The poet appears as mediator between God and his People, threatens God on their behalf, threatens God with war; just so Perebendia, alone on the

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that later formed the basis of socialist realism. Franko's publicist writings and critical articles attacked Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism, decadence, and the theory of art for art's sake.

Ukrainian Steppe voices “the word of God, the poet’s heart free to speak with God at will.” (Bozhe slovo — to sertse po voli z Bohom rozmovlia.)

Mickiewicz’s poet journeys to the limits of the world, to the boundary between God and nature (“gdzie granicza Stworca i natura” (99)). Perebendia’s thought frolics on a cloud at the world’s end flying like a blue-winged eagle, soaring, touching the sky with its wings (Dumka krai svite na khmari hulia –frolics–, orlom syzokrylym litaei, shyriaie, azh nebo blakytne shyrokymy bie). The underlying sadness of the poet, scarcely revealed when he sings happy songs (zapivaie, zasmiietsia, a na sliozy verne) His sorrow springing from his isolation, alone among people, with no home on earth (Odyn vin mizh nymy...nema iomu v sviti khaty...ioho na sim sviti nikhto ne pryima) (102)

“Perebendia” has no messianic pretensions, feels no need to be the savior or the prophet of his people. He is unassuming and modest, yet invaluable to society by dispelling their sorrows. The sphere of activities of the kobzar, comporting himself appropriately to the given situation, always appealing to his audience’s taste while at the same time suiting his own purposes.

Franko highlights the notion of kobzar as guardian of the purity of village life and promoting humane and sincere relations among people, between family members where strife is known to rule. Perebendia with a married couple and evil mother in law at a feast (z zhonatymy na benketi, de svyrukha zlaia), the mother in law as evil fate in the form of poplar tree (pro topoliu-lykhu doliu) sends out her daughter-in-law to the fields to gather all the flax; otherwise she will be transformed into a poplar tree. In another version it is the “kalyna”: In the meadow a guilder rose rustled: Oi u luzi kalyna shumila). A mother persuading her son to beat his wife: bind her hand and foot, thrash her black and blue: Ozmy, synu, drotiani vizhky, zviazhy mylii ruchenky I nizhky; Ozmy, synu, nahaiku-drotianku, spyshy mylu, iak chornu kytaiku) The son obeys his mother, beats his wife to death, later dies for his crime. The telling of the tale shocks and moves the people, arouses fear and sympathy, as it enlightens and uplifts them.

Franko helps the reader see the figure of *Kobzar* as a popular minstrel, serving the people by appealing to their humanity, awakening feelings of sympathy for the sufferings of their brothers and sisters, ennobling their hearts and minds while preserving historical memory; the greatness of the past is set down for future generations. Franko underscores essential differences between Mickiewicz’s poet and Shevchenko’s realistic figure drawn from Ukrainian life. In terms of his social and psychological makeup, Konrad is “a mystical and allegorical figure, the creation of a fertile, overwrought romantic imagination, not appearing in national costume, no specific locality.” (105) Shevchenko, though lacking in a similar breadth of conception and imaginative power, makes his hero more dexterous, more representative of the people, realistically reflecting his origin in a peasant family and a youth spent in serfdom. Franko takes pains to elucidate the concept of the *Kobzar*. In *Perebendia* he describes the widespread respect for lyre players in the greater Ukrainian community whose task it is, among others, to remind people of God and good deeds (107).

In one of his final testaments to the poetic greatness of Shevchenko and his immense significance for his people, an essay of 1914 entitled simply “Taras Shevchenko, Franko employ’s his own poem. The poem is dedicated to Shevchenko, declaring him a Great

Power in the commonwealth of human culture, one who “sighed for ten years in the Russian soldiery, and has/ done more for the freedom of Russia than ten victorious armies.” (110)<sup>1</sup>

In a distilled summation drawn from his lifelong study of Shevchenko, Franko refers to him as a “living creator, working and struggling for the downtrodden human rights of an enslaved peasantry and of the long-neglected Ukrainian people, but also as the champion of all the oppressed” (111). Elevated to the role of spiritual leader of his countrymen and their greatest poet. His poems describe his yearning for a free life, for the individual and society. He remained true to this ideal of freedom throughout his life. “I know of no poet in the literature of the world who made himself so consistently, so wholly, so consciously the defender of the rights of woman to a full and human life. The surmounting of his own sorrow and the dedication of all his strength to the dream of the welfare of humanity — his legacy to the world.” (116)

The preceding discussion sought to present the latent intention and orientation made explicit by the author’s taking stock of his creative and critical aims and his people’s and his own place in the world. The ambivalence of the writer’s tendencies led to a psychological and creative impasse which led to a reassertion of his intentions expressed in a unified manner, both critically in his championing of Shevchenko and creatively in his later writings, especially *Moses* (1905). The existential implications of his thought expressed in his writings reveal a strong degree of continuity in his shift from Mickiewicz to Shevchenko in his support of the humanitarian ideal. What he approves of and what he condemns were connected with his personality and sensibility, with his aesthetic preferences and ethical views, his radical reversals and deep-lying continuities, and ultimately, the overcoming of his ambivalent and shifting attitudes toward Poland and his full embrace of the Ukrainian idea.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s Note (R. W. Seton-Watson) A stillborn project, a new quarterly *The European Review* devoted to problems of nationality and lesser-known continental literatures, due to outbreak of war; Franko sent a manuscript in honor of the centenary of Shevchenko, his countryman, waited ten years for publication.



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