TARAS SHEVCHENKO AS AN ÉMIGRÉ POET

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1.

Faithful to my two prevailing interests, the poetry of Taras Shevchenko and the psychological motivations and sociological implications of émigré writing, I propose to reread some of the poet's works against certain features of émigré literature. The juxtaposition of these two areas of inquiry should add something to each of them, and, perhaps more important, something new should emerge from the very act of their juxtaposition.[1]

I will address a more or less specific and structured set of questions to my approximation of Shevchenko's *oeuvre*. The pair most relevant to the specificity of émigré literature bears on the writer's attitude toward his homeland and toward his host country (the latter term, designating the country in which the émigré presently resides, comes from the discourse of the sociology of emigration; in Shevchenko's case, for obvious reasons, it becomes particularly ironical). These two questions will be made to imply more general ones dealing with the writer's attitudes toward time and space. I will then go on to suggest that such considerations do much to establish the view that the writer has on his own self as that self is presented in his texts. Such considerations will also help me to define the writer's self-image *as a writer* and to examine his view on his actual and implied readers, on the languages of his homeland and his host country (and consequently on the language in which he writes), and ultimately on the role of his literary production in society and history and on the function of literature as such, as these views are embodied in his texts.

I should establish, before going on to Shevchenko's texts, that he was in fact an émigré, in order to avoid the misunderstanding that I consider him an "internal émigré" or some other kind of symbolic émigré. Most important, I should briefly show that in life Shevchenko's views on his homeland, his host country, his writings, and even his own self occasionally diverged from those embodied in his poems.

2.

As an adolescent serf, Shevchenko became a lackey (*kozachok*) in the household of his owner, Paul Engelhardt. In the autumn of 1828, the fifteen-year-old boy left his homeland to travel with his young master to Vilnius and then to Warsaw. In the beginning of 1831, he joined the Engelhardt household

in Petersburg, to which the landowner had fled somewhat earlier from the impending Polish revolution; it is in Petersburg that Shevchenko was to spend most of his life.

In 1843, Shevchenko, then a free man and a promising artist and poet, decided to visit his homeland. That decision was charged with doubts and hesitations.[2] Ten months later he returned to Petersburg, having realized that the actual conditions in Ukraine justified his misgivings. Deeply disappointed, the poet returned to his friends, to his studies at the Academy of Art, to the business of arranging for the publications of his poetry. He, as it were, returned home from a marred holiday to take up his normal life. And yet, in letters to friends, he continued to call Russia a foreign land and cursed Petersburg as a heartless, alien city.[3]

Such seemingly paradoxical attitudes toward the homeland and the host country are not strange to émigrés. An individual, after dreaming about his homeland for many years, finally risks a visit, and becomes hopelessly disappointed with what he encounters. Among other interesting ramifications of such situations is the sudden confrontation of dream by actuality—a clash which, in its various specific conformations, becomes central in the psychology of the émigré.

Shevchenko, characteristically, refused to be victimized by the psychological trauma of his first visit. Two years later, he traveled to Ukraine again, as if to check his initial impressions; it is not out of the question that the poet wanted to stay in Kiev for a longer period. Be that as it may, Shevchenko was arrested in 1847 and transported as a political prisoner back to Petersburg, where he was tried and condemned to banishment. Thus began his deeper exile in the Kirghiz steppes—away not only from his beloved Ukraine but also his near-native Petersburg.

It was about Petersburg that Shevchenko dreamed when, toward the termination of his banishment in 1856-1857, he was shuttled from one Russian city to another. "What will I do without my Academy," he wrote in his diary upon receiving the news that after his release he would be forbidden to reside in Petersburg, "about which I dreamed so sweetly and so long?"[4] When that ban was finally lifted in 1858, he greeted the Russian capital like a native son, happy to see again its Academy of Art, its museums and galleries, its theatres and restaurants.[5]

But soon after settling in Petersburg, Shevchenko was again making plans to visit his "dear Ukraine."[6] A year after his release, he received official permission for such a visit. He had hopes of marrying a Ukrainian woman, building a house on the Dnipro, and planting a fruit orchard.[7] However, after a few months in his homeland, Shevchenko was "advised" by the authorities to return to Petersburg. He spent the last three years of his life in his near-native city, ever more intensely longing to settle in Ukraine. A few days before his

death he told a friend that he must "go home" to get well, because only the pure, uncontaminated air of his homeland could cure him.

It is easy to trace in these biographical facts not only several stages but even several kinds of emigration. The journeys of the adolescent serf can be regarded as enforced economic emigration, determined by the boy's social status as a serf and by his specific duties as a lackey. The years after Shevchenko's liberation from serfdom in 1838 can be considered, at least to some degree, as voluntary cultural emigration. There is no doubt that his incredible rise from serf to professor at the Academy of Art would have been impossible in the then provincialized Kiev. For more political reasons, it would have been more difficult for him—paradoxical as this may sound—to become a celebrated Ukrainian poet if he had resided permanently in Ukraine. And his banishment to the Kirghiz steppes is obviously political imprisonment, the implications of which become diametrically opposed to those of his previous states of exile.[8] Finally, the poet's life in Ukraine itself, initially as a socially alienated serf child and later as an emotionally alienated visitor, can be viewed as a kind of exile within his homeland, a state of "internal emigration." It is only in this instance that I would call Shevchenko an "internal émigré."

This reading of the biographical data might be threatened by the obvious fact that, except for a brief trip to Western Europe in his youth, Shevchenko resided within the borders of the Russian empire. Some of his Russian friends considered him not a foreigner but a native of one of the exotic provinces of their vast country. As we shall see later, that attitude in itself imbues Shevchenko's sentiments toward his host country with a rather unusual hue. Should it be more accurate, then, to call Shevchenko a dissenter within the empire, thus finally resigning oneself to the concept of "internal émigré"?

Such a question might be seriously entertained in the case of some of Shevchenko's Ukrainian contemporaries who at certain periods of their lives resided in Petersburg—Kostomarov, Antonovych, even Kulish, and certainly Gogol/Hohol', who experienced the psychologically grounded alternative between Ukraine and the empire especially acutely. Although most of them were quite explicit on the differences between the two nationalities (*dve narodnosti*), they hardly considered their residence in Petersburg as emigration, let alone exile. What finally decides the question of whether or not Shevchenko considered his residence in Petersburg as emigration is the text of his poems. My reading of it should show that not only did Shevchenko regard himself as an actual émigré in Petersburg, but that he pushed that attitude, that psychological self-positioning, to its very limits. It should also show that Shevchenko exhibits surprisingly many negative, inhibiting, even potentially paralyzing, trends inherent in the specificity of émigré literature, and that he succeeds in turning those very weaknesses into tremendous strengths.

