“A Great Literature”

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> Let us hew the rock! Let us strike and crush the remains of barbarism in our souls. Let us create a society of great style, strong souls, balanced, persevering character. And then, we, creators of our literature, will not feel abandoned to our fate, then our creativity will take root in life...then we will automatically partake of the great creative process of the other cultural realms of our planet, and they will know us not only through geography, not only from occasional memoranda, but also from our names, our language, our works....
>
> Ulas Samchuk

> I think that all the failures of our literary process in the emigration stemmed precisely from our inadequate performance of the roles that we had assumed, or from an improper choice of roles.
>
> Ihor Kostetsky
> (Eaghor Kostetzky)

> In the bad time—there are the bad writters [sic].
>
> Teok

Arguably, there are still now, and there certainly were in the period under discussion, two distinct Ukrainian literatures—the Soviet and the émigré. The relationship between them, their roles in the course of history, have hardly been symmetrical: all the passionate arguments of several generations of émigrés notwithstanding, the literature written in Ukraine remains the main current, but all the more so now, when émigré literary creativity seems to be visibly dwindling. But from the perspective of history, Ukrainian émigré literature, even though it is a minor tradition, is certainly not marginal. It provides an invaluable range

of data and experiences and a perspective essential for reconstructing the totality of Ukrainian life in the twentieth century, not only as reflected in the emigration, but particularly as reflecting Soviet Ukraine itself. For here, to supplement the sanctioned view, even a crooked or cracked mirror is far better than none at all. From our perspective, even more important than the light that émigré literature casts on the surface extension of literary life—for example, on writers and events that are now officially proscribed and forgotten, on the cultural and political background—is the special insight it gives into the workings of literature as a process, and in the way it reveals the innermost forces shaping literary creativity and literary values.

The history of Ukrainian émigré literature has not been charted, and, as with so many things Ukrainian, there is no scholarly consensus even as to when it began. (To date its beginnings with the period immediately following the Revolution and the civil war in Ukraine is problematic, since many writers, emigrating from what had become the Soviet Union, settled in Western Ukraine, which—while under Poland—was hardly a foreign land; and even those settling in Poland proper, or Czechoslovakia, maintained reasonably close contacts with their compatriots in Galicia.) But there is no doubt that the DP period of émigré literature—roughly the latter half of the 1940s—is a special and rather distinct period. Whether one accepts it—as I would argue—as the first true phase of émigré literature, or as a continuation of a process begun earlier, it surely constitutes a watershed in the non-Soviet Ukrainian literary activity in this century. Its intrinsic interest is augmented by its unique ability to serve as a vantage point for surveying what preceded and followed.

For all that, and despite the fact that it is temporally circumscribed and sufficiently distant in time, the DP period has also not received an adequate literary-historical overview. The most probable reason for this, paradoxically, is the superabundance of sources and commentaries and, in particular, the fact that in keeping with their heightened sense of mission and their intense literary self-consciousness, the participants—writers and critics—wrote their versions of this period while they were still very much players on the DP stage.[1] These accounts—most often simply eyewitness chronicles, end-of-year reviews and polemics—have, to this day, stood as the historiography for this literature. The first to speak have remained the authorities, and seem to have pre-empted revision or, indeed, clear vision. Sadly, too, their biases, limitations and partisan loyalties have continued to provide the conceptual matrix for later, purportedly more historical, accounts.[2]

Such an account, however, is not the goal of this study. The rather more modest goal here is to provide a prologue to a history of this period by examining its central issue, the much discussed and much debated notion of "a great literature" [*velyka literatura*]. "A great literature," of course, is not simply an issue or a notion; it is much more than a programmatic (or theoretical) construct

or a polemical slogan. It is, in fact, a *Gestalt* that combines values and praxis. The values range from the political and ideological to the social, aesthetic, and psychological. The praxis, the incarnation of concept and ideal in actual literary works, is, for obvious reasons, intrinsically more difficult to demonstrate and it is perhaps for this reason that, apart from polemical or panegyrical excurses, no analytical study of how one or more literary works actually articulate "a great literature" has really been attempted. Yet given the way this concept served to focus the conscious thought of this literary period, it is certainly legitimate to pose the question in terms of literary practice.

Clearly, a concept, an ideal, a value so resonant with the thought and experiences of the collective would constitute not only a ramified, but a coded system, a text, so to speak, that would be inherently resistant to analysis. Again, the lack of any critical initiatives in this direction seems to support this conclusion. But if our task is more than simply to recount the polemics and describe the shifting alignments, it is essential to disassemble this conceptual edifice, to look behind the facade of *ad hoc* (and largely unconscious) strategies, the rhetorical and artistic fictions and (self-)deceptions, and thus perhaps see the as yet unaccepted and unsanctioned, but surely more interesting, underlying motivations, causes, and patterns.

The Period

The overall social, historical, and political parameters of the DP period are relatively well known. Even the manifest literary parameters, the statistical data about the quantity and diversity of publications, the chronicle of the activities of literary organizations, and so on, can readily be reconstructed and need not unduly occupy our attention. Throughout, and, especially at the beginning, there is unfettered activity. In so short a period—five or six years (1945-50/51) if one takes the historical or socio-political view, and only three years (1946-8) if one looks to the period of most intense creativity—the actual quantity of literary (belletristic and critical) and associated scholarly and journalistic activity is nothing if not impressive. Over 1,200 books and pamphlets were published in all the various fields, from art to religion and youth culture. Some 250 of these were publications of original literary works of poetry, prose, and drama, to which one must add dozens of reprints, translations and works of criticism and children's literature. Scores of magazines, journals, and newspapers appeared, with every camp and organization having at least one and often more. Some were exclusively devoted to literature, many others dealt extensively with literary matters.[3] To be sure, the lifespan of all but a handful of these periodicals was very brief; they appeared and disappeared like mushrooms after a rainfall. The monthly journal *Zahrava*, published by the "Literary Section of the Union of Ukrainian Writers in Augsburg," had only four issues, all in 1946. *Vezhi*, a cultural monthly devoted almost exclusively to literature and published in

Munich, appeared in only two issues, one in 1947 and one in 1948. The *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* (Regensburg, 1948-9) claimed to revive the traditions of both the longest running and most serious Ukrainian literary journal ever, *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* (1898-1919; 1922-33), and the militantly right-wing and nationalist *Vistnyk* (1933-39) of Dmytro Dontsov.[4] The new *LNV* only continued the legacy of the latter, with the major change being that the general editorial and party line shifted from the openly pro-fascist stance of Dontsov's prototype to merely authoritarian prescriptions for Ukrainian society and literature. It too managed to produce only two issues, as did the lavishly illustrated, well-written, and carefully edited *Ukrainske mystetstvo* (Munich, 1947). Some major, and very interesting periodicals managed only one issue. Such was the case with the "almanac" *MUR* (Stuttgart, 1946), and perhaps the single most exciting periodical of all, the literary quarterly *Khors* (Regensburg, 1946). The "collections" (*zbirnyky*) of *MUR*, the other official house organ of the Ukrainian Artistic Movement (Mystetskyi Ukrainskyi Rukh) numbered only three issues (nos. 1 and 2: Munich-Karlsfeld, 1946; no. 3: Regensburg, 1947). Even the most solid and well-established of literary journals, such as *Arka* (Munich, 1947-9), or *Orlyk* (Berchtesgaden, 1946-8), lasted at most two or three years.

The brevity of these enterprises, however, should not suggest that they were all straw fires, although a pattern of quick enthusiasm and quick disillusionment can certainly be discerned. Nor is the real issue the obvious fact that by 1947-8 further emigration west—primarily to the United States and Canada—had grown in a short time from a trickle to a torrent, removing great numbers, ultimately the majority, of readers and writers to another hemisphere. (Thus when Dontsov publishes, in the September 1947 issue of *Orlyk*, an open letter attacking *MUR* and its conception of Ukrainian literature, he is already writing from Canada. When *Arka* publishes in its January 1948 issue Sviatoslav Hordynsky's "Odynadtsiat dniv na okeani," the author of these diary entries is already a newly arrived emigrant in the United States.) The phenomena here point to something more fundamental than the effects of mass emigration and the general transitoriness of DP existence: they illustrate the remarkable extent to which this literature is bound to its social and cultural roots, to its concrete audience. As much as this applies to every literature, in every period, the tightness of these bonds, the reciprocity and resonance between the thought and the values of the group and those of its writers can vary greatly. As we see from the present state of Ukrainian émigré literature, these bonds can be loose indeed. In the DP years they were strong and close, so that when the audience began to disappear so did the literature. This reciprocity is a defining structure here.

The intensity and sheer productivity of this period allows us to speak of it as a kind of "small renascence." But what are its broad historical, extrinsic features? These, too, after all, contribute to the uniqueness of the whole. The first and foremost is the fact that now, after the ordeal of World War II, scores of

Ukrainian writers and thousands of readers found themselves in the West, in a situation of political freedom and relative security.[5] One should not discount, of course, the various privations of DP life, the general anxiety about the future, and the traumas and tragedies caused by such events as forceful repatriation to the Soviet Union or the relatively less destructive, but not insignificant, internal "political" conflicts, abuses of authority and even occasional violence.[6] But while not a paradise, the DP camps were a welcome relief and a first step in the direction of normalcy. In the literary realm this was signalled by virtually unimpeded access to publishing. The result was an all too obvious absence of quality control—a small price to pay for variety and ferment. For this was a new and heady freedom not only for the refugees from Soviet Ukraine, but also those from Galicia, for whom life under Polish rule had been not entirely repressive, but also not entirely free. (The German occupation, of course, was also a period of repression and restriction—although at the same time some writers proscribed in the Soviet Union were republished by the Ukrainian Publishing House in Lviv and Cracow, and some literary activities, particularly anti-Soviet publications, were tolerated.)

