HOMES AS SHELLS: UKRAINIAN EMIGRE POETRY

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I

Although, in our time, media-magicians have proclaimed that "alienation" is an unfashionable word, people are more alienated than ever. They search for community — and communion — in money, in casual sex, in dope, in punk rock. But even when all other homes are lost and when all other families fail us, when the sorrowing consciousness becomes fully and hopelessly aware of its sorrow, a haven remains: the home of our linguistic environment, which implies a mutual culture and its inevitable 'counterculture.' But in the state of alienation to which I shall address myself in this essay — the specific exile of the émigré poet — even the home of the commonly shared language and culture has been crushed by the forces of history. Home has become the shell of a snail: self-generated, mysteriously involuted, intimately personal. There are Ukrainian poets in Australia who, for twenty-odd years, have not spoken a single word of the language in which they write their poetry, except perhaps to their bedroom wall during a sleepless night.

Such a home-as-shell creates a uniquely acute state of creative and personal loneliness, especially in the case of older poets. In death-defying gestures of holding on, they manage almost sucessfully to reject the world in which they find themselves. Suspended in a state of virtually constant reverie, they turn their days and nights into a wasteland of *askesis*: going to work begins to feel like a compulsory stint in a labour camp, friends exist mostly to complain about, fellow poets serve as victims of grimly planned pranks, and normal family relationships sometimes seem to be beyond reach. Sleep, when it comes, brings with it excruciating nightmares of running, of being hunted, of facing a firing squad. If an émigré poet, having gathered sufficient courage through months of hesitation, finally decides to describe his efforts to members of his 'outer' linguistic environment — Americans or Frenchmen or Argentinians whom he has known for years, and perhaps has grown to like — they often dismiss his confession with a well-meant but intrinsically cruel remark: "Poetry *in Ukrainian?* Good God! Why don't you write in English?" (or in whatever language applies).

Every émigré poet obviously has a geographic homeland. A Ukrainian émigré poet's homeland is impossibly far away: the emotional distances are too great for a jet to traverse. Almost all Ukrainian émigré writers refuse to recognize the present puppet government of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The Soviet-Ukrainian literary establishment, in turn, stubbornly ignores or denies the émigrés' existence: Soviet-Ukrainian literary journals keep assuring their readers that no literature is produced by émigrés, except perhaps that of a few crackpots. Furthermore, in the émigré communities in which the poets find themselves, time gradually robs them of a readership — small enough as it might have been to begin with — that they once enjoyed, since their faithful readers die out and the young do not read émigré poetry.

Our future is fuelled and propelled by the energies of our past, and our past, as we remember it, is modified by our projects. Much of what we remember (what our unconscious chooses to remember) of our homeland, and the way that we remember it, depends on the prospects of returning. The further such possibilities are removed from the émigré poet's actual condition, the more his reveries will distort his home. Finally, the more dubious the possibility of return becomes, the more dependent the poet will become on his warped memories. Reveries of a happy childhood spent in one's native land doubtless become material for fruitful poetic creativity: every reader of poetry encounters examples of this time and time again. However, these same reveries may also have a paralyzing effect on creativity. This happens when the poet returns to his reinvented (or totally invented) Ukrainian childhood as if it were a world of fantasy protected from the real world. He returns there and refuses to leave. His future is then swallowed by that invented past: his inauthentic past *becomes* his future, and thus his life becomes a lie. It follows that writing poetry ceases to be important in itself; such a poet has managed to convert his art into an instrument for the artificial sustenance of a past that never existed to begin with. Poetry, in other words, becomes "other words" — a makeshift vehicle for the *description* of a past that has been imagined not in the language of the poem itself but elsewhere. Nevertheless, imagined reveries of home and childhood can become creative when they are used and controlled by the poet, instead of being allowed to control and eventually use up his existence. This can happen only when the poet projects his future in the creation of excellent art: then his reveries serve his poetry, that is, his future; and his future thus enters into a dynamic relationship with his past. Most important, his reveries are then born not outside his poem but within it; they are generated and completed not by exhausting, neurotic frustrations but by the life-giving language of the poem itself.

Although many émigré poets have become paralyzed by the closed circle of their past-as-future, the best among them find enough strength to subject their reveries of home to the project of writing. In such acts of self-transcendence they manage to 'write' not only their own future as poets, and ultimately as persons, but also their readers'; thus the absence of an actual readership ceases to incapacitate them.

What kind of home do such poets write into their poems? Roughly speaking, we find three Ukraines in émigré poetry, depending on the generation to which a given poet belongs: Ukraine as an imagined past; Ukraine as a certain Messianic emotional state (in the sense that the Great Polish Emigration of the last century understood Messianism); and finally, Ukraine as an abstract, almost completely intellectualized concept.

II

Ukraine as a past waiting to be transformed (if not created) by the imagination within the language of poetry usually means a distant past; it is temporal distance, rather than more recent historical events, that allows the transformation into myth. The myth of history shaped by the poet's pen is public only in a limited sense: in its essence it is an intimately personal shell which the poet has fashioned to satisfy his own spiritual need of home. As limited as it is, however, such historical distancing does allow for certain creatively fruitful estrangement. The poet is forced to step out of the temporal stream of his present life and to examine his existence from an outside point of view. Such a posited point of view helps to make certain that personal confession will be turned into art.

The mythologization of the past is especially evident in the work of the oldest generation of émigré poets. Most of them had left their country after the Ukrainian War of Independence of 1918; initially they resided in Poland and Czechoslovakia and eventually settled in western Europe, Canada and the United States. They are provisionally labelled in the history of modern Ukrainian literature as the Prague and the Warsaw groups. Evhen Malaniuk (1897-1968), Halia Mazurenko (1899-1970), Natalia Livyc'ka-Kholodna (1902-) and Oksana Liaturnys'ka (1904-1970) are some of the outstanding names of this generation of poets. Before the Second World War the Prague and Warsaw groups included the important poets, Oleh Ol'zych (1908-1944), Yuri Lypa (1900-1944) and Olena Teliha (1907-1942); all three were killed as freedom-fighters during the war and therefore did not share in the experience of the postwar emigration and subsequent permanent exile.

The older members of this generation participated in, or witnessed, the Ukrainian independence movement of 1918. Most of them had been soldiers, and in a sense remained soldiers to the end — combatants who had lost their battles but who refused to accept defeat. It is easy to understand why they chose to live in "splendid isolation." It should not surprise us, moreover, that these poets did not turn for inspiration to their immediate past, the time of their own lost battles. They preferred to direct their gaze toward the remote past of their nation which could be imagined in personal and pliant reveries, but which at the same time would be rooted in the collective unconscious of the Ukrainian people. In the poets' hands, such mythical reveries became a total poetic environment, infusing diction, prosody, versification, imagery.

The shell of poetry, if it is to become a *protective* shell, must be durable and impermeable. And so, while Ukrainian writers working in Kiev and L'viv in the 1920s and 1930s opened themselves to creative experimentation, the older émigré poets who lived among the Czech futurists and poetists and the Polish Skamander poets, and next door to the German expressionists and the French surrealists absolutely refused to let the loose freedom of innovation weaken the closely knit texture of their poetic worlds. To us, who are tiring of the so-called "modernist experiment" prior to the war, the work of the Prague and Warsaw poets becomes increasingly interesting. Their poems remain fresh precisely because they are so antiquated. The formal rigidity of their poems does not invite easy intimacy with the reader. Their diction is deliberately covered with a patina of monumental, heroic ages, and thus is somewhat alien to the character of daily speech: their language is devoid of the excessively lyrical, romantic qualities of modern Ukrainian, and vested with the hard, bookish authority of the Ukrainian Baroque. In short, even the actuality of Ukrainian speech does not interfere with the pure reverie of a magnificent national past.

In order to keep the individual reverie of the collective national past at a distance from current actuality, all obviously personal notes are excluded from it. Whenever there is a self in the work of these poets, it appears as a mask, a depersonalized persona acting out the given historical myth almost silently, in grandiose epic gestures. This is true of even such seemingly personal forms as the love lyric: the heroines in Livyc'ka-Kholodna's excellent love poetry, for instance, are almost invariably distanced from the person of the poet by being cast as a historical personage or type: a medieval princess, a baroque noblewoman, a Ukrainian witch, a woman of the steppes. Similarly, the borderline between the person of Malaniuk's beloved woman and his feminine personification of Ukraine often vanishes altogether, the one blending into the other without a perceptible fissure.

Evhen Malaniuk, one of the most significant Ukrainian poets of our time, was a master at creating highly stylized lyrical heroes: such masks are made especially striking with the poet's use of the pronoun "I." Even his first poems announced his overriding theme, echoes of which are found in his last poems: he placed his persona between the opposing worlds of the personal and the historical. The personal world is embodied in the romantic conception of poetry as the exploitation of the unconscious, and the historical world in the fierce outlook of uncompromising heroism. His persona is threatened by the world of passive contemplation of beauty, a world of personal dreams and reveries of vague desires, of humid and sultry nights, mysterious blossoms, diamond-eyed cobras, golden-bodied women. This is the poetic world of "easeful death," as the early Keats would have it — a tempting but dangerous escape from the unbearably summer-drenched days of ancient battles, grandiose apocalyptic visions and finally a landscape of the present, a world in which the lyrical hero stares at the empty horizon in lidless despair.