3.

Among the most manifest dangers to which the émigré, and particularly the émigré writer, is susceptible is a distorted view of his host country. This may be caused by either too enthusiastic an admiration of the host country, growing out of gratitude and unexamined loyalty, or, more frequently, by a hypertrophied sensitivity to its negative aspects. This latter attitude is often the result of a complex and deeply submerged feeling of resentment, stemming from the fact that one is forced to remain on the periphery of what for one's actual neighbours, co-workers, and personal friends is so conspicuously, even flauntingly, the center. Paradoxically enough, these two contrary sentiments occasionally commingle in a completely irrational, almost ineffable, emotional tangle.

Although in occasional passages of his diary and personal correspondence Shevchenko may be suspected of approximating such a paradoxical emotional complex, in his poetic texts the structure of the émigré's relationship with his host country is far subtler and more interesting. He often ridicules émigré loyalty to the host country, as for example in the early poem "Son" ("The Dream") where we encounter a caricature of an "economic émigré"—a graft-grabbing *zemlyachok* ("country-man"), an ink-stained nonentity who brags in broken Russian about his influence at the imperial court. But it is by no means only the lowly economic émigré, the stupidly insolent clerk, who is the subject of Shevchenko's sarcasm. The Ukrainian political and intellectual leadership, including the Ukrainians attached to the imperial court, also receive their due. Here, of course, Shevchenko generalizes the issue far beyond the émigré status, approximating central definitions of the distribution of power within an empire, although there is no doubt that such privileged Ukrainians resided in Russia for extended periods (often owning townhouses in Petersburg) and acquired its foreign ways. But I think that something more profound than moral censure of prodigal sons is at stake here. The émigré Shevchenko is anxious that the obnoxious ways of his host country will invade and sully not only his own soul but the soul of his homeland: the spirit of the émigré as a flunkey in the host country will become the rule in the homeland as well, and thus the crucial line of demarcation between the host country and the homeland, which should always remain in sharp focus, will slowly be dimmed.

In the dramatic poem "Velykyy l'okh" ("The Great Mound"), the Ukrainian crow—an evil spirit of the Ukrainian nation—brags to her Russian and Polish sisters that among Ukrainians she:

> ... дворянства страшну силу
> У мундирах розплодила,
> Як тих вошей розвела:
> Все ж вельможнії байстрята![9]

(...spawned awful crowds of courtiers in uniforms, hatched them like lice. They are princely little bastards, one and all.)

In a much later poem "Vo Iudeyi vo dni ony" ("In Judea, in days long past"), by the use of the pronoun "we," Shevchenko seems to include a much vaster group of Ukrainians in this estate of utter flunkeyism:

Ми серцем голі догола!
Раби з кокардою на лобі,
Лакеї в золотій оздобі...
Онуча, сміття з помела
Його величества. Та й годі.

(We are utterly naked of heart, slaves with cockades on our pates, lackeys in golden ornaments... Foot wrappings, sweepings from under the broom of His majesty. And that is all.)

We notice, incidentally, that in these two quotations from different periods of Shevchenko's career images of clothing and adornments predominate—uniforms, cockades, golden embellishments which in the second quotation contrast with the dirty rags that a beggar would wear to keep his feet warm. More important, all this is contrasted, again in the second quotation, with the naked poverty of the heart. Here, as in numerous other instances where Shevchenko sneers directly at the cultural values of his host country, power is not only represented by, but actually contained in, gaudy wrappings, made gaudy to mask emptiness. In the specific case of Ukrainians, the deception is still more complicated: the empty trappings of power—the illusion of power—are meant to co-opt the Ukrainian periphery, to lure it with baubles from the center, in order to beggar and trash it much more thoroughly by depriving it of its culture and history. To be a bedraggled exile, an invisible Other, thus resisting co-optation, becomes the only possible moral choice, and the outcast's ragged foot wrappings become the only dignified adornment.

Shevchenko's innate dignity, combined with the fear that he too may be co-opted, forces him to choose the posture of an invisible outcast. Anxiety about preserving the integrity of his identity forces him to pretend that he has none. In such a peripheral situation it is out of the question even to consider any temptations that the host country may offer him. Again paradoxically, he frequently regrets his lack of choice, but although he often admits the powerful temptation that the glitter of fame offers, he quickly reminds himself of its exorbitant spiritual cost.

Shevchenko particularly resents that the host country holds out such promises exclusively on its own terms. This, incidentally, can again be interpreted as an attitude characteristic of the émigré intellectual. In the

introduction to his poem "Haydamaky" ("The Haydamaks") Shevchenko treats this complaint with particularly ascerbic irony:

> Теплий кожух, тільки шкода,
> Не на мене шитий,
> А розумне ваше слово
> Брехнею підбите.
>
> (The sheepskin coat is warm, too bad that it was not cut for me. And your wise words are lined with lies.)

The sheepskin coat—that "peasant" word—by itself flagrantly challenges the goldbraided uniforms, silken cockades, and highfalutin words of the center, even while it ridicules the gibes of the gold-braided ones against Shevchenko himself as a peripheral poet.

Shevchenko's uncanny ability to identify the crass intentions behind the apparently kind attempts of the host country to seduce him, and his categorical, or perhaps downright rude, gesture of rejection of these attempts, lead the poet to open counterattack against its culture, from literature to architecture. Such sallies begin in the earliest phase of his career and end with his very last poem. As I have attempted to show elsewhere, not only the thematic motifs of "canonical" Russian poetry but, what is more interesting, its imagery, style, and language fall prey to the poet's recouping sarcasm.[10]

The very enclave of language frequently becomes the field of such battles. The short, almost cubistically composed poem "Nu, shcho b, zdavalosya, slova?" ("And what, one may ask, are words?"), for example, begins with the supposition that words, together with the voice speaking them, seem to be of little value. But the poet immediately negates this desperate suspicion:

> А серце б'ється, ожива,
> Як їх почує!... Знать, од Бога
> І голос той, і ті слова
> Ідуть між люди!...
>
> (But the heart beats faster, comes alive, when it hears them!... Certainly, it's from God that this voice and these words go among the people!...)

This patently romantic generalization is made more particular by the fact that, as it turns out, those words and that voice come from the homeland. These lines are followed by powerful images of two texts—one implying the host country and the other the homeland—which are meant to oppose each other. One is a sad, moving, but decidedly "unpoetical" folk song, partially quoted and partially alluded to in a masterful montage of text within text; the poet hears a sailor sing it and then remembers it from his childhood in the homeland. The

song, incidentally, echoes Shevchenko's state as a peripheral outcast—a state now become actual, since the poem was written in the second year of his imprisonment:

І жаль мені малому стало
Того сірому-сироту,
Що він 'утомився,
На тин похилився,—
Люди кажуть і говорять:
Мабуть він упився'.