The very size of the DP population contributed to making its literary life a qualitatively new phenomenon. There not only existed a large and concentrated readership (the total number of Ukrainian displaced persons has been estimated at over 200,000[7]), but also a seemingly full range of genres and literary activities. (In retrospect, as we shall see, this proved to be illusory, most clearly in literary criticism and "theory.") Also contributing to the vitality of this life was the distribution of the writers and the audience, and in the microcosm of the DP camps, where all the regions of Ukraine were represented, the long-hoped-for goal of *sobornist*, of the ingathering of Ukrainian lands East and West, was briefly (if only symbolically) achieved. Finally, and not least of all, the economy of this life conditioned the literary climate. Thanks to international (largely American-funded) relief efforts, the basic needs of the refugees were adequately provided for; with no obligation to work for a living, there was ample time for, among other things, literary pursuits.[8]

As important as are the historical, social, and demographic parameters, the spiritual or psychological determinants are probably more important. Of these, the most central by far is that set of feelings, troublesome and partially repressed and disguised, that is generally called the survivor complex. The horrors and trauma of the recent past, the unavoidable sense of guilt for having survived and fled to safety while so many stayed behind or perished, the resultant—not intellectual or even moral, but profoundly inner—need to bear witness, to tell the world what had happened, were a dominant, incessant refrain. There are various modalities for articulating this need. At one end are the consciously moralizing and "historiosophic" meditations on the apocalyptic past—and future. The same evocation of the holocaust just experienced and the same stance of invoking

divine or transcendent retribution is encountered in otherwise disparate poets, for example, in Mykhailo Orest's poem "Povstannia mertvykh," with such elevated lines as "O zhertvy zla, zamucheni ubyti,/Oskverneni u hidnosti svoii,/Nastav vash chas! Nastav, shchob vidrodyty/Vse, shcho ruinnyi rozmetav prybii" (1944)[9]; in Iurii Klen's long epos *Popil imperii*; in Vasyl Barka's "Prokliattia imperatorovi krainy Soniachnoho Skhodu" (1945)[10]; or in Ivan Bahriany's "Huliai-pole" (1944).[11] A more focused and effective literary expression of these same feelings are the various homages to and remembrances of fellow writers who had recently fallen victim to either Hitlerite or Stalinist terror. The memory of those dying at the hands of the Nazis—especially Oleh Olzhych and Olena Teliha—was particularly vivid in the minds of colleagues and contemporaries. The virtual cult of these writers, as expressed in numerous articles, pamphlets, and convocations (*akademii*), especially on the anniversary of their deaths,[12] was also swelled by the fact that both were members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The much more numerous victims of Stalinist terror were also hardly forgotten. In either case, the most valuable and lasting products of this threnodic mode were editions of some of their works.[13] This fusion of scholarship and commemoration is practised in the emigration to this day, and, in some instances, significantly contributed to Ukrainian literary history.[14]

The theme, or genre, of martyrology was most directly expressed in works dealing with first-hand experiences of concentration camps, prisons, forced labour and the rest of the gamut of totalitarian oppression. Most were unadorned memoirs, their testimony all the more powerful for their formal simplicity, for example, O. Dansky's *Khochu zhyty!*, subtitled "pictures of German concentration camps," or Oleksa Stepovy's *Iasyr*, a collection of letters, notes and even versified accounts of various Ukrainians taken to Germany as forced labourers, V. Martynets's *Brätz*, V. Koval's *My—Ukraintsi*, or, depicting with a detached, almost scholarly objectivity the Soviet camps on the Solovetskii Islands, Semen Pidhainy's *Ukrainska intelihentsiia na Solovkakh*.[15] Some, like Mykhailo Bazhansky's *Mozaika kvadriv viaznychkh*, attempted a more belletrized form, even while keeping the historical and memoiristic core intact.[16] A few, most notably Bahriany in his *Sad Hetsymanskyi*, sought not only to turn the autobiographic into fiction, but to write an inspired, "national" literature, wherein the personal ordeal programmatically recapitulates the collective ordeal, and individual survival prophesies a common salvation.[17]

This correspondence between the personal and the national constitutes a fundamental, but only partially conscious structure in the poetics of this period. Clearly, not all the writers felt called upon to write of or for the whole nation, but the autobiographic principle receives a special, *thematic* validation. Whether in the lightweight lyrical effusions of a Mykhailo Sytnyk or a Leonid Poltava, or the much longer and more substantial epic efforts of Osmachka and Klen,[18]

whether in the huge *roman fleuve* of a Dokiia Humenna or the short, experimental prose pieces of the only recently collected and published Zinovii Berezhan,[19] depicting and deliberating on personal experience becomes more widespread than ever before. In effect, this theme and mode assumes a hitherto unprecedented *de facto* legitimacy. Thus, in the implicit poetics of this period the genre whose principles and parameters most inform the literary system as a whole, which seems most "natural" and "organic" for this period, is the memoir, the personal view of self and history. And yet, a most curious reversal occurs here: for that very drive to bear witness to the age and all its suffering, a drive which really underlies and animates the group's sense of self, is also inextricably linked with an explicit poetics—again, more a programmatic value than articulated poetics—that basically denies this genre or modality. This programmatic value is the notion of a "great literature." It embodies a profound paradox. While animated by and indeed intellectually crowning the multifarious and often diffuse sense of mission that these émigrés, like all others, created for themselves, the only function it could ever have—apart from simply existing as an unattainable ideal—was to dam up the wellsprings of creativity precisely by delegitimizing the personal.

For the DP period as a *literary* period, the historical-political, economic, and psychological criteria do not, in fact, provide an entirely satisfactory paradigm. In particular, they do not really establish the termini of this literary period. In terms of these criteria, both with respect to the preceding war years and even more so with respect to the émigré period that followed, the boundaries seem more fluid than the literary historian would want to admit. In one sense, the period 1945-50 is a continuation of the war years in that certain crucial conditions remain in force: the broad and historically momentous and unprecedented contacts of Western Ukrainian authors with those Soviet Ukrainian writers who fled to the West; the intense examination and exposure of Stalinist depredations in general and in literature in particular; and the publishing of previously suppressed writers, such as Mykola Kulish,[20] or of accounts of Stalinist prisons and concentration camps.[21] All of this constitutes a very real, generic continuum between 1941-45 and 1945-50). So, too, does the fact that under the German occupation, various writers who later became quite prominent in the DP period—Klen, Malaniuk, Bahriany, Bohdan Kravtsiv, Oksana Liaturynska and Sviatoslav Hordynsky—did succeed in publishing their work.[22] Most generally, the sense of personal uncertainty and upheaval, of the *ad hoc* and transitory nature of literary enterprises and institutions, remains constant throughout the decade of the forties and differs markedly with the stabilization—for good or bad—of the fifties and beyond.[23] The continuities between 1945-50 and the years after are even more striking. First and foremost, while some prominent writers (Klen, Mosendz or Katria Hrynevycheva) and some lesser ones (Andrii Harasevych), did indeed die in this period, the vast majority continued to live

and to write well into the next two decades. In varying degrees their work continued to turn to the themes and concerns first raised in the DP setting. Just as significant are the examples of continuity in institutions, the most programmatic of which would appear to be the decision of the newly formed Ukrainian Writers' Association in Exile, "Slovo," to cast itself as heir to the legacy of MUR (a stance all the more easy to take in view of the fact that key members of each organization were the same people).[24] More important, perhaps, is the continuity of various publications, especially journals. The longest continuous émigré journal, the monthly *Novi dni*, published in Toronto, begins its North American incarnation in February 1950, with an editorial linking it to the recent DP past.[25] The most substantial Ukrainian émigré journal, *Suchasnist*, while having its editorial offices in New York, is still published in Munich and can also trace its lineage back to the DP period.[26]

Illustrations of this phenomenon can be multiplied at will. But the real issues, of course, are not the individuals as such or even the actual institutions, organizations or periodicals. The real heart of the matter is the literary climate—its emotional and intellectual parameters, its themes, concerns and values. And here the continuity appears to be absolutely seamless. The examples of writers newly arrived in North America writing for DP publications are only the tip of the iceberg. The huge concealed mass is that all the baggage, the entire literary marketplace, seems, in time, to have been transhumed to the New World. Articles written at the height of the DP period and slated to be published then, such as Ulas Samchuk's "ideological report" delivered at the Third General Congress of MUR, April 1948, or Sherekh's overview of DP literature for 1947, are published a few years later in *Novi dni*.[27] There, too, and in many other publications, one finds reviews on books currently appearing in Germany.[28] The same themes and topics continue to exercise the literary community. In fact the sense that there is *one* literary community that continues on from the camps in Germany and Austria to North and South America and even Australia is strongly reinforced by ongoing polemics. Positions are attacked, opponents are vilified with a fervour that belies distance in time and space. In some instances the continuation of these DP conflicts is merely a function of personal rancour,[29] in other cases polemics are continued because ideological and "political" positions are for all purposes cast in concrete.[30] But while such "dialogue" does die down in the course of the next decade and a half as the dispersed émigrés become atomized—not so much by the fact of settling in different countries as by political sects and groupings—some intrinsically literary phenomena first engendered on a substantial scale in the DP setting do continue on, and indeed their proportion in the overall literature grows in size. Such, in particular, is that fascinating subset of émigré writing—and, of course, émigré society and culture—that can be called "crazy literature."