In that mercilessly hard and lucid world, which opposes the soft, passive world of the unconscious, even love becomes "the keen blade of love." Doubtless, such visions are also personal and romantic, but their personalism is grounded in the romantic conception of voluntarism, of naked will which is put at the service of the national collective. The desperately heroic landscape, the landscape of the exiled warrior, of a Philoctetes, is drawn especially well in Malaniuk's early poem "Biohrafia" (Biography), of which I shall quote two sections and follow by my translation.*

Завжди́ напружено, бо за́вжди — проти течій.
Завжди заслуханий: музика, самота.
Так, без шляху, без батька, без предтечі.
Так — навпростець — дні спалює мета.

Все чути. Всім палать. Єдиним болем бути.
Тим криком, що горить в кривавім стиску уст,
І знать, що випало — загаснути забутим,
І спомином кінця — кісток народних хруст.

.....

Мушу випити келих до краю —
Полиновий мед самоти,
Так нещадно, так яро згораю, —
Чи ж побачиш, почуєш ти?

*Unless specified otherwise, the translations of the poems in this essay are my own.

Недорізаним звірем — вітер
Проридає в страшний простор.
(Там жито — надовго збите,
Там чорним повітрям — мор).

А я мушу незморено-просто —
Смолоскипом Тобі Одній,
Я — кривавих шляхів апостол —
В голубі, невечірні дні.

Always intense, for always against currents,
And always hearing songs and solitude,
I go without a way, a father, a forerunner
To reach a goal which burns and which destroys.

To hear all. Burn with all. To be one cry of anguish,
To be that cry which flames between clenched, bloodless lips
And then to realize that I shall die forgotten,
And my last memory will be my people's bones.

. . . . . .

I must drain this cup to the bottom,
This absinthe of loneliness.
I burn with such merciless brightness:
Wilt Thou hear me? Oh, wilt Thou see?

The wind, like a beast in slaughter,
Shall cry through my dreadful land,
Where the wheat is forever trampled,
Where the air is blackened by blight.

But I must burn straight, unweary,
Torch-like for Thee alone —
An apostle of bloodied high roads
In these azure and nightless days.[2]

We see that for all its intensity and sincerity (a sincerity that is obviously only illusory), the self in this poem is a highly ornate and stylized mask. In Malaniuk's last poems, however, as exile proved to be a permanent estate, he came much closer to his existence of flesh and blood, protesting the desolation of restless and empty old age which sets in like a dreary and dark autumnal day in a foreign city. But even such personal sentiments are often enacted in proud and grandiose gestures. Instead of a confession, we hear impatient but

nevertheless sonorously articulated anger, and instead of self-pitying complaints, rigorously chiselled curses.

In the poetry of Oleksa Stefanovych the self vanishes altogether while both vision and language recede further and further into the past in search of ancient Ukrainian myths. Stefanovych developed slowly. His early poetry, already depersonalized and "objectified" enough, is dominated by a rather shallow absorption in Ukrainian symbolism: the landscape is too decorative, too fine, too languid, and the language is often too sweetly rich. The young émigré poet desperately clings to his homeland, as if its energy, already exhausted, could somehow keep him going in a foreign land. As can be expected, this heritage betrays him.

In his middle period Stefanovych (like Malaniuk in numerous poems) reaches as far back as the medieval and baroque periods of Ukrainian culture. His poems, nevertheless, are not ghostly evocations of the past: they are made alive by earthy, full-bodied imagery; by the palpable, three-dimensional concreteness of their language. For example, in a particularly successful poem from this period, autumn, with her rich fruit harvests, busy wine presses and the full-breasted maturity of her body, is compared to a generous *kniahynia* (a medieval queen or duchess) who is in the process of preparing a munificent, ritualistic feast. The poet dwells on the shapes and colours of the various fruits on her table, the play of light in wine goblets, the shimmering of rich silks and stones in her royal attire, the ringing songs of her guests. But we must remember that the queen *is* autumn; in the following excerpt eminently edible kinds of fruit are mixed with less appetizing, but nevertheless, decorative berries growing on trees and shrubs.

Хай несуть із комор на столи
Виночерпи і плододари
Твої вина, міцні як смоли,
І садів твоїх дари.

Груди груш, винограду грона,
Сині сливи, гради тернини,
Гори яблук в огнях чернових
І рубіни рябини.

Let your cupbearers and your fruit-growers
Carry from pantries and onto tables
Your wines, heavy as resin,
And the gifts of your orchards.

Breasts of pears, clusters of grapes,
Blue plums, hailfalls of thornberries,
Mountains of apples in crimson flames,
And ashberries like rubies.

Stefanovych is most interesting in his late period, which is as different from his middle period as the middle period is from the early poetry. Turning away from his sensual earthy imagery, rejecting the erotic poetry which he had published under a pseudonym, Stefanovych in his late period develops an uncanny combination of Biblical motifs (especially from the Revelations) and ancient Ukrainian myths — the mysterious deities of *Chornoboh, Biloboh, Svaroh, Div, Svitovit,* and *Diva Obyda.* The poet embodies these motifs in skeletally apocalyptic imagery and baroque diction, often heavily seasoned with Church-Slavonic elements, not only on the lexical but also on the morphological and syntactical levels. One is tempted to see here a correlation between the duration of the poet's exile and the increasing mythologization of the past (both historical and personal) throughout his work. The poetic resolution of the state of exile in Stefanovych's late work opposes that of Malaniuk's in temporal direction, while remaining similar to it in the stark desolation of the landscape. The following excerpt is translated by Watson Kirkconnell.

Над світом кличе чорний Див...
Із верходревного у лісі
На світового він розрісся
І велетенський віщий зів
У людську темряву розкрив.

Над світом — клекоти погроз,
Над споночілим — крила Дива...
...Лиш Той, кого зродила Діва,
Зі згубних вирятує гроз, —
Лиш Той, ім'я чиє — Христос!

Black Div, the god of Terror, now is heard . . .
An ancient deity, who forests trod,
He grows now to be universal god
And his gigantic maw's prophetic word
Opens up human darkness, black and blurred.

Above the world, sound cries of hate and scorn;
Above the lost, the wings of Div float dun . . .
And only he who was the Virgin's Son
Can save our spirits from the fatal storm —
For he is Christ, alone the Virgin-born.[5]

Having found a point of view in the pagan and Biblical myths, Stefanovych can contemplate not only eternal metaphysical truths but also the actual political situation of Eastern Slavdom, since whatever else the poem expresses, it certainly hints at the expansion of the modern Russian empire. We recall that in *Slovo o polku Ihoreve* (*The Song of Ihor's Campaign*), Div is represented as a demon-like bird, foreboding evil to the marching knights and soldiers. Now, the poet writes, this foreboding has become a terrible actuality. We note, however, that the resolution of the problem is as mythical as its metamorphic representation.

Yuri Klen (1891-1947) occupies a rather exceptional place in émigré letters. Although he was quite close, both artistically and ideologically, to the Prague and Warsaw groups, he was more intimately related with the Kievan group of scholar-poets comprised of Mykola Zerov, Pavlo Fylypovych, Maksym Ryl's'ky, and Mykhailo Krai-Khmara. They called themselves neoclassicists or Parnassists (adopting the appellations that proletarian critics had originally applied to them in a pejorative sense), although, in the spectrum of the Ukrainian literary life of the 1920s, they were probably closer to the postsymbolist tradition of George, Rilke, Yeats, and Valéry than to what the Western tradition means by neoclassicism or even Parnassian poetry.[6]

A German by origin and a Russian by upbringing, Klen (whose real name was Oswald Burghardt) wrote poetry in German, Russian and Ukrainian at various stages of his literary development. After years of close association with the neoclassicists in Kiev, where he was active predominantly as essayist and translator, Klen was able to emigrate from Ukraine in 1931. He settled in Munster; later he and his family moved to Prague and subsequently to Austria. Paradoxically enough, it is only in Germany and Austria that Klen emerged not only as a Ukrainian poet of the first rank, but also as a Ukrainian patriot and advocate of Ukrainian cultural heritage in western Europe. When the great wave of Ukrainian immigrants arrived in the West after the Second World War, Klen enthusiastically joined in their cultural life, guiding young poets toward maturity.