(And I, as a little boy, felt sorry for that ne'er-do-well orphan, that he 'got tired and leaned on a fence, and people said: He probably got drunk.')

The other text, completely submerged and signalled by the single word "Diana," is a parody of the written "canonical" poetry of the host country, a parody of its heedless and haphazard classical allusions together with its fondness of clumsily coquettish periphrases:

...Із туману
Як кажуть, стала виглядать
Червонолицяя Діяна...
А я вже думав спать лягать,
Та й став, щоб трохи подивиться
На круголицю молодицю,
Чи теє—дівчину!...

(Out of the fog, as they say, began to peek the red-faced Diana... Although I already had thought of going to bed, I stopped to take a look at that roundfaced peasant wife or—pardon me—girl!...)

As we notice even in this short quotation, the text of the poem, with its colloquial, chatty tone, mercilessly undercuts the pretentiously literary periphrasis of the moon as Diana, underlining its mediated literariness by the interjection "as they say." The context further compromises the allusion by the manifestly crude wisecrack about Diana's doubtful, albeit widely proclaimed, virginity. Finally, it "demotes" Diana to the ambiance of the Ukrainian village with the single peasant word *molodytsya*. More important, the text of the entire poem stylistically supports its own overtly avowed sympathy with the folksong from the homeland by aligning its style and tone with those of the song. It is the demonstratively "unpoetical" words of both the song and the text—the words that in themselves unrelentingly undermine the high culture of the host country—which solely have the power to awaken the heart.

In the profoundly perplexing poem "Moskaleva krynytsya" ("The Well of

the Muscovite Soldier"), which, among other things, embodies on both the thematic and the stylistic levels the opposition between the authenticity and dependability of the spoken as against the artificiality and unreliability of the written language, Shevchenko directly identifies the literary canon of the host country as an instrument of power, abused for the oppression of even its own people (in this case, the suppression of the Pugachëv rebellion):[11]

> Піїти в одах вихваляли
> Войну й царицю...
>
> (The poetasters, in their odes, praised war and the Empress...)

These lines are obviously antiquated, incidentally providing the author with the opportunity to pun on the word *piyity* which originally had meant "poets" but was subsequently caricatured to mean "poetasters." What is more important, such stylization directly opposes its context—the narrative of an old Ukrainian villager (in the second version of the poem, a haydamak veteran) spoken in plain folk language. This is but a fleeting example of Shevchenko's numerous and lengthier parodies of the "high style" prescribed by Lomonosov for serious Russian poetry, particularly odes, which Shevchenko regards as eminently suitable for sneering at the abuse of power.[12]

In "Moskaleva krynytsya" Shevchenko, going a step further, seems to accuse writing as such of being a subtle instrument of co-optation. For learning to read and write in the Russian army, the hero, a Ukrainian peasant, must make himself ridiculous by wearing a wig—an unnatural, "cultured" adornment, not unlike those of the Ukrainian gentry, here demoted by the peasant word *kosa* ("braid"):

> Бо таки й письма, спасибі,
> Москалі навчили.
> І в косі був, бо й москалі
> Тоді, бач, носили
> Сиві коси з кучерями
> Усі до одного,
> І борошном посипали,
> Бог їх зна для чого!...
>
> (Because the Russians, bless them, taught him to read and write. And he wore a braid, because, you know, Russians [Russian soldiers] at that time, one and all, wore grey braids with locks. And they sprinkled them with flour, God knows for what reason!...)

I should again remind the reader at this point of the obvious fact that Russia played a dual role in Shevchenko's life and work—that of the host country and

that of a ruthless oppressor of his homeland. All his sarcasm, as an émigré, against his host country is immediately taken up and legitimized by Russia's other role in his life. This is particularly true of those instances where Russia appears as the imperialistically co-optative "civilizing Other," depriving its slave nations of their history and substituting for it a makeshift, diluted version of its own culture or a kind of "supranational" (or, more precisely, "infranational") kitsch. An interesting paradox develops here. The evidently negative forces, which usually distort the émigré's vision and often altogether paralyze him, are compelled by Shevchenko to make his vision sharper and more lucid. He, as it were, forces the two images of Russia to reflect upon each other. If Russia were not his host country, his vision of it as the oppressor would be diminished; I believe that a dissenter in the homeland, an inner émigré, would not be able to give his verdicts that added and ultimately ineffable dimension that we find in Shevchenko's poetry.

This by no means excludes Shevchenko's covertly ambiguous attitudes—born of secret envy, perhaps admiration—and, most important, the constant awareness that success is within reach—and the immediate reaction of shame for such feelings. It is precisely this double attitude, with the aspect of destruction stated and the aspect of temptation implied, that strengthens Shevchenko's views on the two faces of Russia. Needless to say, these attitudes cancel each other out when Shevchenko becomes a political prisoner.

In this poetry Shevchenko, as it were, *forced* upon Russia the role of a radically foreign country—an inhospitable, hostile host country—in which he would act out the part of a peripheral alien. He radicalized the differences between Ukraine and Russia to the point of no return. That gesture of severance was so powerful and so convincing not only because Shevchenko justified it by irrefutable historical, political, and cultural arguments but also, and surely more important, because of his irrational, profoundly revolutionary self-nomination as the Other, which radicalized beyond bounds his actual marginal status as ex-peasant, ex-serf, Ukrainian poet, émigré in Petersburg. Going much further down the road of exile in his poetry than in his life, Shevchenko donned masks and assumed postures of a vagrant, a quasi-derelict, an outcast in the fullest meaning of that word—an invisible, transparent underground man.[13] By literally forcing his host country to despise him, and also provoking the displeasure of his actual native readers, he turned himself into a rather special kind of émigré. His posture here is reminiscent of the view on exiles in ancient and, particularly, medieval societies. Because the exile is severed from both the native and the host communities, he is like a member severed from a human body, unable to go on fully living without its center; he is dissociated from the center of the good life, and hence must exist literally beyond the pale, much like a madman or a criminal.[14]

One can go on to say that Shevchenko imposed the fate that he had

constructed for his early lyrical hero, as well as for the heroes of his early dramatic and epic poems, on his own daily existence. Thus he forced life to imitate art, but surely not in the esthetic sense of an Oscar Wilde. An important example of Shevchenko's imposition of the primacy of literature upon life—within the constantly revolving cycle of imagination and experience which is his *oeuvre*—is his goading of the authorities, in his poems and hence by them, into "granting" him the status of a banished political prisoner. A fairly recent comment on a Spanish émigré writer may readily be applied to Shevchenko: a fictional character, together with his author, actually "*wills* imprisonment. It aids self-definition, it helps to clarify choices and commitments, it engenders revolt."[15]

4.