Yet when all is said and done, and all the many threads of continuity are identified and traced, there is little doubt that the DP years, as a literary period, are, nonetheless, quite distinct from what precedes and what follows. The basis for this distinctness is not to be found in the circumstances discussed earlier (political freedom, the imperative to bear witness and so on), but in two moments that are indeed unique to this period. These are the organizational, or more precisely the social-organizational, setting and the notion of a "great literature." The two are intertwined, they feed and determine each other. By "organizational" I mean not only MUR and the drive to create various large, all-encompassing—more symbolic and "political" than actually functioning—let alone corporate entities, but also the concrete societal setting that made it possible. In effect, even though many never joined MUR or quickly left it, even though many never subscribed to, and more later denounced its premises, the DP period of Ukrainian émigré literature can rightly be called the MUR period—not because that organization dominated this period, but because the thinking and the values from which it sprang did. Hence, too, this is a period of a "great literature"—not simply because this was the generally acknowledged goal and battle cry of MUR, but because this notion, this value, like MUR itself, was the unique product of the social and cultural totality of this period. Clearly, neither before nor after was Ukrainian literature defined in those terms.

The Theory

To speak of a "theory" for this notion is to stretch the usual meaning of the term. In fact, the great bulk of commentary and lucubration on *velyka literatura* as such was injunction and exhortation, pious or grandiose desiderata, and polemics. The occasional more integrally theoretical component, like Iurii Sherekh's idea of an "organically national" style, was rather an addendum, and one that was basically elaborated *ex post facto*.[31] For all that, the discussions around this term, the attendant issues raised, cast an extremely interesting light on mid-twentieth century Ukrainian literature as a whole, and indeed on Ukrainian intellectual history. In the way it illuminates the literary process, if not in terms of its political and historical resonance, this debate is of the same order of magnitude as the "Literary Discussion" in the latter half of the 1920s in Soviet Ukraine. In view of the fact that modern Ukrainian literary history has few broad-ranging, historiosophic debates on the general direction and the goals of Ukrainian literature (the incipient and very tentative debate about modernism, for example, was basically side-tracked by the populist and civic-duty arguments of such as Franko and Iefremov), this discussion assumes even greater importance. In one sense, it constitutes the culminating phase of the century-old debate about *narodnytstvo*, the presumably populist essence of Ukrainian literature.

The watchword of "a great literature," or "for a great literature" (*za velyku literaturu*) was initially articulated in the first program of the Ukrainian Artistic

Movement, MUR. The first congress of MUR was held December 21-22, 1945 in Aschaffenburg, in the American zone of occupied Germany.[32] The proceedings of that congress—specifically the programmatic papers of Ulas Samchuk, "A Great Literature" (Velyka literatura), Iurii Sherekh, "The Styles of Contemporary Ukrainian Émigré Literature" (Styli suchasnoi ukrainskoi literatury na emigratsii) and Ostap Hrytsai, "A Small or a Great Literature" (Mala chy velyka literatura)—were soon published in the first "collection" of MUR;[33] the very titles of two of the three show how directly the issue was to be addressed and hint at their essentially exhortatory mode.

In fact, the introductory editorial statement, "What We Want" (Choho my khochemo), sets the tone of sublime duty and solemn injunction:

> The times have set and continue to set before Ukrainian art the tasks to which it is called: to serve its people in highly artistic and perfect forms and in so doing to win for itself a voice and authority in world art.
>
> Rejecting an art that is weak and in its ideas alien [*ideino-vorozhe*] to the Ukrainian people, Ukrainian artists unite so that in comradely collaboration they may strive to the heights of true and serious art. This union of Ukrainian artists in the emigration is open to all activists [*diiachiv*] of the word, the brush and the stage who inscribe on their banner the watchword of an art that is perfect, mature in ideas and form, and eternally searching.[34]

The basic desiderata of this program are further elaborated: "The contemporary tasks of Ukrainian art," the statement continues, "are in principle the same as they were ten or twenty years ago—unqualifiedly, fully and with self-sacrifice to stand guard over the interests of the nation, which struggled, struggles and will struggle for establishing the rights that it undoubtedly deserves." The vehicle for this, "the principal task of Ukrainian art," is:

> to create by artistic means a synthesizing picture of Ukraine, its spirituality in the past, now and tomorrow. The artists who join MUR know that heavy day-to-day labour will be demanded of them. They are ready for this, but they are even more aware of their immediate task—to be artists. Genuine, well-rounded, unique artists, artists of such stature that through their works they determine their readers' general world view and direction of thought, [artists] who reveal cultural-historical and psychological horizons, who force one to think persistently and feel passionately, who desire to create a literature which can truly become the conscience and the expression of the ideals of the people, which will give us the right to enter, as equals among equals, those places where the problems of all the peoples of this planet are decided and resolved. Not the poster, the memorandum or the appeal, but a great art—full, manly, all-encompassing—is to be our irrevocable mandate for the right to exist on the land of our ancestors as an eternal, creative and historically conditioned necessity. It is precisely this that our difficult and unique times require and will long require from us, artists, and it is precisely these requirements that we are called upon to fulfill. Such is our goal, such is our ideal...[35]

Among the various interesting and revealing formulations, the two fundamental premises that Ukrainian artists, specifically writers, have a moral duty to their nation, an obligation to bend all their efforts to the overarching national cause of Ukrainian independence and that their task is to be effected through art that is of the highest quality, are more than plain. Moreover, as much as the goal of artistic excellence and sophistication is emphasized, as much as this programme denies the right of any political party to dictate its line and proclaims a full openness to different styles and ideas ("Full freedom, great in its ideas and its expression, the full creative expression of the individual—that is the task of our association"[36]), there is hardly any doubt that the task, the goal, the duty is the determining component and that the art, the means, the search for excellence is subordinate to it. There is, to be sure, a tension between the stated end and means; the commitment to artistic excellence is made very forcefully ("We will be merciless towards those who by cheap costs would try to gain the label of artists"[37]). But the very fact that a final goal and imperative of art and literature is at all postulated (let alone explicitly stated as transcendent to and determining the means, the art), puts the whole program and the theory of literature that stands behind it uncomfortably close to the literary theory of the state, the evil empire, that was the declared mortal enemy. In effect, in its ontological principles, if not in its stated openness regarding form and style, in its theoretical validation of a teleology of literature, its belief in a guiding principle in and a managing approach to literature, this theory is remarkably close to Socialist Realism, indeed a kind of distorted (or, at best, humanistically ameliorated) version of it. The parallel phenomenon of a "national realism" does indeed emerge in the DP period, and as a "theory," if not as an easily defined praxis, it does continue to flourish in the emigration; its roots are clearly traceable to the *Visnyk* writings and doctrines (*visnykivstvo*) of the interwar years—augmented, to be sure, by deeply ingrained Soviet habits of thought of various authors from that sphere.[38] MUR (in its spokesmen and representatives) certainly does not consciously see itself as proclaiming or demanding adherence to "nationalist realism." In fact, it is soon violently attacked precisely for not doing so. The issue is rather that in its deep and, in all probability, quite unrecognized structures, the program of MUR parallels to some degree the abhorred Socialist Realism. This much on a theoretical level. On the functional level, as we will see, the deep contradictions in the program—its espousal of goal-oriented literature, one that derives its essential *raison d'être* from a specific extra-literary goal—the full political and cultural independence of the fatherland—on the one hand, and full artistic freedom and the search for artistic excellence, on the other—grew into the flaw that made the collapse of MUR inevitable.

Another way of describing the immanent tension in the MUR program is to see the above cited expression of faith and hope as a document consciously (and in retrospect, desperately) mediating between two irreconcilable polarities. A

sense of one of these—the militant doctrine that the future of Ukrainian émigré literature lies only in total commitment to the political struggle—is fully conveyed in Ivan Bahriany's "Thoughts on Literature" (Dumky pro literaturu). It, too, was included as a programmatic article in the first MUR collection, even though it was apparently not first read at the MUR congress.[39] The crudeness and reductiveness of Bahriany's thoughts on what literature can or should be is matched by the perfervid tone and demagogic style of his argument: literature that is not a "weapon" or the "path of struggle" is either "lemonade," in effect, poison in the body politic, or the aberration of "art for art's sake," which is but a "theory of desertion" (from the "nation, from all struggles, from difficult reality"), or a cold "objective mirror" that is the trade of uninvolved writers-turned-secretaries.[40]

It goes without saying that for Ukrainian literature to be a great literature, which Bahriany passionately approves and desires, it must not only be militant, but entirely subordinate to the overall strategy of the war effort: "...in the whole complex of means available for the nation's struggle, literature should occupy one sector of the entire attacking front, and the Ukrainian writer should be in its first ranks."[41] The manic fervour and unchecked brutality of Bahriany's convictions, with their obtrusive, undigested remnants of Soviet and Visnykite prescriptions (the writer as engineer of human souls; the writer as soldier bound by military discipline; literature as too important to be a private matter—it is a national matter; the sense that deviation from the dogmatically asserted literary priorities is tantamount to treason)—all this makes his article eminently quotable, but hardly enlightening. The point is clear: MUR not only contained, but at least at this initial juncture, was to a large extent obliged to reflect this radical, not to say anti-humanistic, version of a Ukrainian literary program. The antipode, however, the unquestionably enlightened and intrinsically more literary (and literate) views of such as Kostetsky and Iurii Kosach would soon also be expressed.