Klen's early poems (the earliest of which are mature and often excellent) carry themes based on Odysseus, Anthony and Cleopatra,

Jeanne d'Arc, and the conquistadors. Such "western" themes are embodied in carefully constructed and highly polished stanzas (often sonnets), in which the imagery and the sound patterning are elegantly understated. The infallibly placed epithet, the carefully balanced and developed syntactical structure harmonizing with the structure of the line and stanza, the dignified and undramatic diction, the scrupulous avoidance of all personal references, the calm *bas-relief* of the image, the subtle tensions of irony and wit, the motifs from Western mythology and culture — all of these traits bring Klen's poetry closer to the Parnassian practice than any other works in Ukrainian literature, including the poetry of the neoclassicists themselves. Among American poets Klen's work is reminiscent of Allen Tate or John Crowe Ransom.

A dramatic reversal occurs in Klen's later poetry, whose style approaches that of the Prague and Warsaw groups, especially that of Malaniuk. In his great unfinished poem *Popil Imperii* (*The Ashes of Empires*), he surpasses Malaniuk in formal experimentation and thematic contemporaneity, although we should not think of the work as belonging to experimental or postmodern poetry. *Popil Imperii* is a historical and philosophical poem, dealing mainly with the fate of the Ukrainian nation during the course of the twentieth century against the background of western-European affairs, but making frequent references to more distant historical periods. Impressively erudite, the work not only contains subtle allusions to countless facts and personages in Ukrainian and European history, but embodies parodies of such epic predecessors as the Bible, Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Krasinski's *Undivine Comedy,* Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Goethe's *Faust,* Virgil's and Kotliarevs'ky's *The Aeneid,* Pushkin's *Evegeni Onegin,* as well as the works of Shevchenko and Mickiewicz, and much else. [7] Although the source material of the poem is rich, the work is not muscle-bound by its erudition in the manner of, say, Pound's *Cantos,* or Olson's *Maximus Poems.* Quite the contrary, the poem is anything but pedantic or elitist, and it can be enjoyed on various levels of cognition. Built upon stark paradoxes, it contains passages of broad humour on the one hand, and delicate, lyrical drawings of nature on the other; its dramatic, expressionistic portions, in which arrogant sarcasm follows unabashed pathos, are at the opposite extreme of the cultivated wit and the emotional understatement of Klen's sonnets.

What is most interesting to me, however, is that Klen places his poem in various historic and literary periods — not for the sake of isolating himself from actuality, but to illuminate reality from the perspective of a new angle and thus embody it in a fresh and unexpected way. The chapter that echoes *The Divine Comedy,* for

instance, dutifully opens with the wanderer's encounter of the three beasts.

Сірий мох тут і глиця,
Лев, пантера, вовчиця
Мене стежать у хащах,
Стежать душі пропащих.

Here is grey moss and clay;
She-wolf, panther, and lion
Track me down in the thicket,
Lost souls watch from the bushes.

My translation of this stanza does not do full justice to the last line: the Ukrainian *propashchi* does mean "lost souls," but it can also imply perished, tortured or martyred human beings. This nuance alerts us to what is to come. When the hero of the poem meets his guide, the guide is not Virgil but Dante himself. This is not the only surprise, however: Dante has the appearance of a modern poet-revolutionary, wearing a military uniform and carrying a pistol.[9] Is this simply a temporal projection of the militant, rebellious Tuscan politician? Or is Dante a mask, meant to hide Klen's true guide — a Ukrainian poet who had fought in the Soviet revolution and now, like the pagan Virgil, must share the inferno that he himself, no matter how unwittingly and innocently, had helped to create? The name Khvyliovy stubbornly suggests itself to me each time I read this passage. My interpretation is supported by the long passage about the tortured intellectuals whom the two wanderers meet on their internal journey; not Bertran de Born or Cavalcanti's father, not the various Renaissance teachers and philosophers, but Soviet Ukrainian poets and thinkers that perished (became *propashchi*) in Stalin's purges. Klen imperceptibly incorporates into his verse a quotation from a letter that the poet Drai-Khmara (Klen's friend from Kiev) wrote to his wife from a northern prison camp about the ghastly tortures to which he was subjected each day.[10]

I believe that Klen's use of the historical and literary past for the sake of the present is a significant alternative to the émigré writer's escape into the past as a haven from the unwelcome storms of actuality. The obvious difference between Klen's earlier and later works dramatically illustrates this awakening — not only to artistic mastery, which is abundant enough in his sonnets, but to a new cognition of the world and a new self-awareness through such artistic mastery.

III

The second great wave of Ukrainian émigré poets left their homeland during or immediately after the Second World War. They left either compulsorily, to work in German labour camps, or willingly, to escape imminent Soviet occupation of their homeland. A few arrived in the West as Soviet soldiers and German prisoners-of-war. They were men and women between the ages of nineteen and thirty-five. They came from all parts of Ukraine, which until then had been divided by diverse political boundary lines, resulting in varied backgrounds influenced to a greater or lesser degree by Russia, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia. These émigrés were forced by circumstances to work together for the first time in their lives.

The poets from western Ukraine, who had resided mostly in the culturally developed city of L'viv, were somewhat westernized even before arriving in the West. It is no wonder that they found it easier to accommodate themselves to their new environments than their colleagues from eastern (Soviet) Ukraine. Western literature seems to have provided them with a spiritual home, and they readily took to the translation and criticism of Western poets. Bohdan Kravtsiv, a poet of exceptional talent, Sviatoslav Hordyns'ky, Marta Kalytovs'ka, Bohdan Nyzhankivs'ky, Ostap Tarnavs'ky, and Volodymyr Havryliuk are some names that come to mind.

Vadym Lesych (1909-1982) was by far the most talented and accomplished poet of this group. Restless and multifaceted, his talent refuses to develop in a straight line. The poet exists in a state of creative flux, always seeking new ways to express his difficult and dark sensibility. In his numerous metamorphoses, Lesych manages to preserve a unique voice: a seasoned reader of Ukrainian poetry has no trouble identifying his work according to his numerous periods and phases. It is interesting that the three collections written by Lesych under various pseudonyms in Ukraine do not show much merit; it is only as an émigré that he first found an authentic voice.

In his work from the 1950s, Lesych casts magic spells on nature, especially upon its darker and more mysterious aspects: the night, the moon, ferns, mosses, dim lakes, and dusky groves appear time and again. It is as if the primordial voices of night and water, and the primaeval, seedless plants stemming from the youth of the earth, were meant to give the poet basic answers to the urgent questions of his existence, as if they were expected to anchor his lonely wanderings. These short poems often achieve a strangely hypnotic, incanta-

tory power, akin to the work of Rimbaud, the moon poems of Laforgue and, most important, Rilke's early work. Along with poems of this type, we find in Lesych's middle period expressionistic works dealing with the estranged state of the expatriate, whose feelings of alienation not only concern his immediate environment but also involve man's estrangement from nature and the universe.

In his later poetry Lesych turns from his French models and from Rilke to Anglo-American poets, especially T. S. Eliot, and to younger Polish poets like Rozewicz and Herbert, who themselves show traces of Eliot's influence. In these poems Lesych has abandoned the magical quality of whispered diction and lush imagery, slowly unfolding from one line to the next, for a terse, dry style, exploding with catastrophic metaphors. These poems seem to proceed by sequences of phrases of similar lengths, in almost monotonous patterns of an ascetic recitative. In his last collection entitled, characteristically, *Predmetnist' nizvidkil'* (*Things from Nowhere*) and published in 1972 when the poet was 63 years old, Lesych attempts to combine his earlier and later directions. By developing individual images from one line to the next, and by filling out the sparseness of his style with moderate sound patterning, the poet dissolves the outline of objects into vague presences.

Lesych's poem "Perhamen pamiati" (The Parchment of Memory) illustrates the turning point between the poet's middle period and his newer 'Eliotian' stage. The translation is by Patrycia Kylyna.

Пергамен пам'яті пом'ятий, не шелестить,
як шумлять затьмарені сади вечора
і вітер гне, наче лук, дугу далечі
і луки ликують під фіялками сутінку.
Бурий дим — і округла, мов гльоб, порожнеча.
Дим від кострубатих кістяків життя,
що попеліють.
Порожнеча, яка чекає на повноту.

Пергамен пам'яті іржаво
запалює свічі на вівтарі вечора.
Мов мох полярний — синіють приморозки.
Під білими зорями тремтить,
мов павутиння, музика Ґріґа.
Речі зовсім непов'язані, що існують
окремо кожне для себе, —
але, наче доспілі овочі з різних дерев,

—падають важко у тиші саду
на землю, що меркне в чеканні.

Тіні стають, мов дерева,
і дерева стають, мов тіні.

Пергамен пам'яті
зашелестів
піском розбитих дзеркал
у розсипаній пустині.

The crumpled parchment of memory does not rustle
as rustle the dusky orchards of evening,
and the wind bends the curve of distance like a bow,
and the fields rejoice under the violets of twilight.
Around me there is brown smoke and emptiness round like a globe
The smoke from the rough skeletons of life
that turn to ashes.
Emptiness that waits for fullness.