Shevchenko's embodiment of his homeland in the language of his poetry is even more decisively predicated upon his peripheral situation as an émigré than are his attitudes toward his host country. Here we again perceive a duality of vision, both aspects of which reinforce each other.

Shevchenko's relationship to his homeland was shaped by circumstances quite different from those of Ukrainian émigré writers today. To begin with, Ukraine was a part of the empire; moreover, it was potentially accessible to Shevchenko, except for the ten-year period of punitive banishment plus a few episodic bans against his residing in Ukraine. Also, except for ten years of banishment, Shevchenko was not completely cut off from his native readers. And surely most important of all, he did not suffer a complete severance from the native sources of his inspiration, which all too frequently causes the émigré writer's talent to wither.[16] To the contrary, although Shevchenko's knowledge of his native sources was obtained not so much with his mother's milk as by assiduous study, the center of his creative energy is particularly close to the wellsprings of his native culture. And yet, finally, Shevchenko deprived himself (as the Spanish émigré writer José Ramón Marra-López put it about his own situation) of "the direct paralinguistic immersion into the day-to-day signs and nuances of the nation's public life."[17]

Much more atypical is the fact that Shevchenko seems to have deliberately preserved, and even symbolically increased, the distance between himself and Ukraine, while at the same time declaring his closeness to the homeland. A significant example of such distancing is Shevchenko's frequent practice of abstracting Ukraine as a land and a people by means of powerfully dramatic personifications—abstracting the country through the extravagant concretization of it as a person. True, when we consider Shevchenko's most familiar personification of Ukraine as mother, we should keep in mind that such allegorization in itself is so ancient and so widely used that it has become a de-

personified, neutralized platitude, as the English-language "mother country" shows. But when we gather together his numerous images of Ukraine as a mother, we soon see that the allegorical figure is so opulently molded, so fully articulated, so worked or, if you will, so carefully manipulated that it *almost* loses its intended nature of allegory and *almost* becomes a figure in and for itself. As such, it joins the elaborate structure of prominent female figures in Shevchenko's poetry—the poet's actual mother, numerous embodiments of his lovers, his Muse, and, finally, the Virgin Mary. The homeland is distanced by becoming the crowning metaphor of another emotionally powerful paradigm, the Eternal Feminine, responding to the poet's emotional (perhaps even unconscious) needs much more immediately than to his vision of the political reality of the homeland.

Along with such personifications Shevchenko seems to distance the homeland by means of excessively idealistic symbolization, thus shifting it to yet another emotionally charged paradigm. Here is the well-known opening of the early poem "Rozryta mohyla" ("The Excavated Well"):

> Світе тихий, краю милий,
> Моя Україно!
> За що тебе сплюндровано,
> За що, мамо, гинеш?
>
> (O quiet world [light], o beloved land, my Ukraine! Why have they plundered you, why are you dying, mother?)

More interesting than the personification of Ukraine as mother is the pun implied in the words "svite tykhyy." Although the most obvious meaning here is that Ukraine is "a quiet world," which is reinforced by "krayu mylyy," the older definition of the word *svit* as "light" hints at a more significant, and a more provocative, design. The phrase repeats the beginning of a liturgical song, where it serves as an apostrophe to Christ. My guess that Shevchenko intended this pun is supported by the opening of his much later poem "Svite yasnyy! Svite tykhyy!" ("O bright light! O quiet light!"), addressed directly to Christ, criticizing the quietude of His light and calling upon Him to clean out, in the gesture of a haydamak, the imperialistic Russian Orthodox Church. What interests me in the earlier poem is that the counterposition of the powerful symbol "Christ" and "beloved land" goes far in the direction of abstracting that "beloved land" by elevating it to the metaphysical height of the divine symbol. The extraordinary degree of symbolization, and hence abstraction, of the homeland is, according to Paul Ilie, an important characteristic of émigré literature.[18]

The controlling psychological effect of personification, symbolization, and other devices, too numerous to mention, of the distancing of the homeland

is finally paradoxical: actuality is kept at bay, so as to retain a *certain* Ukraine—a certain profile of Ukraine—intimately close and unsullied. This effect is enhanced by a pretense at actuality, a playing with actuality, such as dedicating poems to actual persons and addressing such persons directly, casual mentioning of daily details, etc. Although we readily see parallels between the events pertaining to the homeland which are alluded to in the poetry and those which are more fully developed in the correspondence and the diary, such events in the poetry are radically distanced by a sort of mythical atmosphere, a dreamlike aura, which invariably surrounds them.[19]

The unclouded profile of the homeland that Shevchenko frequently advances in his early, and occasionally later, poetry is the homeland of personal and collective memory, overdetermined or valorized by imagination. Hence, two disparate temporal planes go to comprise the past as it is oneirically remembered: the historical, collective past of the Cossacks—already romanticized by the historians whom Shevchenko read or with whom he corresponded and conversed—and the poet's personal past embodied in overdetermined visions of a childhood spent in the homeland. Occasionally these two planes meet almost imperceptibly in a single metaphorical continuity. A rather superficial but nevertheless vivid example of such blending of historical and psychological time can be found in the epilogue to the poem "Haydamaky," where Shevchenko proudly declares that as a young boy he walked with bare feet the same paths that the haydamaks once had trod. Most often, however, such fusion takes place on deeper and less obvious levels, as in the case of the understated and yet pervasive self-identification of the narrator with the poem's hero Yarema Halayda. It is accomplished on the compositional level by frequent autobiographical intrusions into particularly dramatically heightened, particularly intense historical narratives.

The émigré writer's past life in the homeland, especially if it is distanced by time, somehow becomes predicated upon the past glory of his people; *both* of those times were happy times, and they were happy *together*. Even more characteristic are instances where the energies moving both of these temporal planes become fuelled (overdetermined or valorized) by his imagination. Such investment in itself can be very productive, and it is by no means restricted to émigré poetry.[20] Sometimes, however, it is so deeply interiorized that it causes debilitating frustration, which, in turn, paralyzes the subject's ability to differentiate not only between fiction and actuality but also between good and bad art, which, in the end, becomes one and the same. In his émigré situation of perceptual and experiential deprivation, together with an intense disenchantment caused by a sense of hopelessness, such a writer—frequently in spite of his own wishes—turns his writing into a desperate affirmation of the oneiric visions of his own past, changed as they are by his desire. This, in turn, founds his "unrealistic" visions of the future in which everything will be

overturned as if by magic. Such stubborn affirmation deprives the writer of the playful distance, and even irony, which would again "enchant" the language of his art.