In terms of dramatic effect, the congress articles, coming as they do after the preceding editorial statement and the Bahriany harangue, are a let-down. This is particularly true of the first of these, Samchuk's "A Great Literature." Samchuk, already the author of several large prose works and throughout this period, until his immigration to Canada in 1948, president of MUR, is at pains to appear to be balanced, thoughtful and reasonable ("By my very nature I do not like extremes. I do not persecute them and I do not espouse them. I do not think in the categories of a revolutionary, but at the same time I do not understand the reaction to revolution"). His article is often interlarded with self-conscious metacommentary ("Here, too, I want to think clearly, directly and quite lucidly..." or "then again, I consciously want to repeat myself again and again").[42] The intellectual effect is to make his talk diffuse, dull and virtually shapeless. If one can cite him at all, it is only in large, wordy units. His meandering thoughts are utterly conventional and well hedged: "great literature" is an immediate and

pressing issue, but also a complex one; it is a new and current phenomenon, but also one that has been with us a long time; literature is the speech of a nation and through literature nations assert their spirit; nation with great authors have themselves become great; Shakespeare and Goethe were great writers, but they also belong to all mankind. And, finally, to the point: contemporary Ukrainian literature should also strive to be great; we, the Ukrainian writers, are called by history to bring our nation to its rightful place in the sun.[43]

For all the conceptual and stylistic fluffiness of this statement, there is also, it would seem, a hidden message. The verbiage itself, the muffling cloak of excess words, may also serve to desensitize the issue of a "great literature," to make it less the polemical property of MUR, or indeed of any of its more or less conscious factions, and more an acceptable general truth—its potential sharp edges rounded off with the magical names of Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe and Shevchenko. There is, at any rate, no doubt that the final exhortation (echoing Franko) to hew the rock of backwardness and to break into the bright day of great, European literature is presented in so general and so uplifting and uncontroversial a way that no one would think of questioning it. And for a while, indeed, no one did.

While Sherekh's article is much more analytical than exhortatory, and deals with the stylistic options of a "great literature," rather than with apologetics for it, Hrytsai's examination of the issues of "A Small or a Great Literature" fully bares both the exhortative mode and the various commonplaces that have accreted to the concept. Then already an elderly former gymnasium professor (born in 1881), Hrytsai apparently often demanded and received the respect due a person of that rank. This paper also fits the archetype of an Austro-Hungarian *belfer*—it is categorical, normative, not very imaginative and utterly humourless. Like those before him, Hrytsai believes that "we need, we desperately need a literature that is on a great, on a European level, the representatives of which, by virtue of their authority as creators and carriers of the spiritual culture of the nation, could perform on the arena of the world at large an important task, one that goes beyond their role as writers."[44] He laments the fact that the Ukrainians did not have writers of the stature of Tolstoi or Hauptmann to argue their case in the court of world opinion, as well as the fact that in his history of Charles XII, Voltaire accuses the Zaporozhian Cossacks ("obviously on the basis of the tsarist sources that were given to him") of stealing in the course of a banquet a silver platter—"and this insinuation of Voltaire's, shameful for us, has remained in his work, unchallenged by anyone to this day."[45]

To compensate for this dual absence—of Ukrainians in European consciousness and Europe in Ukrainian consciousness—Hrytsai proposes that the MUR conference at which the paper was read address an appeal to Ukrainian writers, which, while urging them all to make every effort "to raise the level of Ukrainian literary creativity to the heights of the creative achievements of the best

literatures of the European and non-European world," would also call upon them to take four concrete steps to that end (all of them elaborating the quasi-Shevchenkian "uchitesia-chytaite"). According to Hrytsai, Ukrainian writers need to: 1) learn English, French and German; 2) read up on the classics in those literatures as well as in Spanish, Italian and the literatures of Scandinavia; 3) inform the outside world about Ukrainian literature by scholarly and publicistic works, by translating Ukrainian works into these languages and by personal contacts; and 4) produce works, preferably in the genre of epos, the novel and theatre, which would have a universal content, and which would show "the whole world the philosophical-ideological side and the depth of the Ukrainian spirituality."[46]

As humourless, didactic and pedantic as these injunctions may appear (one need only compare them with Ezra Pound's tongue-in-cheek advice to William Carlos Williams as to the books "that you *need* to/read for yr/mind's sake"[47]), they do accurately reflect both the grandiose aspirations to affect and impress the world and the gnawing, collective sense of inadequacy. While the latter, almost always, will appear only in various psychologically determined disguises, the former, unabashedly expressed as national duty, or even more, as a national mission, is not only conscious, but indeed programmatically stressed.

At its most sweeping (as seen in the articles of Bahriany and Samchuk), Ukrainian literature is simply defined as a literature that is ideological and nation-building. Such, for example, is the argument of V. Derzhavyn in his paper "National Literature as Art" (Natsionalna literatura iak mystetstvo) presented at the Conference of the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences (UVAN) in Mittenwald, 22-3 June 1947. According to this norm, simply being written in Ukrainian does not make a work part of Ukrainian literature: it must also form (and presumably conform with) national consciousness.[48] A militant and aggressive version of this argument, and one that specifically ties in the notion of "great literature" with national mission and duty, is found in the pronouncements of the resurrected *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*[49] and of various political commissars for literature.[50] It appears as an unquestioned given in contexts that are sober and critical. Thus, for example, the painter Edvard Kozak, who in his article "Wide Roads and the Logs on Them" (Shyroki shliakhy i kolody na nykh) is rather pessimistic about the future of Ukrainian émigré art and much dismayed by the flood of amateurishness, the lack of quality control and a self-imposed provincialism, still concluded with "We believe that despite all that we can break up with our work the ice floe of the community's indifference and that in the future the community will help us perform our cultural mission, one that is imposed upon us by the times and by history."[51] The argument is most striking, however, when asserted not by critics (or writers speaking as critics, such as Bahriany and Samchuk) or by ideological watch-dogs, but by writers speaking as writers, in effect, professing their *artistic* faith. We hear it from various ends of the literary spectrum, for example, from the rather traditional *byt* (pobut)

oriented realist (or "augmented realist" as he styled himself) Vasyl Chaplenko ("We will publish as we can—by photoreproduction, by cyclostyle, or whatever, but we will not neglect the national duty that lies upon us. I, myself, have several large pieces which I have worked on for years and which I wrote precisely as a way of realizing the national obligation that I took upon myself....[52]). But we also hear it from the "neo-classicist," erudite and highly esteemed poet Iurii Klen, who in his introduction to *Popil imperii* uses virtually the same argument to explain his choice of the epic mode.

The intellectual and political origins of the concept of mission can hardly be examined within the confines of this study. Still, two possible antecedents can be noted. One, in all likelihood, is the Soviet, with its teleology, its doctrine of literature as the handmaiden of political progress, and the quasi-religious sense of proselytization, of the duty of the believers to enlighten and save the world. The other, in my opinion the more pronounced and more germane, is that of Polish messianic thinking. Polish political messianism, its premises and especially its rhetoric, could not but have a deep imprint on Galician Ukrainians, especially since in some of its aspects it was directed against their very political existence.

Rhetoric about an historic mission (and rhetoric it could only be—there was hardly any means for implementing this notion) became part of the general nationalist credo and influenced not just the thinking of the interwar period, but, with various modifications, of the war years and, as we now see, the immediate postwar period as well. Iuliian Bachynsky's bitter denunciation of this epigonic megalomania fell on deaf ears.[53] The "times demanded" (as the formula used by ideologues and non-ideologues alike would have it) faith, will and heroism,[54] and not reasoned analysis and sober assessments of means and ends.

While the sense of a sublime, national mission or historical calling clearly animates much of the rhetoric and thinking of this period and establishes the general ambience or horizon of *velyka literatura*, there is one particularly concrete moment that deserves attention. This is the extraordinary drive to create organizations. Like the periodicals we already noted, groups and associations sprang up rapidly and seemingly everywhere, but often just as quickly dissolved. Quantity, however, is not the issue here, but rather the drive to create overarching "superorganizations," presumably to guide and manage the whole sociocultural process. There were superorganizations for political activity, for student affairs, for art, for literature and for scholarship.[55] Some of these all-encompassing organizations were never fully realized: a "parliament" for the arts, i.e., a congress of the umbrella organizations for literature (MUR), for the performing arts (OMUS), for painting (USOM) and for music (OUM) was held, but the resulting United Arts (Obiednani Mystetstva), even while electing a president (Samchuk) and drawing up a constitution, never really got off the ground. Similarly, an all-encompassing organization for scholars managed only a constitutional convention. But the very real *intent* to form these entities is itself

sufficiently revealing. Even if the scholars did not really activate their Union of Ukrainian Scholars and Researchers (Spilka ukrainskykh naukovykh robitnykiv), the fact that the congress was held, and especially that its resolutions called for the establishment of such an umbrella organization for *all* scholars and researchers, having *one, unified* scholarly publishing house, etc., speaks volumes for the mind-set involved.[56]

Again, one can see here the influence of the Soviet mentality, with that system's insatiable appetite for centralized control.[57] The aetiology of this mind-set, however, is far less interesting than the function it ultimately performs. In effect, taking MUR as a paradigm, such an organization constitutes a revolutionary attempt to supplant a gradual, organic and necessarily slow process with an act of will, a quasi-political *fait accompli*. Whereas literature, as a body of work, a set of attitudes and values, modes and vehicles of discourse, must develop gradually, a literary organization can spring up virtually overnight.[58] While allowances must, of course, be made for the difficult circumstances, especially economic strictures and transitoriness, one cannot but see from the record of its activity that MUR as an organization seems to have been primarily concerned with its large "national role," with its symbolic and "political" functions (congresses, elections and presidia, position papers and resolutions—the pattern is depressingly familiar for émigré organizations) and not with grass-roots work at actually establishing a literary market-place.