The parchment of memory rustily
lights the candles on the altars of evening.
The frost turns blue like polar moss.
Like cobwebs, the music of Grieg
trembles under the white stars.
Things exist completely unconnected,
each one for itself,
but like ripened fruits of different trees,
in the silence of the orchard they fall heavily
to the earth that fades in waiting.

The shadows turn to trees,
and trees to shadows.

The parchment of memory
rustles
like the sand of broken mirrors
in the scattered desert.[12]

As mentioned earlier, many western Ukrainian poets have managed to find a home in foreign lands and in foreign poetry. Generally speaking, this has not been the case with the poets who came from eastern Ukraine. For most of them, the first encounters with the West — the West that they had searched out in books, that they had talked and dreamed about since childhood — were rifles, held by

western Europeans. Uprooted from their soil by envoys from the land of Goethe, Wagner and Stefan George, they went abroad as slave labourers, prisoners of war or inmates of concentration camps. Some, but by far not most, left for the West voluntarily, preferring the worst of hells to a Soviet 'paradise.'

Even now, after more than 30 years, many of these poets cannot forgive the insults hurled against their humanity. They have developed, consequently, a mistrust of western Europe and the Americas which is at times almost as relentless as their intense hatred of the Soviet Union. In their verse they contrast the gothically imagined evil ways of the West with the bucolically imagined innocence of their own homeland.

This group of poets have experienced a double loss: they have been unable to adjust to the West on the one hand, and on the other, they have lacked sufficient building materials to construct a sustaining myth of their nation's past. They missed the brief but splendid triumph of 1918. Raised in the dark nadir of Stalin's purges, all that they remember of home is the cold terror of raped cities and the charred desolation of starved villages. The radiantly imagined homeland of ancient glory of the Prague and Warsaw poets is not available to them. Nor, obviously, can these poets commit themselves to the spiritual heritage of the West; "an unfulfilled generation," Lesych justly called them.[13]

It follows that most émigré poets from Soviet Ukraine cannot afford to dispense with the self or to distance it through a tragic persona. Their wounded self, in fact, seems to have become their only home. Even poetic form and language have ceased to matter, and purely literary values take second place to raw expression. We should keep in mind that for most émigré poets, writing surpasses literature: writing becomes either a vehicle for memories and hopes or a totally self-enclosed shell. The idea of literature as a specific cultural process is almost obliterated in favour of writing out their grief and their pain.

The homeland for these poets becomes an emotional field, a wholly imagined reverie, that reduces the present reality to a mere shadow. Theirs is a Messianic Ukraine to be carried forever in the poet's heart and to radiate from the heart upon the cold concreteness of the world, including a certain geographic entity within the Soviet Union. This is their only home — this and the burning pain inflicted upon their personal lives by the incomprehensible injustices of history. The impact of such forces on these poets has resulted in the creation of some of the most intense confessional-type poetry that Ukrainian literature has known since the voice of Shevchenko. In such works, diction and prosody become an incantation, a lament

and, even, a howl. The voice is often unashamedly hysterical. But it can also become lovingly lyrical — reminiscent of Ukrainian folksongs.

Often, however, a poet of this generation remembers that he is, after all, a contributor to Ukrainian literature. He remembers this duty with a vengeance, with results that are frequently disastrous. For example, he will embark on a deliberate imitation of some important literary giant, such as Shevhenko or Tychyna, or of a literary movement. The consequence of his efforts is not style (as in the case of the Prague and Warsaw groups) but sporadic stylization, in which the sincerity of personal pain is not bracketed or sublimated but violently stifled. The contradiction between such stylization and open expressionism is only superficial: both are very much a part of the world of these poets, because both are effects of homelessness and the subsequent fervour of Messianism.

Perhaps the most representative poet of this group is Teodosi (Todos') Os'machka (1895-1962). He was an unsure master, the author of an uneven *oeuvre* in which superb works alternate with embarrasing failures. He was older than the majority of the émigré poets from eastern Ukraine, and therefore had experienced a happy, pastoral childhood in a remote Ukrainian village. His childhood reveries are beautifully embodied in the first section of his epic poem *Poet* and in his novels. But such sunny passages appear rarely in his work; the subsequent years spent in the inferno of Stalin's prisons and insane asylums darkened the poet's consciousness for the remainder of his restless, tragic life. He spent his days in a fugue of escapes from imaginary persecutors, in sudden, unexplained journeys from country to country and from continent to continent. Os'machka died in an American hospital for the poor.

Os'machka did not hesitate to risk everything in hurling at the reader his visions of strange and artistically hazardous grandeur, frequently embodied in a language of unabashed pathos. In the poem "Rehit" (Laughter), personal pain becomes national pain, which in turn grows into universal pain. In spite of man's noble efforts, the only indices of human existence are the master and his slave, and the only answer that the earth gives to man's anxious questioning is cold, cynical laughter.

Море Средземне шумить,
хвилями дзвонить в боки пірамід африканських,
хлюпають ріки криваві в долинах віків
у круті костяні береги із людей...
І чую крізь гомін стихій над тілами рабів
свист батогів...

Берегами женуть кислооких, немитих і голих;
падають, гинуть, як мухи під зиму,
а долинах Єгипту, Еллади та Риму
й середніх віків...
Свист батогів!..
З їх посвистом хижим єднаються в пісню
і наші пожежі, і ревища, й дим, і чади,
як брязкіт кадила та ладан у церкві...
Свистять батоги,
кліпає сонце,
і бризкає кров аж у стелю світів,
із крапель кривавих зростають зірки,
а зорі на небі,
як в полі волошки, зривають поети
і в'яжуть вінки
на білії чола коханкам своїм...
Філософи мудрі моря піднімають
у чашах ґранітних на гори під сонце
і ріки сплітають у косу землі,
а правди не знайдуть...
Кров бризкає в небо і зорі цвітуть...
Гей, земле!
диявольський регіт твій чую
у шумі мільйонів віків,
і хочеться плюнуть з одчаю
тобі, земле, мамо,
щоб випекти пляму, пустелю,
на спині твоїй
як вічне тавро арештанське,
і димом пропасти в безодні часу!

The Mediterranean Sea is rumbling,
Ringing with waves 'gainst the slopes of African pyramids,
Rivers of blood gurgle in the valleys of ages
Washing the steep shores of the bones of humanity . . .
And I hear through the murmur of elements over the bodies
of slaves
The cracking of whips . . .
On the shores they are driven, the sour-eyed, the unwashed,
the naked,
They fall, perish like flies toward winter,

In the valleys of Egypt, of Hellas, of Rome,
In the valleys of the Middle Ages . . .
The cracking of whips!
With their fierce swishing are in one song united
Our fires and roars, and smoke, and fumes,
Like the clangor of censers and the incense in temples . . .
The whips are cracking,
The sun blinks its eye,
And the blood squirts up to the ceiling of worlds;
Stars grow out of the bloody drops,
And the stars in heaven
Like cornflowers in the field are plucked by poets,
And tied into garlands
For the white foreheads of their beloveds . . .
The sages uplift the oceans
In goblets of granite up to the hills near the sun
And rivers entwine themselves into braids of the earth
But the truth they will not discover . . .
Blood gushes into the sky and stars are in bloom . . .
O, earth!
I hear your diabolical laughter
In the whirring of millions of planets,
Through millions of ages,
And I wish to spit from despair
On you, Mother Earth,
To burn a stain, a wasteland
On the back of your body
Like an eternal brand of the captive,
And to vanish like smoke in the abyss of time.[15]

Of the younger émigré poets from Soviet Ukraine, Petro Karpenko-Krynycia (1917-) has carried Os'machka's anger into the streets of Manhattan and Chicago, the jails and insane asylums of California and the automobile factories of Detroit. Juxtaposing his personal and national misfortunes with the grief of the Mexican worker, the American-Indian prisoner, the destitute bum, and the desperate hoodlum, Karpenko-Krynycia has created powerful, although controlled, expressionistic poems, some aspects of which can be compared with the best work of the Beat Generation. The excruciating tensions of his life, so obviously embodied in his work, have finally cost the poet his sanity. The same can be said of Mykhailo Sytnyk (1920-1959), a more lyrical and nostalgic talent; he died a violent death at the hands of Chicago's tramps, whose society he had joined in the last years of his life. Leonid Poltava (1921-) inherited

Os'machka's vision of the Ukrainian tragedy as being part of a human (if not a cosmic) catastrophe, although he did not have enough strength to remain faithful to this vision, having abandoned it for indifferent journalism in verse and prose. Poltava's poem "Kryk" (The Scream), puts the émigré poet's personal anguish into the frame of a universal holocaust after an imagined nuclear war.

І ніхто вже не знайде мене —
Із жахом замість очей,
Із болем замість серця.

Навіть люди з Помпеї
Не змогли до кінця померти,
Бо ми їх знайшли, поселили в музеях
І живили бодай цікавістю.