As an extreme example of the overdetermination of memory by desire, Shevchenko repeatedly refers to the homeland of his childhood as paradise and, almost in the same breath, to the time of the Cossacks as a mythical time of childlike play (as if actually imagined by a young boy), which somehow went together with superhuman heroism and an almost Olympian majesty.[21] The dark profile of actuality, overshadowed by heart-rending disappointment, is frequently suppressed, so that its unclouded, childlike profile be fully illuminated. That dark profile, nevertheless, almost like the shadowed products of the unconscious, begins to be felt and eventually intrudes, particularly after Shevchenko's first trip to Ukraine. The shock of disappointment that the youthful poet experienced at that time may have been, at least in part, the result of his former, powerfully interiorized, metaphorical distancing of the homeland; homecoming may have seemed to him to be a deeper and a more dangerous exile because actual events there threatened to rob him of his vision of Ukraine. Notice that in the following two excerpts from "Son," which deal with the theme of leaving the homeland *again*, the images of "paradise" and "mother" predominate. Also notice the secondary images having to do with clothing—the horrible divestment of the vanquished for the purpose of horribly investing the conqueror's progeny:

> Он глянь: у тім раї, що ти покидаєш,
> Латану свитину з каліки знімають,
> З шкурою знімають,—бо нічим обуть
> Княжат недорослих.
> .....
> Тяжко матір покидати
> У безверхій хаті,
> А ще гірше дивитися
> На сльози, на лати.
>
> (Oh, look. In this paradise that you are now leaving, they tear a tattered coat off a cripple's back; they tear it off together with the skin to make boots for unripe princelings.
> .....
> It is hard to leave one's mother in a roofless hut, but it is harder still to look at her tears and her tatters.)

These examples and the large number of other poems which deal with the theme of leaving the homeland suggest how emotionally draining and excruciating such leave-taking must have been. Shevchenko's threats of never returning to the homeland—probably the most desperate decision that any

émigré can make—are directed, in the following quotation from "Son," not only against the enemies but also the circumspect "unenemies" (a play on the Polish word *nieprzyjaciel*, literally "unfriend"), his wealthy countrymen who let their country be ravaged and raped even as they lavishly entertain him:

І вороги й не-вороги
Прощайте! В гості не приїду!
Упивайтесь, бенкетуйте!
Я вже не почую—
Один собі на вік-віки
В снігу заночую...

(Farewell, my enemies and my unenemies! I will never return as your guest. Get drunk, make merry, I will never hear you now—all by myself, forever, I will go to sleep in the snow...)

And in the following quotation from "Try lita" ("Three Years") Shevchenko's threat never to return to his homeland is predicated upon the passing of his youth and the death of his happy dream of Ukraine after his visit—a dream that in the past used to be embodied in the happy words of his youthful song:

Чи голосно зневажайте,
Чи нишком хваліте
Мої думи,—однаково
Не вернуться знову
Літа мої молодії,
Веселеє слово
Не вернеться!... І я серцем
До вас не вернуся,
І не знаю, де дінуся,
Де я пригорнуся,
І з ким буду розмовляти,
Кого розважати,
І перед ким мої думи
Буду сповідати.

(Insult my poems loudly or praise them in whispers—whatever you do, my young years will never return, and neither will my happy word. And I will never return to you in my heart. And I do not know what I will do with myself now, where I will turn, find shelter, with whom I will converse, whom I will entertain, and to whom confess my poems.)

It is as if the banished Shevchenko banishes the actuality of his homeland from his presence.

The spiritual cost of this "reverse banishment" can be heavy. One such

sacrifice involves the émigré's inability to live his time which, rather than distance, becomes his worst enemy, although ultimately time and distance are predicated upon each other. The years spent in the host country fly by much too quickly because they are now empty of significance (since all meaning has been relegated not only to another place but to another time), while boring days and especially nights, unrelieved by luminous moments of celebration, crawl along at an excruciatingly slow pace. After his ill-fated visit, as after the death of someone near, Shevchenko learns to experience émigré time for what it is: borrowed time, empty time. He particularly suffers from this temporal void because in Petersburg the aurora borealis makes even the distinction between night and day smudged and somewhat dubious:

І день—не день, і йде—не йде,
А літа стрілою
Пролітають, забирають
Все добре з собою.

(The day is a day and not a day, it passes and does not pass, while the years fly by like arrows, taking with them all that was good.)

To die and to be buried in a foreign land is perhaps the émigré's most terrifying nightmare. And Shevchenko frequently expresses his acute anxiety about being buried in the distant wasteland of snows and sands, the land of the dead in Ukrainian mythology, which for him is a constant symbol of Russia. The thought of even a sumptuous funeral in the host country, as he states in "Moskaleva krynytsya," becomes intolerable:

Чи чув ти, що кажуть: легше умирати
Хоч на пожарині в своїй стороні,
Ніж в чужій—в палатах...[22]

(Have you heard what they say? It is easier to die in one's native parts, even if it be among smoldering ashes, than in palaces in a foreign land...)

The imagined site of death and burial in the native land is almost invariably not a desolate, fire-ravaged ruin, but the paradise of a dream-like, heavily overdetermined landscape. Another "Son"—a much later work than the longer and more famous poem with the same title discussed above—consists, in the main, of manifestly mythicized Ukrainian landscapes, the romantic visions of which visit the poet in a dream:

Дивлюсь—аж он передо мною
Неначе дива виринають,
Із хмари тихо виступають:
Обрив високий, гай, байрак.

(I look—and suddenly before me emerge seeming marvels, quietly stepping out of a cloud: a steep precipice, a grove, a green valley.)

It is in such a setting that an old Cossack is ending his life in seemingly serene dignity. He thanks the Lord for permitting him to die on the "holy hills" near the river Dnipro.

A very important change, however, occurs in the poem when the hills, first called "holy" ("Na si svyati hory"), are eventually seen as "despoiled" ("Na tykh horakh okradenykh"). This change is supported by the broader context, for the lyrical descriptions of the oneiric landscape are brutally interrupted by dissonant, dark notes. In a "Gothic," early-Gogolian image an old Cossack church, conversing with the Dnipro river, looks out upon the world with its moldy panes, as a corpse would stare out of its coffin with green, dead eyes. Addressing the chapel, the poet asks:

Може, чаєш оновлення?
Не жди тії слави!
Твої люди окрадені,
А панам лукавим
Нащо здалась козацькая
Великая слава?!