What Sherekh (who as founding member and chief spokesman is certainly competent to judge) considers MUR's failing—its inability to secure independent means for publication or to set up a genuine organizational network[59]—is indeed more serious than that. It shows not simply a failing in performance, but a basic discrepancy in the very nature of the organization. For an organization that was to nurture literature and assure its high standards to be unable to provide for these functions suggests that its very purpose, its essence, is different from what it claims to be. In fact, the argument can be made that the basic "flaw" of the organization—its lack of actual (as opposed to symbolic) organizational features, its lack of *substance*—is not the reason for its decline and fall, but simply its defining feature. The difference, especially now from our perspective in time, between the stated and the actual goals, intentions and priorities is more than apparent.

The issue is not organizational (the performance of MUR, its success or failure at implementing this or that goal), but theoretical (the values and the mind-set generating and making the goals). To put it more directly, the issue is not how well the literary process was managed—the evidence shows that it was not managed well at all, and that is all to the good—but the very fact, with its literary implications, that managing and controlling the literary process was generally and enthusiastically accepted by what then qualified as the literary establishment as well as the majority of the rank and file. From our cultural and

historical vantage point, the proximity of this understanding of literature to the Soviet and generally totalitarian attitude may be quite deplorable. But, deplorable or not, it did underlie the general psychological, cultural and largely unconscious context of the idea of a "great literature."

Two further aspects should be noted here, if only very briefly. The first is Europeanism, the sense that—Western—Europe has much to offer in experience and cultural and literary models, and that Ukrainian literature and culture should actively strive to absorb these. MUR clearly associated the goal of *velyka literatura* with such an orientation to the West. As a concern with contemporary and avant-garde artistic developments, Europeanism is evident in the work of individual writers (Kosach and Kostetsky) and even various collective efforts (the journal *Khors*).[60]

But as an intellectual and theoretical subset of the imperative of a "great literature," Europeanism is not without its complications. In effect, while *velyka literatura* was a platform that virtually all accepted, Europeanism was a plank in that platform that some took issue with. One basis for opposition was ideological. If Europeanism is to be understood (as it then largely was) as acceptance of and orientation toward the Western intellectual and artistic avant-garde, then it certainly was not favoured by the various shades of militant nationalism. Whether for the Dontsovite *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*, or the Melnykite ideologue Zhdanovych in *Orlyk*,[61] or the leader of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Democratic Party (URDP), Ivan Bahriany, such things as Joyce, Kafka and Sartre, surrealism and existentialism, were basically incomprehensible, dangerous and polluting. (For Dontsov and the right-wing nationalists in particular, this hostile stance was rooted in their contempt, already well documented in the interwar period, for the Western democracies. Now, however, this had to be expressed more circumspectly.) For the editors of the *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*, in their first issue, the meaning of a great literature lies in its national character, one which is unmistakably in contrast with Europe

> In creativity, the road to the universal passes through the national. None of the truly great writers of the world sets for himself the prior goal of creating a great literature for the world as a whole; every single great work is, first of all, intended for that milieu from which he takes at least the bases of his characters, his local colour and all that which inspires him to write.
>
> He creates, above all, for himself, for his milieu, for his nation and its feelings, its goals, its ideas and aspirations.
>
> And if such a work is written with talent, with love for those about whom it is written, it is transformed into Great Literature and becomes a work not only for the nation, or for any one people, but for all the world.
>
> This should be remembered by some Ukrainian writers who try to convince themselves that they have outgrown their nation by 50 or even a hundred

> years, and are ready now, right away, to leap to the world-wide table of the Greats (*vsesvitnioho stolu Velykykh*), but their nation, their people have grabbed with their "Kashchenkite" hands[62] their European tailcoats and won't let them get that running start that would allow them to reach the top of the world and show themselves in their full European glitter.[63]

It is somewhat ironic that a questioning of Europe becomes a common value shared by the *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* and Iurii Sherekh, the leading critic of this period, and one who in all other respects could be counted on to take positions diametrically opposed to those of this journal and the milieu around it. Sherekh's position, however, is considerably more reasoned and sophisticated. And the real irony lies not so much in the superficial typological similarity of the two stances as in the fact that Sherekh—the theoretician and main spokesman for MUR, and its *de facto* head (Samchuk being by all indications merely a figurehead)—was throughout his career a critic and publicist who more than any other in this group was acquainted with and attuned to Western values, to "Europe." To be sure, in one of his earlier articles, "Styles of Contemporary Ukrainian Émigré Literature," Sherekh gratuitously maligns the concrete, real Europe and finds the positive only in an abstract one: "the Europe of the impotent French *rentier* and the German beer-belly shopkeeper was never seriously considered. The abstract Europe, the Europe of cultural treasures won by the Faustian man—yes, this was considered, but only so that having been accepted it be superseded."[64] This splenetic barb, however, while not untypical for Sherekh's opinionated and at times apodictic style, does not really reflect the crux of the argument. The point of the discussion here is Sherekh's principled (and cogently argued) opposition to those like V. Derzhavyn, who would claim that one style—neo-classicism—constitutes the only path to excellence and the only legitimate option for Ukrainian literature. This validation of only one style and its attendant exclusive orientation to "Europe" and its "classics" must lead, as Sherekh argues, to sheer epigonism and ultimate sterility. It is precisely to counter this that Sherekh, falling back on Soviet Ukrainian literature of the 1920s, postulates a "national" or a "national-organic" style which would be attuned to and would express the uniquely Ukrainian experience and spirit. Updating Zerov's well-known watchword of *ad fontes*, he argues that "the cry of today should be: to the sources of Ukrainian national culture." Thus, he continues:

> let us not think about the world and about representing Ukraine when we create. Let us try to express ourselves, our truth, more deeply, more fully, more essentially. Let us think more deeply, let us breathe more broadly, let us cogitate and feel with the categories of the Ukrainian empire of the spirit and not that of a Little Russian or Little Polish province; let us think through our concept and let us find for it its form of expression. And when we attain this, when we create a great *Ukrainian* literature, then "by this very fact" we will win for ourselves "a voice and an authority in world art." Our literature which

> wants to be great can only be a great *Ukrainian* literature—otherwise it will not be great. Let us ponder this....
>
> Does this mean that we do not need to know other literatures and other languages, that we have to give up on informing foreigners about our literature? No, a thousand times no! We do not preach obscurantism or self-isolation. The person who does not know world literature does not have the right to write—for he or she will discover what has long ago been discovered, he or she will be a sower of provincialism, and a general laughing-stock....
>
> A national style which is not ethnographically stylized cannot be created if one has not experienced and absorbed the achievements of world literature. It is a shame to have to repeat these ABC's....[65]

These lines surely raise more questions than they provide answers. Apart from its *ad hoc* polemical and publicistic value, the notion of a "national" or a "national-organic" style, further developed by Sherekh in a later article,[66] is highly problematical, the root of its confusion being the amorphous and polysemous idea of "style." The existence of a unique, national character in every national literature is tautologous. It rests, however, on a range of components: traditions, themes, values, modes of perception. It is a totality, not a style. It is to Sherekh-Shevelov's credit that he subsequently disavowed it. The second, rather more important issue is the rhetorical tenor and the implicit social function of this passus and the whole article from which it is taken (and ultimately much of Sherekh's corpus). This, as the final image of the ABC's intimates (and the following paragraph insistently drives home[67]), is the sense of the critic's propaedeutic, indeed school-marmish, role. (While for many this role and robe seemed entirely natural, for Sherekh, it became the tunic of Nessus which, in the final analysis, led to his "suicide.")

For the present, one can only defer various other expressions of the Europeanism/Great Literature connection, for example, Kosach's impassioned but highly cogent denunciation of the obscurantist and anti-humanist, visnykite legacy and his identification of greatness in literature with freedom to think and openness to ideas, with pluralism and tolerance, and, above all, with "the sovereignty of the writer."[68] In retrospect, the emphasis on the latter is by far the most fruitful and prescient idea raised in these debates. One can, however, comment on the immanent validity, or "organicity" of yoking "great literature" with Europeanism. Clearly, if one looks not to the flowery rhetoric but to the underlying values and premises, the pairing is artificial. For even if we do not insist that everyone who propounded *velyka literatura* believed in a controlled and managed literary process (although even the most liberal betrayed such tendencies), there is little doubt that all but an insignificant handful believed in a mission, in a calling for Ukrainian literature as a whole and the various writers individually. And this is quite different from a "Europe" which then, as now, was determined by cosmopolitanism, pluralism and predominance of the avant-garde. The two mind-sets—the émigré Ukrainian and the "European"—taken in terms

of openness of culture, pluralism, tolerance of heterodoxy, flexibility of values and secularism are still far apart. In one sense, as such contemporaries as Sherekh and Kosach seem to be suggesting in different ways, the very fact of striving to validate *velyka literatura* by way of "Europe" only indicates the great distance between the two. At that time, and for some time still to come, the émigrés were in Europe but not of it.