Але я вже помер навіки,
Той, що вирощував квітники пісень,
Що виносив дітям солодкий мед казок,
Що й терплячи — радів світом

(Терпіння — без Батьківщини!)

Вже не можна навіть терпіти,
Бо немає мене
І немає світу —
Тільки біла байдужа трава.

And nobody shall find me now,
Me, with terror instead of eyes,
And pain where my heart was.

Why, even those of Pompeii,
Even they could not die completely,
Because we found them,
Settled them in museums,
And gave them our curiosity to eat.

But now I have died forever,
I, who planted flowerbeds of songs,
Who brought the sweet honey of stories
To children,

Whom the world gladdened even in pain

Suffering without my Homeland!

Now I cannot even suffer,
Because I do not exist,
Because the world does not exist,
Because everything is covered
With heartless white grass.

Although the poem is called "Scream," its diction preserves nothing of Os'machka's loud oratory; this scream is past screaming, and its quiet, controlled free verse is much more tragic because of its deadly calm.

For the authors of such poems as "Laughter," "Scream," "Crisis," and "Despair" there are many risks, some of which I have already mentioned, and some of which are too obvious to mention. With regard to this point, Emile Cioran, the Rumanian émigré who has made a name for himself in French letters, expressed an acute insight: "One danger threatens the exiled poet: that of adapting himself to his fate, of no longer suffering from it, of enjoying himself because of it. No one can keep his griefs in their prime; they use themselves up. . . . What, then, is more natural than to establish oneself in exile, the Nowhere City, a *patrie* in reverse?"[17]

This is what has become of the émigré poets from Soviet Ukraine who have managed to keep from burning themselves out. Like the poetry of some middle-aged Beats, their work has become complacent in its suffering; they have become, if one may say so, the *bourgeoisie* of suffering. Their *angst,* in other words, has become a set form, of being-in-itself. Raw emotion, unmediated by art, constitutes but an impermanent home; when it collapses, makeshift substitutes have to be erected — such as the numerous instances of imitation and stylization in the work of these poets. When genuine emotion runs out, it is often substituted by literary reminiscences of emotion in other poets.[18]

Another danger facing the poets under discussion, as well as Ukrainian émigré literature as a whole, is the delusion that suffering alone, especially if it is caused by political catastrophes, buys a ticket to Parnassus. As a result, this particular group of poets, more than any other, has in its ranks a number of men and women who consider themselves to be poets solely because they express in verse their protest against the injustices to which history has submitted their lives and the life of their nation. This situation, morally difficult as it

is, tends to create total anarchy in literary criticism: honest critical evaluation is frequently taken as an affront against good patriots — or even as national treason. It goes without saying, then, that the critic finds it difficult to orient himself within this generation of poets.

There is no doubt, however, that the ironic and cultivated poetry of Leonid Lyman (1922-), the interesting and often artistically authentic stylizations of Oleksa Veretenchenko (1918-), the early poetry of Yar Slavutych (1918-), the recent work of Dima (1925-), together with the work of the poets discussed earlier in this section, should be considered as serious contributions to Ukrainian literature.

IV

In discussing poets and their work in terms of generations or significant movements, one's observations are bound to suffer from inadvertent generalizations; my essay is no exception. In order to amend this somewhat, I shall mention a few notable poets who have refused to follow the general direction of émigré poets from Soviet Ukraine. They are Mykhailo Orest (1901-1963), who was the brother of the important neoclassicist Mykola Zerov, Lidia Daleka (1903-), Vasyl Barka (1908-), and Oleh Zuievs'ky (1922-). Not that the themes and images of parting, of exile and of the homeland are absent from their poetry; quite the contrary, such motifs abound in their work. But the crucial difference is that art has gained supremacy over experience — experience either in its raw state or hidden behind inauthentic folkloristic or even neoclassical stylization. These poets use experience for the sake of a future that is art. Let me illustrate my claims, by presenting brief sketches of Zuievs'ky's and Barka's work.

Zuievs'ky is a descendant of the symbolist and postsymbolist traditions. At first, he obviously was taken with the Russian symbolists (especially Blok), but soon that influence was overshadowed by more beneficial reverberations from Rainer Maria Rilke and Stefan George. Through George, Zuievs'ky discovered the poetry of Mallarmé and Valéry. His recent translations of Mallarmé and Valéry, authoritative and accurate, show a profound sympathy for the work of these difficult poets. Mallarmé's influence on his recent work is beyond doubt. As in his earlier phase, Zuievs'ky internalized the influence of another poet and used it for the purposes of his own art.

Initial readings of Zuievs'ky's recent work suggest that objects have a prominent place in his involved imagery. But soon we notice that their outlines become diffused in our consciousness; objects

begin to shimmer, to blend into one another, crossing over into each other's fields. Objects, thus, are not so much absent as absenced from Zuievs'ky's imagery. They are not negated outright by the poet, but seem to negate themselves by the peculiar mode of their existence within the boundaries of the images; the images are also fluid in and among themselves, constantly threatening each other's autonomy. It is obvious that Mallarmé's talent for negating reality by asserting it in a special way is present here. Such 'illusionistic' effects, stemming from Mallarmé's theory of the ideal, are predicated upon the way that language is used in a given poem. The polyvalence of lexical meanings — even of auxiliary parts of speech which frequently appear in unusual syntactical positions, and the functions of which thus become ambiguous — is taken to the limit of comprehension in Zuievs'ky's poetry. It is not the words themselves but rather the silences, the blank spaces that occur between suggestions, that seem to do most of the work in each line.

In the tradition of Mallarmé (prior to *Un coup de dés*) and of Valéry, Zuievs'ky's poetic structures are closed and highly formal; they contain thematic material that would become too amorphous in open, free-verse forms.

As in the poetry of Mallarmé and Valéry, so in Zuievs'ky's work, the person of the poet exists, if at all, only as a rarefied consciousness, meant to absorb and then to transform the outer world by language to the point of transparency. The first person (whether in the singular or in the plural) appears but rarely. This does not mean, however, that Zuievs'ky ignores his personal past. But as in the case of objects, experiences are present only in order to negate themselves in the medium of poetic language. A researcher could easily trace a dialectical movement between the verbs "to leave" and "to arrive" in Zuievs'ky's poetry. There is a similar play between images of limits, boundaries, walls, and closed rooms on the one hand, and on the other, open spaces, open doors and, most important, mirrors (as illusions of openness or as symbolic openness). What remains in the language is the movement of the dialectic, the shadow of the play (and the play of shadows) itself; The pain of departing, no matter from where; the sensation of being closed in, no matter by what; the impression of sudden liberation and open horizons (sometimes dreadfully open horizons), no matter for what reason. Here the condition of emigration loses its specificity and acquires a truly symbolic essence, blending with the exile of man within his estranged world and with man's desperate denial of his concrete environment, which has become hostile. Together with Mallarmé and Valéry, Zuievs'ky accomplishes the denial of antagonistic actuality by art and in the name of art, since it is only art that will not betray man by

hurling him into exile; hence art becomes the only home worthy of man's essence.

Zuievs'ky's poetry is almost beyond translation; it would take another Zuievs'ky to do it justice, just as his own translations do justice to Mallarmé. For American readers the closest parallel to Zuievs'ky's poetry would be Hart Crane's *White Buildings,* although objects (or their fragments) are more vivid and outstanding in Crane's images that in Zuievs'ky's. A fairly characteristic poem is the rather early "Navkolo ryby — Paul Klee" (Around the Fish: Paul Klee). Besides other qualities, my translation attempts to convey the serpentine syntax of the original.

Ні листу контури, ані скрижалі,
Мов карта і гілки, протягнені в імлу,
Віддаючи свої горизонталі
Ознакам простору на з'явленість малу,

Ще не збудили, всі дібравши змоги,
Подоби іншої з відшуканих картин,
Як тільки нерозгадні остроги
До часу кожного, де народився чин.

Тому то й риба, заявивши риси,
Між світлих променів собі шукає троп,
І жовте сонце, що над нею висить,
Оберігає річки темний гороскоп.

Neither a leaf's mold nor commandment tables,
Like map or branch extended into murkiness
And throwing back its horizontal levels
To signs of space for tenuous epiphanies,

Have yet aroused, amassing all their forces,
Another likeness out of paintings found anew,
Save only for ambiguous exhortations
To each duration when the act arose and grew.

And hence the fish, having declared her contour,
Seeks out her passageway among resplendent beams,
While the bright yellow sun which hangs above her
Protects the lightless horoscopes of streams.