(Perhaps you are awaiting renewal? Do not expect such glory! The backs of your people are broken, and what need have the evil lords of the great Cossack glory?)

The old Cossack then expresses embittered opinions on Ukrainian history and the role of Cossack leaders in it. He blames the hetmanate for having ruined "God's paradise" ("Zanapastyly Bozhyy ray"), and finally questions the success of Christ's attempts to change "God's people" ("Lyudey Bozhykh").

The quality of the valorized descriptions of the Ukrainian landscape is now altered by these sober historical considerations. Such subtle changes in value-bestowing are precipitated by the emergent opposition between the outer-directed vision of the eyes which, paradoxically, continue to valorize the immediately perceived (paradoxically, because the immediately perceived is really seen in a dream, removed from the present by valorized memory) and the inner-directed vision of the heart which refuses such valorization. Here we have an interesting reversal of the familiar Platonic-romantic model of the relationship between outer and inner vision, to which Shevchenko occasionally turns even as early as "Dumy moi..." ("My thoughts..."). Such a reversal, in itself also romantic, is necessary in this poem because nature, initially estheticized by poetic dreaming, now becomes ethicized by historical considerations:

І все те, все те радує очі,
А серце плаче, глянуть не хоче.

(And all of it, all of it, gladdens the eye, but the heart weeps and does not want to look.)

We see such ethicization of nature, to its detriment as a prelapsarian paradise, everywhere in Shevchenko. More interesting, the opposition between the oneirically valorized and the historically wakeful views are embodied in two distinctly separate orders of poetic discourse which constantly threaten to annihilate each other.

The two subtly conflicting moods in the poem are but one of the many embodiments of a rift in Shevchenko's view on the past of his homeland. Even as he constructs valorized images of his past and the nation's past—together with equally valorized visions of the future predicated upon such visions of the past—he opposes to them passages of condemnation of the historical past, both of the nation and of his personal life. Even more interesting are passages of ironical criticism of his own childishly enthusiastic glorification, which immediately follow, and undercut, a moment of celebration. Now the past is not enthusiastically learned and re-imagined from romantically coloured history books, but existentially experienced *through* the present. It follows that in the language of such critical views of the past, declamatory ebullience and general "poeticity" are exchanged for sardonically sparse and concrete diction, based on specific detail, the latter frequently challenging and undoing the former. Such a double view on the past of the homeland begins in the works written after Shevchenko's first visit to Ukraine—which seems to be symbolized as a kind of "falling into sin"—and continues into his late poetry. As early as "I mertvym i zhyvym..." ("To the Dead and the Living..."), the phillipic against the bad faith of young Ukrainian intellectuals, we observe the practice of setting up and immediately undercutting the romantic image of the Sich Cossacks as carefree adolescents, capable of Homeric heroic feats. The majesty of the hetmanate receives similar treatment when it is linked with, and sometimes made directly responsible for, the landowners, both foreign and native, who ruthlessly exploit the Ukrainian people. Such angry passages do not replace those in which the Cossack past is unequivocally glorified; the two contradictory attitudes continue side by side, constantly reflecting on and interrogating each other.

An almost analogous, but perhaps even more dramatic, movement proceeds on the temporal plane of the poet's personal past because, as I have already pointed out, the two planes seem to depend upon each other. In the powerful poem "Yakby vy znaly, panychi" ("If you only knew, lordings")—which, incidentally, is also a literary polemic against the poetry of the center

and of Ukrainian folkloristic sentimentalism, and, at the same time, a bitterly sarcastic instance of metaphysical rebellion against the highest center of the Divine—Shevchenko's cherished image of his childhood as paradise is mercilessly pierced and torn asunder by the image of that childhood as hell on earth:

Якби ви знали, паничі,
Де люди плачуть, живучи,
То ви б елегій не творили
Та марне Бога б не хвалили,
На наші сльози сміючись.
За що, не знаю, називають
Хатину в гаї тихим раєм?
Я в хаті мучився колись,
Мої там сльози пролились...
.....
У тій хатині, у раю,
Я бачив пекло...

(If you only knew, lordlings, the place where people live by weeping, you would stop composing your elegies, and you would not praise God in vain, laughing at our tears. I have no idea why they call a hut in a grove a quiet paradise. I suffered grief in such a house long ago, and my tears flowed there... In that hut, that paradise, I saw hell.)

Notice the impersonal "nazyvayut'" ("they call") within its immediate context: it is as if on this ethical level of his poetic discourse Shevchenko is forced to abdicate the responsibility of himself having called a peasant hut "paradise" a few poems before, assigning that image, which has now become an instance of bad faith, exclusively to the lordling poets.

Shevchenko's investigation of his own oscillation between the two extreme views on the role of the homeland in the émigré's life seems to turn, in the poem "Buvaye v nevoli" ("It happens that in captivity"), into a feverish search for identity. This search involves not only his personal past but also the historical past of his nation. Here, in fact, it is quite difficult to differentiate between the two temporal planes, as his "ancient past" imperceptibly blends with images of the Cossacks:

Буває, в неволі іноді згадаю
Своє стародавнє; шукаю-шукаю,
Щоб чим похвалитись, що й я таки жив,
Що й я таки Бога колись то хвалив!
Шукаю, шукаю...

> (It happens that in captivity I sometimes remember my ancient past. I search, search for something that would give me reason to boast that I too once lived, praising God! I search and I search...)

We have seen that Shevchenko's passionately out-spoken examination of the historical past of his homeland goes hand in hand with his unabashed romantization of that past. This oscillation can be interpreted as the difference between received tradition, so zealously protected by the émigré, together with the ensuring need to turn historical facts into mummified quasi-myths for "safer" preservation, and pathbreaking visions, perceived from the geographically and spiritually distant perspective of exile. Such an inconsistent, wavering stance is precisely what protects Shevchenko from the dangers that threaten the émigré when he faces his homeland. Two potentially dangerous views on the homeland—glorification of its past and heedless deprecation of its now alien-bound present—are counterposed in Shevchenko's poetry in such a way that they save the poet, not by blocking out but by intensifying his émigré status. And the constant oscillation between plus and minus, with its adhering interillumination, offers an excellent example of the romantic text opposing and undermining itself by means of romantic irony. It is irony, in short, that saves the émigré from the dangers of his status in Shevchenko's text.