If Europeanism constitutes, at least formally, a program and thus a link to the future, the link to the past, the historical roots of the broad complex that was the goal and the value of *velyka literatura* are focused above all on the figure and legacy of Mykola Khvyliovy. There is little doubt that while the legacy of Dontsov, of "visnykism," was still a perceptible influence and presence, it was on the defensive, not least of all by virtue of having been only recently so enthusiastically supportive of fascism and national socialism. In contrast, not only for those like Sherekh, Hryhorii Kostiuk or Iurii Lavrinenko who had come from Soviet Ukraine, but for many other writers, critics and intellectuals from various regions and backgrounds, Khvyliovy exemplified an intellectual and emotional openness, an assertiveness of will, an optimism and commitment to quality and disdain of provincialism.

The controversy over Khvyliovy was fierce even by prevailing standards in the DP camps. For many, his only redeeming feature was his suicide; by some he was vilified not only as a communist, but also as a Chekist and a matricide (the latter qualities being inferred from a literal reading of his own fiction). And yet polemics aside,[69] it is plain that the central *stated* issues of *velyka literatura* ("Europe" vs. provincialism, quality vs. populism, a sense of "mission" and of optimism for the future of Ukrainian literature) and the more thoughtful programmatic statements of MUR (the articles of Sherekh and Kosach) had Khvyliovy as their touchstone. Beyond that, as a figure overlaid with the secondary elaboration afforded culture heroes, Khvyliovy became for some a paradigm: of the writer hounded but uncowed by bureaucrats and gendarmes, of the shaper of literary opinion living out his convictions not only in words but in deeds. It is hardly a coincidence that Sherekh, the prime shaper of such opinion at that time, titles his first collection of essays after a collection of Khvyliovy's,[70] and that he later orchestrates his symbolic demise in a manner very like that of the author he admired so much.

The Underlying Structure

The truest sense of the phenomenon of "a great literature" can only be found in what must always be the literary critic's ultimate evidence—the texts themselves. The proposition I raised earlier, that the idea of "a great literature" informs the very fabric (the tone, the intellectual horizon, various compositional and rhetorical devices, and so on) of individual literary works, should and, I believe, can be demonstrated. *Velyka literatura* is by no means merely the property of those

talking *about* literature—critics, impresarios and commissars. Every literary work is always a nexus of various external and internal "causes," and singling any one out could tend to distort the whole. Moreover, in any historical overview an adequate sampling, or base, is essential. Nevertheless, in lieu of both an intensive and extensive investigation, we can still postulate, in a very preliminary fashion, to be sure, some characteristic tendencies, in effect, the dominanta, precisely as they reveal themselves in artistic terms.

One major effect is the special legitimization of some genres and the delegitimization of others. In a word, an implicit poetics has taken hold, conditioned in large measure by various critics' distinctions between "great" and "small" literature in which "large" genres like the epos and the long novel are seen as intrinsically better, aesthetically more valid, than "small" genres like satire, parody, depictions of actual *pobut* and indeed the lyric. The latter, to use a much discredited nineteenth-century term, tend to be cast as "literature for home use"—the archetypical East European kitchen, where dirty dishes and drying socks vie for space and where the family members gather to eat and fight. The salons—the noble genres—are for being on one's best behaviour and for impressing guests, especially foreigners. An essential result of this hierarchy is a distortion of voice and composition. It is impossible to "prove" that the dullness of the novels of Samchuk and Humenna is an instance of this; in effect an intended "great scope" becoming simply languid pace and plodding problematics. In the case of Klen's *Popil imperii*, however, there is little doubt that on the one hand, the epic mode is consciously and purposefully chosen to fulfill the hierarchical value in question, and on the other, that it is precisely this extrinsically and artificially imposed modality that is the very source of the work's weakness.

The point can be put more directly: the poem is a monumental failure, its intended "epic" and historiosophic effects invariably breaking down into unpersuasive, often shrill, posturing as a consequence of an emotional tone and a narrative and cognitive stance that have nothing in common with epos or history, but which are genuine and which simply cannot be willed away. Its strongest moments are invariably personal recollections (especially of childhood, where the need to judge empires and lucubrate on universal history has not yet asserted itself). It is both melancholy and instructive to compare *Popil imperii* with Klen's *Prokliati roky* (1938) to see how much more effective the earlier and much shorter poem is in harmonizing feeling, experience, voice and form. Its concluding dirge for the dead and persecuted is truly moving, and it conveys more wisdom and compassion with a greater sense of that tragic period than any self-consciously historiosophic passage in the later opus.

Another prevalent tendency generated by the goal of a "great literature" and the task of speaking for the nation's cause is to overload art with a "publicist" message of unassimilated political content. The work of Bahriany in general, and

his drama (or dramatic novella as he styles it) *Morituri*, in particular, stands as a good example of this artistic self-betrayal, or simply falseness. Here, precisely as in literature written according to the recipes of socialist realism, it is never enough to depict experience: one must augment it with exhortation and heavy-handed symbolism. Personal experience in NKVD prisons cannot be allowed to speak for itself, a drop in the sea of suffering, unique yet typical. One must make the hero an eloquent spokesman for the entire suffering nation and indeed a direct descendant of Khvyliovy. One must make Karl Marx one of the prisoners so that through his humiliation and terror the bankruptcy of his theory can be made plain to even the slowest of readers.

The self-destructiveness of this goal of "greatness" is apparent even in good works—works that are innovative and sophisticated, such as Kosach's *Enei i zhyttia inshykh*. For the debilitating feature that this short novel shares with Klen's poem and Bahriany's drama is an intensive literary self-consciousness that almost palpably militates against the work's broader potential. This self-consciousness (as a specific form of *literaturshchyna*) is perhaps the most poisoned fruit of *velyka literatura*. The rhetoric of pedagogy, as we have seen, pervades the criticism of this period, and it seems that most writers compensated by emphasizing their literariness. Kosach's *Enei* exemplifies this defence mechanism: the work is not only honeycombed with literary allusions to, echoes of, or quotations from Shakespeare, Schiller, Baudelaire, Dante, Gogol, Cervantes, and others, but on the basic compositional levels of narrative and character development often seems incapable of finding its own voice, as it persistently and self-consciously tries on mask after mask. While ambivalence towards literary models need not be an aesthetic failing, it is here, not only because it is so pervasive, but because it tends to paralyze both the voice and the dynamism of the novel. At its worst, the novel's metathematics suspend it in a declarative and poeticizing fog: things, emotions, people, ideas are not shown but muffled in "literary" descriptions. The props, at times, overwhelm the players.

These are all, to repeat, more or less pronounced tendencies and unconscious patterns. They are not conscious positions, let alone programmatic stances. Once the critic is attuned to them, however, they cannot but be obvious. When worst comes to worst, writers find themselves, as Kostetsky observed,[71] assuming entirely false roles, like tenors straining to be basso profundos—all because "the times demand it." At best, the falseness is more subtle as the writer, in order to satisfy some abstract norm of greatness, betrays the potential of his artistry by gilding the lily.[72]

Underlying both the conscious and the unconscious needs and desires is a structure that does provide a unified definition of the role of *velyka literatura*. It is the deceptively simple fact that the literary activity of this period, in all its various ramifications, is in an unprecedented way oriented toward the reader. The reader, of course, is always a factor in the literary equation, but the emphasis

may vary, and in this period the bond between the writer and his audience—the validation of the audience at the expense of the writer and his text—is inordinately strong. This makes the DP period rather exceptional in the course of modern Ukrainian literary history. For seldom was the writer and his work more dominated by the implicit demands and the explicit claims of actual readers or their various (often self-appointed) spokesmen. (Ukrainian literature written under the aegis of Socialist Realism provides close competition in this. Its readership, however, is entirely mediated—in the accepted literature, that is—by official strictures and censorship. At the same time, writers who are part of the establishment attain privileges and status which are never afforded to émigré writers, no matter how loyal to their party they are.)

While the period as such and the program and value of *velyka literatura* are not entirely synonymous (there were works and writers that stood apart from it), the orientation towards the reader, with the rhetoric, poetics and *Weltanschauung* that devolves from it, provides the essential link between the two and allows us to see *velyka literatura* as *the* dominant mind-set of this period.