Vasyl Barka's poetry is complex and unique: it is not easy to find for it definite points of orientation in Western literature: Dante's *Vita Nuova* and the tradition of Petrarchism provide but a vague parallel. Whereas Zuievs'ky's language is directed primarily at the dissolution of objects posited in the imagery and of established semantic values, Barka's poetry is first and foremost the Ukrainian language. His images appear not as negative but as positive, asserting and frequently celebrating God's creation. Possible sources of Barka's imagery might be found in Ukrainian folklore, particularly in the lyrical folksong and in the *duma* (ballad). Barka, however, spiritualizes and Christianizes folkloristic motifs almost beyond recognition. Using primarily refined re-embodiments of folk language, Barka creates linguistic patterns of stunning delicacy and intricacy. In this, Barka has some illustrious predecessors, particularly Tychyna and Svidzins'ky. Whereas Zuievs'ky is wholly Western, wholly orientated to his new home, Barka's roots remain in the soil of the East. Only occasionally does his poetry enter into a dialectical relationship with the Western literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Barka prefers long cycles of short poems. His *Okean* (The Ocean), for example, runs to 640 pages of integrated and linked pieces. His new poem *Svidok* (The Witness) (published in 1982) consists of four volumes. Most of his recent books are not so much collections in the conventional sense as unified series of similiar forms with variations, in which thematic and imagistic motifs reappear as subtly and as rhythmically as in a long, intricate musical composition. In these chains of closely related forms, every poem is in place and no two pieces can be interchanged. Barka's method of composition can be compared not only with the late medieval and Renaissance practice of arranging short lyrical poems into harmonious series, but also, and perhaps even more fruitfully, with Persian and Arabic poetry. Such a comparison is supported by the vivid colours of Barka's imagery, his elaborate epithets directed to his rather bejewelled, posed and highly stylized treatment of nature. This comparison again should not be taken too far, however, since it soon founders on Barka's idealized, undogmatic Christian view of the world.

Barka's subject matter, so difficult to extract from the intricate weavings of his language (and yet, contrary to Zuievs'ky's practice, transcending the poem's language), is as monolithic as the composition of his books. It is based on the Neoplatonic tradition of spiritualized love between two human beings, between manknd and nature and between nature and God. The leading metaphor of the ocean appears throughout Barka's *oeuvre* in an important ambiguity: on the one hand, the ocean serves as a symbol of mystical love, constantly changing its surface, while forever remaining the same in its

depths; on the other hand, it embodies the sense of an inexorable limit — a limit between God and nature, between man and nature and, most important, between the poet's home and his exile. And yet even this limit can be bridged by the mystical quality of love and of poetic imagination, since the latter depends on the former. In the end, the vision emerging from Barka's *Okean,* as well as from his other work, is that of "the many in the one," the unification of all contradictions, — the basic premise of Ukrainian philosopher Hryhori Skovoroda.[20] Barka shares Skovoroda's belief that it is the innocent eye of the child that grasps this unity with intuitive immediacy. Hence we find in Barka's work deliberate attempts at primitiveness and naiveté, which may occasionally irritate the reader: even such adverse phenomena as enemies (*vorizhen'ky*), grief (*horen'ko*) and misfortune (*nedolen'ka*) are 'diminutivized', which in itself suggests a sense of unification of good and evil in Ukrainian folklore. Barka's overuse of diminutives in his early poetry caused critics to scoff and parodists to have a field day.

Barka's muse, however, does know anger. Wrathful tones are heard most frequently in his early poetry, in which political themes and themes of exile are sharply defined. In these poems Barka uses Biblical language quite like a properly irate prophet. (Some of his early work bears a strong resemblance to Khlebnikov's early epic work, with its deliberately bombastic rhetoric.) Exhortations are mixed with sarcasm and expressed in a deliberately stylized, rhetorical language; strong and frequently grotesque imagery is meant to convey the poet's inspired hatred. In such works evil does not merge with good but opposes it; there is no possibility of compromise with evil, since it is the enemy that opposes God's creation. Needless to say, this phase of Barka's career was influenced by Shevchenko (as was some of Khlebnikov's early work). In the end, Barka decides to return home — to the home of love, in which all creation harmoniously resides. In that home, anger is out of place, as is adversity.

In the following selection from *Okean* we find the ambiguities and paradoxes of an exile's longing for his lost love and his lost home, as well as his acquiescence to the world which transcends personality and temporality. What the inexorable ocean has taken away, it returns to the poet on a higher level — in the vague promises of a greening tree, the crown of which reflects the eternal movement of the planets. The poem is called "Ruiny moria" (The Ruins of the Sea).

Мені розлука відгомін розсіє
з крила — через чаїні нетрі.

І догорить мороз, і в лихо сіре
порайдужиться равлик мертвий.

Руїни моря чи до зграй непізніх,
чи ниви смутків невідкриті...
Але в півскоєчках стоять, мов — тризні
прохання з незриданних ритмів.

І то — смерть ніжности! пісок застигне,
розбиті видива в відпливі;
так рідко з неба квіткове — хустинне
про тебе згадкою щасливить.

Не втомиться з долонею гіркою
благать в гілочки хоч відспів...
кипить світил верхів'я, — над корою
про тебе зеленіють вісті.

Through sea-gull thickets parting and farewell
will scatter echoes from a wing for me.
And frost will flicker out, and a dead snail
will rainbow briefly in the greying grief.

Are these sea-ruins meant for unlate flocks,
or are they fields of sorrows, undisclosed?
Requests composed of never-wept-out rhythms
stand on half-shells like mourners at a wake.

So ardor dies! The sand will cool, and tides
will take the broken visions. Now the skies
so rarely fly their bloomed embroideries
to gladden me with memories of you.

The bitter hand of even my last song
will never cease to beg from a small sprig:
the crest of orbs is boiling, fluttering,
and news of you grows green above the bark.

Barka, over 75 years of age, and Zuievs'ky, aged 63, have found their home in poetry: Zuievs'ky in the self-enclosure of poetic lan-

guage and Barka in the transcendental unity that poetic language — and only poetic language — discloses. It is in the art of poetry that they have found their future. Given the conditions of émigré poetry, their homes seem to endure and to expand: not only are Barka and Zuievs'ky the best poets of contemporary émigré literature, but they stand among the best in contemporary literature as a whole. In normal political conditions, for instance, Barka would probably be considered the best living Ukrainian poet. These poets are also prolific (without grants, fellowships and the like). Their work adds a new and decisive dimension to the definition of émigré poetry as a phenomenon which develops apart from normal literary processes. In contradistinction to those poets who work in their own countries, it is not only *their* art but art for its own sake that seems to be their Noah's ark.

V

Émigré poets, if there are enough of them in one place, tend to form clubs, organizations or institutes. The New York Group of Poets, whose membership constantly fluctuates, was organized in 1957. It was meant primarily as a publishing cooperative and as a centre for poets to gather in. Its formation was motivatd by the need to face *together* the demands that the young poets' environment was making on Ukrainian poetry and that (more important) Ukrainian poetry was making on their environment. Most of its members were emigrants in childhood or early youth; some were born in the West. Collectively, they read and translate all major Western languages, and the poetry journal which they published annually between 1959 and 1972 carried numerous translations of important Western poets of our time. It would seem that this generation of poets finally found a true home in Western culture.

And yet, it is these poets who feel more alienated than some of their older colleagues discussed above. Their alienation, certainly, is less dramatic, more subtle and more symbolic; because of its subtlety, however, it can be more dangerous to the creative process. The source of such danger lies in an insoluble paradox: on the one hand, the language of their poetic inspiration does not permit them to integrate completely with the world around them, since they express themselves best in a language not of their environment. Moreover, this language, in which they hear their poetry even before they write it, limits their creative freedom in the language of their environment and daily discourse to translations, an occasional essay or an occasional poem, or attempts at novels. On the other hand, they do not have the monastic zeal and dedication of their older colleagues that

would make it possible for them to inhabit their creative reveries completely and without reservation. These poets have too many reservations and ask too many hopeless questions. In fact, they have to make reservations in order to survive, as if their imagined Ukrainian past were not so much a permanent home as a temporary abode, a hotel. At the same time, their older colleagues frequently treat them as transient guests in the Ukrainian domain. Never having been fed by the energies of the Ukrainian soil long or thoroughly enough, this generation of poets is torn between two quasi-homes, two temporary homes: one for temporary living, the other for temporary dreaming.

It is no wonder, therefore, that like Lesych, Barka and Zuievs'ky, these poets have chosen poetry itself as their home. They also had to make another choice, one which their older colleagues were spared: not only did they choose to make poetry their home, but they also chose to make *Ukrainian* poetry their home. This last choice was perhaps the most agonizing of all. Ukraine is, for these younger poets, not an existential necessity but something of a posited concept, in which they have elected to believe and which they have elected to follow. Having done so, they share the heavy burden of the émigré poet with their older colleagues who had it thrust upon them. With a little effort they could have broken the spell cast upon their consciousness by the language of their early childhood and become American, English, Canadian, or Brazilian writers, as countless young emigrants had done. But compromise was not their way.