Such salvaging of the émigré's view on his homeland through the two intersecting temporal planes of the personal and the historical past, and the two contradictory attitudes attending each of these planes, does not occur within the boundaries of any single temporal plane or any single attitude, or in the supplanting of such planes and attitudes with each other. It occurs somewhere "in-between," somewhere within the very energy that courses between the lines of the personal and historical past, the individual and collective present. It occurs in the energy of that quest, that *shukayu*, which is so characteristic of Shevchenko.

5.

Another danger that threatens the émigré writer is a warped perception of his identity. It directly ensues from the émigré state of petrified temporality. Basing himself on Bergson, John G. Gunnell writes:

> Man first existed in space but he first became aware of himself in time, for it is only in terms of time that thought becomes conscious of itself. The discovery of the self and the experience of temporality occurred simultaneously since it is the self that posits, separates and mediates the dimensions of past and future.[23]

The émigré's mythologization of the historical past of his nation, and especially of his personal past, almost always implies the corresponding mythologization of his self. The émigré obsessively concentrates on his self, aggrandizing it beyond belief so as not to lose his memories, which comprise his self, in the daily onslaught of the tides of the alien sea. Glauco Cambon, writing about Dante, speaks of the émigré poet's "vindication of the self as a center of experience."[24] It is, paradoxically, precisely this overprotective attitude that threatens the self in much more serious ways that the intentional casting of it into the stream of daily activity, because such inauthentic conservation and hypertrophy of the self, as it is fed with memories of the past, is already a kind of death.

Shevchenko's hypertrophic concentration on the self and the urgent immediacy of the language in which that self is often embodied can be viewed in the light of the proposition that the émigré is cut off from living dialogue because, being isolated from community, he is isolated from communion.[25] As early as the Middle Ages the émigré was regarded as "a creature without dialogue."[26] In the poem appropriately entitled "Zarosly shlyakhy ternamy" ("My roads are overgrown with weeds") Shevchenko writes:

> Мабуть, мені не вернутись
> Ніколи додому;
> Мабуть, мені доведеться
> Читати самому
> Оці думи!.. Боже милий!
> Тяжко мені жити!
> Маю серце широкеє—
> Ні з ким поділити!
>
> (I will probably never return home; I will probably have to read these poems all by myself. O, dear God! My life is so heavy! I have a wide heart, and nobody to share it with!)

The émigré needs to speak, even if it be to himself, as if his voice, given the drastic decrement of efficacious intentional acts, were the only proof of his identity and hence of his existence. What is exceptionally interesting in Shevchenko, however, is that in the midst of even his most abject monologues he almost imperceptibly establishes a dialogical relationship with the reader. Within his images of lived speech, he actualizes and even dramatizes the implication that his poems are, in fact, written and one day will be read. From his first published poem to the last Shevchenko speaks with others, even when they are obviously absent, do not exist, or are not human. He frequently speaks not only to himself but also with himself, addressing himself in the second person singular. The obviously dialogical nature of such self-address is

emphasized by the tone, frequently bantering and ironical, whose function is to check the immediately preceding attitude cast in a contrasting mood. In the poem with the telling first lines "Khiba samomu napysat'/ Taky poslaniye do sebe" ("Perhaps I should write an epistle to nobody but myself"), we find an exceptionally heart-rending passage, written in the first person, bemoaning the fact that the poet is forced to write for himself alone, without a ray of hope for present or future readers. Suddenly, however, the poet turns to himself in the second person with an immediately effective image of jocular, highly idiomatic direct speech, constructed of abbreviated syntactical structures and generously larded with folksy expressions and vivid "linguistic gestures":

> Нічого, друже! Не журися!
> В дулевину себе закуй,
> Гарненько Богу помолися,
> А на громаду хоч наплюй—
> Вона капуста головата!
> Автім—як знаєш, пане-брате:
> Не дурень—сам собі міркуй!
>
> (Forget it, friend! And do not worry! Enchain yourself in irons, say a decent prayer to God, and you might as well spit on the community—it is nothing but a cabbage head. But then, after all, do as you see fit, sir confrere: you are not a fool—use your own head!)

The poet establishes a dialogue with himself, in order to tell himself not to hope for dialogues. What is more, he interrupts this informal chat with himself in midstream, in a move worthy of an experimental novelist circa 1989, to tell himself that, after all, he does not need his own advice because he is bright enough to know what to do.

Another example of dialogical division of the self occurs in the poem "Nu shcho b, zdavalosya, slova?" when the poet, after copiously weeping over his lost youth, stems the flow of self-pity with a sudden ironical thrust against his own maudlin mood. Again, the two edges of the irony are in full evidence, inasmuch as the reason for the poet's despair—his captivity—is by no means trivialized but, on the contrary, stands out in sharp relief:

> Чого ж тепер заплакав ти?
> Чого тепер тобі старому
> У цій неволі стало жаль?
> .....
> Що ось як жити довелося?
> Чи так, лебедику?—Еге!...
>
> (Why are you weeping now? What are you so sorry for now, old man, in this captivity?... That you have to live in this way? Isn't it so, ducky?—Yes, sir!)

More conventionally, Shevchenko addresses dozens of individuals—friends, fellow writers and intellectuals, actual or would-be lovers, parents, historical personages long dead. He constantly turns to readers, both actual and imagined, whose existence he at the same time doubts. As a romantic, he apostrophizes his homeland, natural objects and entire landscapes, the moon, the stars, his Muse, and, more frequently than most, God Himself. He is particularly fond of speaking directly to his fictional characters, suddenly projecting them onto the plane of actuality. Moreover, he posits—and this is surely unusual for his time—an interlocutor who is absolutely transparent, an absence as a minus-device or a sign of absence which is turned into a presence solely by the manner in which the poet directs his voice. Thus Shevchenko overcomes the curse of non-dialogue to which he as an émigré was condemned. His victory is so pronounced that it overcompensates for lack of speech; his lines, more so than those of most poets, ring with various and diversified voices, teem with voices, become almost oversaturated with voices. And while these voices oppose themselves to silence, they include silence in their very transcendence of it, as the early poem "Osyka" ("The Aspen") indicates:

Молюся, знову уповаю,
І знову сльози виливаю,
І думу тяжкую мою
Німим стінам передаю.
Озовітеся ж , заплачте,
Німії, зо мною
Над неправдою людською,
Долею лихою...

(I pray and again hope, and again pour out tears, and I pass my heavy thought to the silent walls. Speak, weep with me, you silent walls, over human injustice and over evil misfortune.)

Within the highly charged field between the two points of the dialogical bifurcation of the poet's self, in which that self lives and heals itself, it tirelessly converses with itself, interrogating itself about exile and its attendant contradictory emotions, especially about guilt and doubt, the most baffling of all the emotions experienced by an émigré, particularly by one with Shevchenko's heartening view on the world.