References to the reader, a concern for his comprehension and involvement, the more or less explicit belief that only the consensus of the collectivity, indeed its anonymity signifies new strength ("Kupą, kupą ku potędze," as Tuwim put it)—all this abounds in theoretical-programmatic articles, in reviews and polemics. "The mission," "the nation's call," "the demands the age (or history) imposes," the whole gamut of military imagery speak of the soap box and the political rally. The notion that Ukrainian émigré literature should be tied to and determined by political goals and concerns is, of course, always in the wings and is periodically being trundled out to centre stage by various commissars for literature or by critics moonlighting as commissars. (A fine example of the latter is found in Iurii Boiko's "Open Letter to Iu. Sherekh," where he attacks the MUR theorist for apoliticism and for tolerating apoliticism in others, such as Kosach. Boiko declares with impeccable circularity that "what Ukrainian politics and Ukrainian literature have in common is that both one and the other should stand at the fountain-heads of national life. Then they will have the strength of Antaeus. In this commonality of the source lies the natural precondition of their union."[73]) When a small group of disaffected authors, calling themselves "Svitannia," splits off from MUR, their open letter to the leadership of MUR has all the earmarks of a broadside announcing a party schism. After stating that MUR has "compromised itself" by "a series of publications that are of low quality and above all false in their ideas (*ideino falshyvykh*) and deeply injurious to Ukrainian literature," and listing by way of illustration the major works of Sherekh and Kosach, it makes the following key point: "the writers who have gone furthest in their published appearances toward compromising MUR in the eyes of the nationally conscious readers, i.e., Iu. Kosach and Iu. Sherekh, still

remain for the broad reading masses the main representatives, so to say, of the ideology (*ideinoi linii*) of MUR...."[74]

The reader, however, does not only appear as the confused, duped or outraged object of the author's wiles.[75] He is not, in other words, only construed in terms of extrinsic, political or ideological considerations. He is also the undisguised addressee. This is most apparent in the pedagogic tone that is so often assumed by critics. It seems at times as though literary criticism has been identified with and reduced to primers and lessons of *bon ton*, to *Kinderstube, vykhovuvannia* and ultimately *upupienie*.[76]

The flowering, one might even say hypertrophy of criticism in the DP period also reflects on reader orientation, for the majority of the criticism understandably deals not with formal or intrinsic analysis but with generally thematic and social moments. In the purely functional sense, apart from tone, content and level of discourse, the criticism of the period performs the more natural role of talking about literature *to an audience*. At the present stage of émigré literature, the critic talks only to a handful of other critics.

Finally, the question of the reader and how to deal with him, how and what to write for him, provided the ground on which *velyka literatura* was exploded and this phase of émigré writing brought to a close. The principal saboteurs, as everyone really suspected, especially those outside the walls of MUR, were Kostetsky and Kosach, both of them founding members of the organization. Their heresy, the explosive material, was not, as the wisdom then had it, their apolitical stance (or even Kosach's impassioned attack on *visnykism*), nor their "Europeanism," "left-wing" experimentation,[77] avant-garde poetics or presumed erotic thematics. The heresy was simply that they denied the primacy of the reader, indeed reduced him to the least important factor in the model of literary communication. Kosach did it directly and polemically in the course of arguing for liberal, humanist values. His watchword, "for the sovereignty of the writer," while standing as the title of one of the sections of his paper, is in fact its central issue.[78] Kostetsky's argument is more subtle, more oblique and ultimately more seminal. He proposes to reformulate the question: "not WHAT but WHO and HOW." The issue is to find one's own individuality, and for this, in principle, there can be no ready-made formulas. The writer and the critic both should pose questions and not preach answers.[79] Nothing could have so undercut the themes of *velyka literatura*. By its very nature as a program with a designated set of goals, it postulated answers. And it is not really surprising that while Kostetsky was attacked for many, often very trivial things, this heresy was never mentioned. It was never noticed: matter does not recognize anti-matter.

It is also not surprising that the aesthetic program of sovereign individualism, of genuine not rhetorical openness to new and "foreign" ideas and models, of intuitive rejection of shibboleths, missions and organizational control that was present in embryo in Kostetsky's oblique and tentative ruminations was picked

up and given substance by the next generation, the so-called New York Group. It may seem unkind, but perhaps the most lasting achievement of MUR was that it sheltered such subversives, and of *velyka literatura* that it so quickly generated its own antithesis.

Notes

1. Cf. especially Iurii Sherekh [George Y. Shevelov], "Ukrainska emigratsiina literatura v Evropi 1945-1949," in *Ne dlia ditei* (New York, 1964), and Volodymyr Derzhavyn, "Ukrainska emigratsiina literatura (1945-1947)," *Kalendar-Almanakh* (Augsburg-Munich, 1948).
2. Cf. Hryhorii Kostiuk's "Z litopysu literaturnoho zhyttia v diiaspori" [*Suchasnist*, nos. 9-10 (129-30)] (Munich, 1971); and Liubomyr Vynar, *Ostap Hrytsai* (Cleveland, 1960).
3. See Yuri Boshyk and Boris Balan, *Political Refugees and "Displaced Persons," 1945-1954: A Selected Bibliography and Guide to Research with Special Reference to Ukrainians* (Edmonton, 1982).
4. *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* XXXII (Regensburg, 1948), 1-5.
5. To my knowledge, there are no reliable statistics on this. In their introduction to *Koordynaty*, an anthology of Ukrainian poetry in the West, the editors, Bohdan Boychuk and Bohdan T. Rubchak, note that their original pool of poets (including duplication because of pseudonyms) was 368, which they subsequently pared down to 68 (*Suchasnist* [New York], 1969, vol. 1, vi). If only one-half or even one-third of the original number were active in the DP period, and considering that this refers only to poets, the total number of writers in this period must have been fairly substantial. In a somewhat more rigorous way (Boychuk and Rubchak, after all, deny any scholarly claims and speak of their efforts as a literary work, as a labour of love [ibid., vii]), Bohdan Kravtsiv in his *Na bahrianomu koni revoliutsii* (New York, 1960) lists close to 100 authors who fled from the Soviet Union after World War II. To this one must still add the writers from Western Ukraine.
6. The newspapers for this period are most instructive. Cf. *Nashe zhyttia*, Augsburg, 1947.
7. V. Markus, "Displaced Persons," *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 1 (Toronto, 1984), 676, and V. Kubijovyč and V. Markus, "Emigration," ibid., 822-3.
8. The degree to which the realia of daily camp life could or could not serve as the subject matter of literature, or a "great literature," is a question to which we will return; cf. Hr. Shevchuk [Shevelov], "Tabir v literaturi i literatura v tabori," *Siohochasne i mynule*, nos. 1-2 (1949): 55-61.
9. Cf. MUR, *Almanakh*, no. 1 (1946): 123-5. Cf. also "Obolona, nezryme tilo...," *Arka*, no. 6 (1947): 34.
10. Vasyl Barka, *Apostoly* (Augsburg, 1946), 30-2.

11. Ivan Bahriany, *Zolotyi bumerang* (Neu-Ulm, 1946), 152-68.
12. Cf. *Orlyk* (Berchtesgaden, February 1947), 1 and (Feb. 1948), 1-4.
13. Cf. Oleh Olzhych, *Pidzamche* (n.p., 1946) and Olena Teliha, *Prapory dukha* ("Na chuzhyni," 1947).
14. See especially Mykola Khvyliovy, *Tvory v piatiokh tomakh* (Baltimore, 1978-84).
15. O. Dansky, *Khochu zhyty!* (Munich, 1946); Oleksa Stepovy, *Iasyr* ("Na chuzhyni," 1947); V. Martynets, *Brätz* (Stuttgart, 1946); V. Koval, *My—Ukraintsi* ("Nimechchyna," 1948); Semen Pidhainy, *Ukrainska inteligentsiia na Solovkakh* (n.p., 1947).
16. Myhailo Bazhansky, *Mozaika kvadriv viaznychkh* (Aschaffenburg, 1946).
17. Ivan Bahriany, *Sad hetsymanskyi* (n.p., 1950).
18. Mykh. Sytnyk, *Vidlitaiut ptytsi* (Hamburg-Heidenau, 1946); Leonid Poltava, *Za muramy Berlinu* (n.p., n.d. [Augsburg, 1946]); Teodosii Osmachka, *Poet* (n.p., n.d. [Regensburg, 1947]); Iurii Klen, *Popil imperii*, in *Tvory*, vol. 2 (Toronto, 1957).
19. Dokiia Humenna, *Dity chumatskoho shliakhu* (Munich, 1948); Zinovii Berezhan, *Na okrainakh nochi* (Stuttgart-New York, 1977).
20. Mykola Kulish, *"Patetychna sonata," drama* (Cracow-Lviv, 1943).
21. Ivan Shkvarko, *Proklynaiu* (Cracow-Lviv, 1944).
22. Iurii Klen, *Karavely* (Prague, 1943); Evhen Malaniuk, *Vybrani poezii* (Lviv-Cracow, 1943); Ivan Bahriany, *Zvirolovy* (Lviv-Cracow, 1947); Bohdan Kravtsiv, *Ostannia osin* (Berlin, 1940) and *Pid chuzhymy zoriamy* (Berlin, 1941); Oksana Liaturynska, *Kniazha emal* (Prague, 1941); Sviatoslav Hordynsky [Iurii Burevii], *Surmy dniv* (Cracow, 1940), *Pershyi val* (Cracow, 1941) and *Vybrani poezii* (Cracow, 1944).
23. The question of continuity between the literary situation of the war years and that of the immediate postwar period is also discussed by Sherekh; cf. "Ukrainska emigratsiina literatura v Evropi 1945-1949," especially 229-31.
24. Cf. Kostiuk, "Z litopysu literaturnoho zhyttia v diiaspori," 7-9.
25. "Slovo do chytachiv," *Novi dni*, no. 1 (Toronto, February 1950), inside cover. The founder and editor of *Novi dni*, Petro Volyniak [Wolyniak], had been the publisher of *Litavry* and *Nash shliakh* in the DP period.
26. I.e., through *Ukrainska literaturna hazeta* and *Suchasna Ukraina*.
27. Ulas Samchuk, "Sekty-partii chy suspilstvo-natsiia?" *Novi dni*, no. 12 (January 1951): 7-13, and Iurii Sherekh, "Roku Bozhoho 1947," *Novi dni*, no. 15 (April 1951): 14-20.
28. See, for example, the review of U.S. (Ulas Samchuk?) of Sherekh's *Dumky proty techii*, *Novi dni*, no. 5 (June 1950): 26, or Valentyna Korpova's review of Bahriany's *Sad hetsymanskyi*, in *Literaturno-naukovyi zbirnyk*, no. 1 (New York, 1952): 280-82.
29. Cf. the personal attacks—in verse—on Iurii Sherekh in the Buenos Aires-based journal *Porohy* (February 1950); cited in Vasyl Chaplenko, *Mii holos u pusteli* (New York, 1979), 58. Chaplenko's bitter and shrill attacks on Sherekh-Shevelov and

various other critics for real or imagined slights make for melancholy reading (and are shrugged off by the literary "establishment" as the ravings of a crackpot). Like much of muckraking and *samvydav*, however, his writings about the literary scene often dredge up the interesting details that "official" histories prefer to ignore. They also highlight an interesting structure of contemporary émigré literary life, i.e., its fragmentation into rather hermetic and self-sufficient groupings, with each imposing a kind of conspiracy of silence on the world outside its walls.