It follows that the New York poets do not hesitate to remodel and even refurbish the home of their Ukrainian heritage. Most of them, for example, adopt a radical attitude to Ukrainian as a poetic language. Capable of hearing it objectively, from 'the outside,' they do with it what no older poet would dare to do. As mentioned already, the Ukrainian language is lyrical and musical, with a flexible syntax and a rich sound pattern. It is so poetic that it forms into verse with little intervention on the part of the creative consciousness. Paraphrasing Schiller, one may say that in such a language as Ukrainian, acceptable verse writes itself. Much Ukrainian poetry has been written by simply using the natural resources of the language, with uninteresting results: the reason that most young Soviet Ukrainian poets are so uninventive is that they let the Ukrainian language lead and control their verse. Some older poets deliberately struggle against the poetic qualities inherent in the language, Lesych being an excellent example. The New York poets, however, do not have to resist the pull of these qualities as strenuously; they are capable of distancing themselves from the language, and this process yields all sorts of unexpected possibilities of manipulation and play.

Vira Vovk (née 1926), Bohdan Boichuk (1927), Zhenia Vasylkivs'ka (1929), Yuri Kolomyiec (1930), Emma Andiievs'ka (1931), Yuri Tarnavs'ky (1934), Patrycia Kylyna (1936), Oleh Koverko (1937), and Marko Carynnyk (1944) constitute the core of the group. The talented Maryna Prykhod'ko (1926), Marta Tarnavs'ka (1930), Lida Palij (1932), and several other poets have been working outside the group but more or less in the same direction. The able translations of Wolfram Burghardt (1935) have earned him full-fledged membership in spite of the fact that he does not write original poetry. Two members of the group, Yuri Tarnavs'ky and Emma Adiievs'ka, are poles apart in their poetry, and yet they have much in common where Ukrainian poetry and, particularly, émigré literature are concerned. It may be instructive, therefore, to look at their work in some detail.

Yuri Tarnavs'ky has probably been the most cosmopolitan poet in Ukrainian literature since the baroque period. A computer engineer, with experience in cybernetics and semiology and a Ph.D. in transformational linguistics, Tarnavs'ky does not hesitate to introduce some of his professional interests into his poetry. He goes much further than Lesych in reducing the Ukrainian language to its basic structure, in making it as neutral and transparent as possible, so that in his hands it becomes not only a communicative vehicle for startling, surrealistic images but, more important, a system of clear and spare signs. Needless to say, in such poems syntax is reduced to a functional support of semantic clusters. In some of his more recent experiments, however, Tarnavs'ky goes to the opposite extreme by turning syntax into a purely poetic device: he becomes hypnotized, as it were, by a syntactical structure, repeating it over and over again in a long, deliberately monotonous series with a minimum of variation, in the hope that the reader will be surrounded by it, enveloped in it, forced to surrender his consciousness to its *eidos*. Such a construction becomes a "text" (as the term is used by structuralists), in which the reader himself must find his own beginning and his own closure. Although this may be reminiscent of automatic writing, at its inception it is opposite to the surrealists' procedure: the poet constructs his patterns not by neutralizing his consciousness and disengaging it from the creative process but rather by introducing deliberate, almost mathematical rigour. It would be futile, in my opinion, to attempt a translation of such work. I will improvise, instead, a translation of Tarnavs'ky's early poem, influenced by Sartre in its philosophy and by the early Pablo Neruda in its art. Although it is not as daringly innovative as his later work, it is pertinent to my theme, with its motifs of absurdist alienation.

Я не поет,
бо мої слова грубі,
як поліна,
і не мистець,
бо мадонни німі до мене,
як чужі фотографії,
і не філософ,
бо не можу читати
ні Канта,
ні Декарта

але коли ніч
і коли пече мозок,
що мені робити?
(коли б я вмів ходити на голові
— я ходив би)

I am not a poet
because my words are rough
like hunks of wood,
and I'm not an artist
because for me madonnas
are as silent as snapshots
of total strangers,
and I'm not a thinker
because I can read
neither Kant
nor Descartes

but when it is night
and my brain starts to burn
what am I to do?
(if I knew how to walk on my head —
I would do it)

Whereas Tarnavs'ky reduces language to a minimum, Emma Andiievs'ka finds her starting point in folk speech, as do some of the older poets, like Barka. Yet Andiievs'ka differs from them in that she takes the ornateness of Ukrainian to its furthest, sometimes deliberately absurd limits. Her syntax is fantastically involved (I use "fantastically" in its various meanings), and she often uses fine, rare words, charged with mythical or magical reverberations and calling forth vague, disturbing reveries. The relative obscurity of some of the

images constructed with these ancient words helps to stimulate such reveries. Hence the difficulty of her poetry is meant not to hinder but to enhance communion with the reader; contrary to Tarnavs'ky, words for Andiievs'ka are everything but vehicles of meanings that exist outside themselves. The texture of each word, its density, flavour and the sounds produced in the reader's unconscious is what fascinates her most.

Although her early work carries traces of Rimbaud's influence, her attitude toward language should not be confused with the philsophy of symbolism proper: far from being pure, her poetry teems with a sort of biological, vegetative energy; in it myth and taxology come together in strange designs. To my knowledge, the only poet who comes close to such density, magic and mirth of language is Velimir Khlebnikov in his later works, and his influence on Andiievska's poetry is obvious.

Whereas Tarnavs'ky's work, for all its deliberate structuralism, is personal and sometimes painfully confessional, Andiievs'ka's poetry is radically distanced from her person. Such distancing is grounded in her view on life, which surfaces in her recent novels: the individual is an insignificant entity against the arena of forces that are much greater than he/she; their permanency only serves to underscore man's puny life span, and man's illusory free will is at their mercy. The poet assumes the pose of an amused and sometimes awed observer of nature and all its mysteries. Never is the observing subject frightened or apprehensive: although man's fate is designed somewhere else, man should not be a stranger in the universe. The final emotional effect of Andiievs'ka's poetry is not existential dread (as Tarnavs'ky's often is) but rather wonder at the intricacy of nature's designs and an attempt to participate in its mysteries through poetry. Andiievs'ka's poetic world is closer to Alice than to Maldoror.

Tarnavs'ky's work is almost free of formal versification; the rare instances of stanzaic structures are meant to parody conventional verse. For Andiievs'ka, conventional poetic forms offer a source of infinite, almost childish, delight, and she virtually does with them what she wants. The following "sonnet," for example, punishes the sonnet form for its tyranny of expression: not bothering to modify the sonnet form from the inside, Andiievs'ka brings it to heel by sheer violence. It would be futile for a translator to reproduce all the intricacies of deviation in the poem quoted below, and casting it in conventional sonnet form would be dishonest. I have decided, therefore, to concentrate on its imagery, merely hinting at the complex rhythmic patterns that have become Andiievs'ka's trademark. The poem is called "Hroza" (The Storm).

Громовищ півні-велетні звалились з сідал
Буття і гребнями креснули об дахи.
Хто — соляним стовпом. Хто світлом задихнувсь.
Над містом розлилась неонова розсада,

І в цей світ новий нахлинув звідусюди.
На царство з почестями повернувсь потоп.
Він, проданий у рабство немовлям, ступа
Назустріч жебракам, грудної клітки соти

Розкривши: "Друзі, їжте, пийте, я весь ваш!"
І ломиться квартал і за кварталом міст,
І скрізь кричать розбій, що зірвано угоди,

Що час настав законами обмежити грозу.
"Я ваш!" гука потоп із водяних огрудин,
Хоч родичі його клянуть його з низин.

The giant cocks of thunder tumbled from their perches
Of Being, striking rooftops with their combs.
Some folks endured Lot's fate, some choked on light.
A bed of neon seedlings spread above the city,

And all at once a new world streamed into this planet.
The Flood returned as prince against the realm,
Where they had sold him as an infant slave.
He strides to meet the beggars of the land, exposing

The honeycombs of his rib cage: "Eat, drink, I'm yours!"
And a street crumbles, after it a bridge,
And everywhere they cry: "All treaties have been broken!

Help! Help! Someone should curb the storm by law!"
"I am all yours!" the Flood proclaims through stems of water,
Although his relatives are damning him below.

I cannot leave Emma Andiievs'ka without quoting her delightful "Nezakonna zustrich z prorokamy" (An Unlawful Meeting with Prophets), translated by Patrycia Kylyna. As in "Hroza" (in which the flood appears as Joseph, whose brothers had sold him into Egyptian slavery), in this poem Andiievs'ka crossbreeds Biblical

myths with pagan myths of nature, producing "unlawful" apocrypha of her own — apocrypha that probe the mysteries of both the Bible and nature by letting one illuminate the other.

В пророків бороди — соми.
На голові кавунні німби.
Пів неба в саквах восени
Відносять в отчинашах німфам.
А ті — на плечі небеса,
А отченаші в жменю й ними
Годують селезнів, і сад
Гримить їх сміхом чорносливним.

The beards of prophets are like sheat-fish.
On their heads they wear haloes of watermelons.
When autumn comes they take half the sky
In paternosters packed in saddle-bags for nymphs,
Who put the sky on their backs,
And take the paternosters in their hands, and
Feed the ducks with them, and then the orchard
Thunders with their black and plum-like laughter.[25]

Now let me turn to Patrycia Kylyna herself. She is a bilingual writer, at home in both English and Ukrainian. She is the author of three English-language novels, the last two published under her real name, Patricia Nell Warren, and of three collections of Ukrainian poetry. Kylyna does not have a single drop of Ukrainian blood in her veins: she is of distant Irish and Norwegian ancestry. The home of Ukrainian poetry, which the Ukrainian friends of her youth inhabited, seemed to her appealing enough to learn Ukrainian, to assume a Ukrainian pseudonym, and to dare a career in Ukrainian literature, which has yielded impressive and lasting results. Her commitment to Ukrainian literature proves that home is not always a geographic location: home can be language and culture alone, with their own rigorous territorial imperatives. The value of "the soil" often tends to be overestimated.

The New York Group of Poets has encouraged a new group, most of whom were born either in western Europe or in North America and have never seen Ukraine at all. Although their experimentation in the Ukrainian language is generally halting and reserved (they tend to use the "transparent" Ukrainian that Tarnavs'ky practised in his early poetry, although what for him was a matter of choice, becomes for them a matter of necessity), they nevertheless build ever wider

bridges between Ukrainian literature and contemporary American and western European poetry. They are not émigré poets in the strict sense of the term. What are they then? What is their position vis-à-vis Ukrainian literature on the one hand and their native lands (their real homelands) on the other?

Such questions turn the definition of émigré literature upside down, and only a new approach to the analysis of émigré literature, which is beyond the scope of this essay, can answer them. There are six or seven poets who are gaining increasing visibility; among them, Roman Baboval and Kateryna Horbach have grown into accomplished poets. Below is a short piece by Baboval, translated by Vitalij Keis.

Слова твої
твоє волосся
мила
пахнуть то дощем
то смертю
вітер осінню мені засипав жили
я розтрощу морю голубий хребет
і стану говорити голубам про хліб
про шкіру віку

your word
your hair
my love
now smell like rain
now smell like death
the wind blows autumn into my veins
I'll smash the blue spine of the sea
I'll tell the pigeons about the bread
about the skin of time[27]

VI

I began my essay with a rather cheerless view of the fate of the Ukrainian émigré poet. And yet the various developments that I have traced seem to belie my initial misgivings. Let me sum up these developments. Probably the greatest living Ukrainian poet, Vasyl' Barka, lives not in Kiev but in Glen Spey, New York. A younger Ukrainian poet is a woman from Montana, of Irish-Norwegian ancestry, with the last name of Warren. The youngest 'émigré' poets

are not yet thirty, which makes them several years younger than the last wave of émigrés from Ukraine. I submit that there is no real contradiction between my opening and my conclusion. The tragic situation of homelessness generates a kind of desperate and yet magnetic energy that not only keeps the older poets writing but draws into its eye young individuals who are not otherwise committed to the émigré ethos. Cioran's essay on émigré literature begins with the following thought: "It is a mistake to think of the expatriate as someone who abdicates, who withdraws and humbles himself, resigned to his miseries, his outcast state. On a closer look, he turns out to be ambitious, aggressive in his disappointments, his very acrimony qualified by his belligerence."[28]

I submit further that the energy produced by the state of homelessness, and by the resulting reveries of home, is similar to, although not identical with, the state in which most poets are destined to work. Gaston Bachelard (who thought deeply on poetic reverie, and from whose works I have taken the metaphor for my discussion) relates how Bernard Pallisy, a baroque architect and scientist, invented for himself an explanation of the snail's production of its shell. According to Pallisy's reveries, the soft and defenceless creature, by using its own body and twisting this way and that, shapes its hard little house to its own needs, and particularly to the need to escape into its involuted corridors when danger threatens. When the snail grows, it makes its shell grow with it by persistent twisting and turning.[29] Sitting before a sheet of paper, the émigré poet ultimately refuses to adapt to his environment. He does not write for recognition, for rewards, or for posterity, because more often than not he is not even certain that his poem will be published. But he knows that his only future — the only future in which he will survive — is the project of the poem before him. Only in this way can he speak about "the skin of time." Having lost his home and having failed to find another, he must build a home for himself, using the energies of his total being for this arduous task. It is in this way that he is a true poet. In the end, every true poet forever seeks his own house of language which becomes for him, in Heidegger's words, "the house of Being."

Notes

1 Evhen Malaniuk, *Poesii v odnomu tomi* (New York: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1954), pp. 10-11.

2 An early version of this translation was published in *Horizons: Ukrainian Students' Review 2,* (1-2) (1956-1957), pp. 95-96.

3 Oleksa Stefanovych, *Zibrani tvory,* ed. Bohdan Boichuk (Toronto: Yevshan-zillia, 1975), p. 58. The poem is dated 1929.

4 *Ibid.:* 160. Dated 1949.

5 C. H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell, *The Ukrainian Poets: 1189-1962* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), pp. 428-29.

6 See Yuri Sherekh [George Y. Shevelov], "Legenda pro ukrains'ky neoklasycyzm," *Ne dlia ditei: literaturno-krytychni statti i esei* (New York: Proloh, 1964), pp. 97-133.

7 See Volodymyr Derzhavyn, "Popil imperii Yuria Klena i novitnia sproba pereocinky yoho poezii," *Vyzvol'ny shliakh* 5, (10) (October, 1958), pp. 1175-79; 5, (11) (November, 1958), pp. 1295-99; 5, (12) (December, 1958), pp. 1407-10; 6, (1) (January, 1959) pp. 94-104; 6, (2) (February, 1959), pp. 195-204. Throughout this long essay Derzhavyn traces and discusses most, but not all, of the literary influences on the poem. Evhen Malaniuk enumerates some of the poem's sources in his Foreword to volume 2 of Yuri Klen's *Tvory,* entitled *Popil imperii,* eds. Evhen Malaniuk and Vofram Burhart (Toronto: Fundacia Yuria Klena, 1957), p. 9.

8 Yuri Klen, *Tvory,* vol. 2, p. 103.

9 *Ibid.:* 105.

10 *Ibid.:* 144. A passage of the relevant letter from Drai-Khmara to his wife is quoted by Klen himself in his valuable memoir *Spohady pro neokliasykiv* (Munich: Vydavnycha spilka, 1947), p. 47. In this book Klen also quotes the lines from *Popil imperii,* devoted to Drai-Khmara.

11 Vadym Lesych, *Rozmova z bat'kom: Poezii zoshyt shosty* (New York: Slovo, 1957), p. 63.

12 "Some Poems of Vadym Lesych Translated into Different Languages." In Vadym Lesych, *Kreidiane kolo: Poezii zoshyt siomy* (New York and Munich: Na Hori, 1960), p. 85.

13 Vadym Lesych, "Na mezhakh nezavershenoho pokolinnia: Poety ukrains'koi emigracii 1940-yx rokiv," *Slovo: Zbirnyk Obiednannia ukrains'kykh pys'mennykiv v ekzyli* 1 (1962), pp. 298-308.

14 Teodosi Os'machka, *Iz-pid svitu: Poetychni tvory,* ed. Ju. Sherekh-Sheveliov (New York: Ukrains'ka vil'na akademia nauk u ShA, 1954), pp. 293-94.

15 Teodosi Os'machka, "Laughter" (trans. Eugenia Wasylkiwska), *Horizons: Ukrainian Students' Review* 2, (1-2) (1956-1957), pp. 94-5.

16 Leonid Poltava, *Bila trava: Piata zbirka* (Philadelphia: Ameryka, 1963), p. 13.

17 E. M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist,* trans. Richard Howard (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 77.

18 Even Maiakovsky and Esenin, Soviet poets whose political convictions are not shared by Ukrainian émigré poets, find their way into the work of the émigré poets.

19 Oleh Zuievs'ky, *Pid znakom feniksa: Poezii* (Munich: Na hori, 1958), p. 91.

20 On whom Barka has written an excellent essay. See Vasyl' Barka, "Apostolichny starchyk," *Suchasnist'* 17 (1), 1977, pp. 5-13. Reprinted in his collection of essays *Zemlia sadivnychykh* (New York: Proloh, 1977).

21 Vasyl' Barka, *Okean* (New York: Slovo, 1959), p. 121.

22 Yuri Tarnavs'ky, "Ya," *Zhyttja v misti: Poezii* (New York: Slovo, 1956), p. 9.

23 Emma Andiievs'ka, *Narodzhennia idola* (New York: Slovo, 1958), p. 12.

24 *Ibid.:* 36.

25 In manuscript.

26 Roman Baboval, *Podorozh poza formy* (New York: Niu-Yorks'ka hrupa, 1972), p. 59.

27 In manuscript.

28 Cioran, *op. cit.:* 74.

29 See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 127-32.