30. A prime example of this is the virulent polemics concerning Mykola Khvyliovy (cf. below). Cf. especially *Na sud ukrainskoi emigratsii "natsional-komunizm"—Kvyliovyzm ta ioho propagatoriv* (New York-Toronto, 1959), ed. V. Koval.
31. See Iurii Sherekh, "Etiudy pro natsionalne v literaturakh suchasnosty. Do teorii natsionalno-orhanichnykh styliv," *Literaturno-naukovyi zbirnyk*, no. 1 (New York, 1952): 148-61.
32. See Iurii Sherekh, "Ukrainska emigratsiina literatura v Evropi 1945-1949," 229-33 and *passim.*
33. *MUR* (*Zbirnyk* I) (Munich-Karlsfeld, 1946).
34. Ibid., 3.
35. Ibid., 4.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., 5.
38. Cf. Iurii Sherekh, *Ne dlia ditei* (New York, 1964), 27-9 and *passim.*
39. *MUR* (*Zbirnyk* I), 25-38.
40. Ibid., 26-7.
41. Ibid., 29.
42. Ibid., 38-9.
43. Ibid., *passim.*
44. Ibid., 82.
45. Ibid., 85.
46. Ibid., 85-6.
47. See William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (New York, 1963), 165.
48. See *Nashe zhyttia,* no. 27 (122), 14 July 1947, 4.
49. Cf. *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*, no. 1 (1948): 1-5.
50. See, for example, O. Zhdanovych, "MUR—v teorii i praktytsi," *Orlyk*, no. 8 (1947): 26-9; cf. also Iurii Boiko's articles, note 73, below.
51. *Arka*, no. 2-3 (1947): 30.
52. "Shche pro vydavnychi spravy," *Nashe zhyttia*, no. 41 (136), 3 Nov. 1947, 6.
53. See his *Bolshevytska revoliutsiia i ukraintsi* (Berlin, 1928), especially 7-13.

54. Cf. N. Gerken-Rusova's "Heroichnyi teatr," in *Sviato Derzhavnosty* (Prague, 1936), 4-11.
55. See the relevant essays in this volume.
56. Cf. *Nashe zhyttia*, no. 27 (122), 14 July 1947, 4.
57. Sherekh-Shevelov admits this influence with respect to his thinking then—if not to the premises behind MUR—with a candour that is quite rare among his contemporaries; cf. note 38, above.
58. According to Shevelov, this is literally the way MUR came into being: see *Ne dlia ditei*, 18. Kostiuk, in turn (see "Z litopysu literaturnoho zhyttia v diiaspori," 7) is quite open, indeed jocular, about the fact that Slovo, the Ukrainian Writers' Association in Exile, began its existence on paper and only gradually acquired some substance.
59. Cf. Sherekh, "Ukrainska emigratsiina literatura v Evropi 1945-1949," 239-47 and *passim*.
60. While a concern with contemporary Western art is pronounced in various publications, e.g. *Arka*, none is as open about it as *Khors*, where there is not only a large section of translations, where titles of various sections are given in English, but where there is even an appeal—in English, French and German, and summaries of individual articles also given in English and German—to "foreign"—Western—writers to contribute articles on designated topics.
61. Cf. note 50.
62. Andriian Kashchenko: late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century author of Cossack adventure novels intended for juveniles but often read for patriotic uplift. The term "kashchenkite" is part of Sherekh's terminology of debunking Ukrainian provincialism.
63. *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*, op. cit., 4.
64. Op. cit., *MUR* (*Zbirnyk* II): 56.
65. "V oboroni velykykh," *MUR* (*Zbirnyk* III): 12.
66. Cf. note 31.
67. I.e.: "Everyone who wants to be a writer must know world literature and foreign languages. He is not a writer until he has this—this we stress categorically. The era of hacks and of apologists for hacks is over. People who have not experienced the school of world literature can write and be published—but they are not writers, and their writings have nothing in common with literature. This is a preliminary grade, one [which one attends] before entering literature. It is as necessary as the one before that: to learn the alphabet, the rules of grammar, and punctuation." Op. cit., 12.
68. "Vilna ukrainska literatura," *MUR* (*Zbirnyk* II): 47-65.
69. Examples of enlightened discussions of Khvyliovy in this period are O. Han's *Trahediia Mykoly Khvyliovoho* (n.p., n.d.) and Petro Holubenko's "Mykola Khvyliovy i suchasnist," *Orlyk*, no. 5 (May 1947): 8-14. An example of one of the sillier

(but typical) attacks on Khvyliovy is Fedir Dudko's "Hodi movchaty!" *Nashe zhyttia*, no. 18 (113), 12 May 1947, 4.

70. Cf. Hr. Shevchuk's [Sherekh's] "Tabir v literaturi i literatura v tabori," *Siohochasne i mynule*, nos. 1-2 (1949): 55-61.

71. "Pro iednist riznomanitonoho i superechlyvoho," *Slovo* (*Zbirnyk* I) (New York, 1962), 325.

72. In a later article Sherekh speaks of the "falseness" of a whole generation of poets; he uses the term in a different and narrower context. Cf. "Pokolinnia bere falshyvu notu," *Novi dni*, no. 36 (January 1953): 6-9.

73. "Odvertyi lyst do Iu. Sherekha," *Orlyk*, no. 11 (November 1947): 20. An equally explicit political approach is found in Boiko's article on Barka, "Pro Vasylia Barku i pro deshcho pryntsypove," *Orlyk*, no. 5 (May 1947): 21-3, in which he chides the poet for his lack of political clarity and commitment, and meaningfully advises him to shake off "abstract humanism" and to enter on the one and only right path—of militant nationalist struggle.

74. "Odvertyi lyst do pravlinnia MUR," *Nedilia*, 7 December 1947, 5.

75. Cf. especially the reviews of DVH, "Fosforyzuiuche boloto," *Orlyk*, no. 10 (October 1947): 32, and of Hrytsai's monograph-length denunciation of Kosach, Kostetsky and other such literary, moral and intellectual bankrupts: "Bankrot literatury," *Orlyk*, nos. 9-12 (1947) and nos. 2-4 (1948). The dominant tone of high dudgeon also provides moments of (unintended) comic relief.

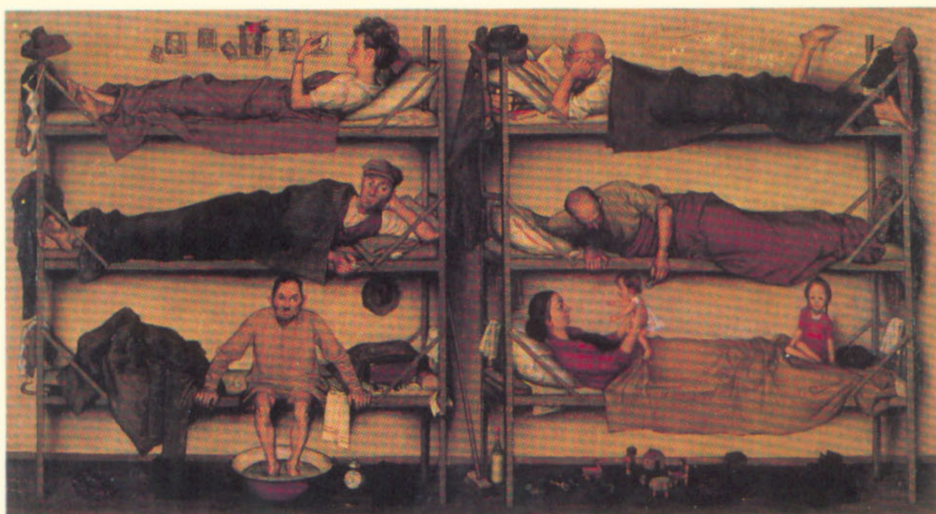
76. Apart from Hrytsai, the critic who does this most energetically, and with a sense of mission, is Sherekh. Cf. the opening paragraphs of his "Etiudy pro 'nezrozumile' v literaturi," *Arka* no. 4 (1947): 1, and the introduction and various articles of *Ne dlia ditei*.

77. Kostetsky's word-play with "kambrbum" (a version of "cummerbund"?), in his short story "Bozhestvenna lzha" in *Khors* (pp. 49-68), came to symbolize for some critics his degenerate lack of seriousness.

78. Iurii Kosach, "Vilna ukrainska literatura," *MUR* (*Zbirnyk* II): 55.

79. Ihor Kostetsky, "Ukrainskyi realizm XX storichchia," *MUR* (*Zbirnyk* III): 34 and *passim*.

The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II



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