Shevchenko frequently expresses feelings of guilt about having left his homeland. Abandonment of one's home becomes self-abandonment, and an utterly immoral act. The magnificent early poem "Kateryna," for instance, can be read as a narrative of exile, reminiscent of Shevchenko's own attempts to find happiness in the "sands and snows" of Russia and his guilty conscience about such efforts. Another example of this thematic strain is the strong poem "Ne kyday materi" ("Do not abandon your mother"), written in 1847 during

Shevchenko's initial imprisonment in Petersburg. The body of the poem implies that the heroine's homeland suffers by her disloyal departure. And its closure openly hints at young Shevchenko's own situation in Petersburg and the anxiety that it must have caused him:

> Віщує серце, що в палатах
> Ти розкошуєш, і не жаль
> Тобі покинутої хати...
> Благаю Бога, щоб печаль
> Тебе до віку не збудила,
> Щоб у палатах не найшла;
> Щоб Бога ти не осудила,
> І матері не прокляла!
>
> (My heart divines that you luxuriate in palaces and do not sorrow after your abandoned house... I pray to God that grief never wake you for the rest of your life, that it never find you in the palaces—that you never condemn God or curse your mother!)

In a number of *Ich-Gedichte* the poet fears that by leaving home and participating, no matter how marginally, in the alien culture of the unfriendly host country, he broke solidarity with his downtrodden countrymen. Here the feeling of guilt fades into the more corrosive emotion of doubt. In some of his most desperate lyrical poems, Shevchenko blames himself not only for having abandoned the homeland, but for further alienating himself from the people by having become a poet and therefore a "homeless" member of the intelligentsia, which pushed him into an even deeper exile of punitive banishment. In 1847, during the intial term of his imprisonment in Petersburg, Shevchenko writes:

> Дурний свій розум проклинаю,
> Що дався людям одурить,
> В калюжі волю утопить.
>
> (I curse my stupid brain for having let myself be duped by fools, and having drowned my freedom in a mud puddle.)

Shevchenko's subtexts, gleaned from various poems, seem to bring together several meanings of "erring," which also obtain in Ukrainian, such as "wandering," "deviating from the moral code," "being mistaken." There is something morally not quite right in the émigré's straying; he must have committed an error, perhaps even a sin, by having left his homeland. His wandering is not the result of sin, as it is in the case of Cain and his numerous literary progeny; it is wandering itself that constitutes a sin. It is fitting, therefore, that such a life of "erring" be punished by a lonely death in a sandy, snowy landscape, itself the land of "svit za ochi" ("God knows where"—

literally, "beyond the reach of the eyes"), the wasteland of Moroka, Marena, death.

Besides his fear of a miserable death, a fear which Shevchenko expresses from "Dumy moi" to his very last poem, he also longs for a speedy death which would terminate his unbearable life in exile or, perhaps, punish him for his erring ways. "Zasny, moye sertse, naviky zasny, / Nevkryte, rozbyte..." ("Sleep, my heart, go to sleep forever, uncovered and ruined..."), he writes in a brief, painfully despondent poem "Choho meni tyazhko?..." ("Why is my heart so heavy?"). And thoughts of death occasionally focus on thoughts of suicide. In a poem dedicated to his friend, the actor Mykhaylo Shchepkin, Shevchenko's voice borders on hysteria:

> Стань же братом, хоч одури!
> Скажи, що робити:
> Чи молитись, чи журитись,
> Чи тім'я розбити?!
>
> (Become my brother, or at least pretend. Tell me what to do. Should I pray, should I sorrow, or should I smash my skull?)

Tortured by thoughts of injustice and of his own diminished life, the émigré often turns his fury upon the entire universe. The destructive emotions against the self and against the universe run parallel to each other or, as frequently happens in Shevchenko's poems, gestures of suicidal despair extend outward, turning into gestures of metaphysical rebellion. As early as the poem "Chyhyryn" and, particularly, the first "Son"—both written when the poet had decided to commit his gift to social concerns—we hear grim notes of some impending universal holocaust, a new Judgement Day:

> Нехай же вітер все розносить
> На неокраєнім крилі!
> .....
> Нехай чорніє, червоніє,
> Полум'ям повіє,
> Нехай знову рига змії,
> Трупом землю криє.
>
> (Let the wind smash everything and carry everything away on its boundless wing!... Let it grow black, let it glow red, let the flames blow on everything, let it again vomit dragons and cover the earth with corpses.)

Shevchenko's angry voice frequently reaches up to the Almighty Himself, who either symbolizes the source and essence of the power of earthly autocracy, its "divine right," and then He must be put to sleep, or else He is *deus otiosus*,

indifferent, removed, purblind, and then He must be wakened.[27]

Unlike many émigré writers, Shevchenko refuses to let the emotions of sorrow, guilt, doubt, and blind fury against the universe usurp and rule over the domain of his poetic language. Like much else in Shevchenko's world, the language of such emotions, from the earliest of his poems to the last, moves side by side with the language of joy and reconciliation. No matter how hard some critics try to prove some neat evolution and resolution in Shevchenko's thought and work, the poet's growth from strength to strength is based not only on his love of life and other people but on that which it opposes but by no means erases—on his dark, destructive, even suicidal impulses. In the very last poem of Shevchenko's *oeuvre*, when illness forces the poet to face the urgent demand of death, we come upon lines of gentle protest in the context of a typically jocular, familiar apostrophe to the Muse:

Ой не йдімо, не ходімо,
Рано, друже, рано;
Походимо, посидимо—
На сей світ поглянем...
Поглянемо, моя доле...
Бач, який широкий,
І широкий та веселий,
Ясний та глибокий...

(Oh, let us not go, let us not go yet; it is early, friend, it is early. Let us stroll awhile and sit together. Let us look at this world... See how wide it is, how wide and happy, how bright and deep.)

This passage follows, and contradicts, lines in which the poet ironically accepts the dreadful sign of his mortality:

Втомилися і підтоптались,
І розуму таки набрались,—
То й буде з нас!—Ходімо спать,
Ходімо в хату спочивать.

(We are tired and we are growing old, but we have learned an awful lot. Now we have had enough! Let us go to sleep, let us go into our house to rest.)

To complicate such oppositions, Shevchenko occasionally insists that his hopes are really hopeless self-delusions:

Минають літа молодії;
Минула доля, а надія
В неволі знову за своє,
Зо мною знову лихо діє

І серцю жалю завдає.

(Years of youth are passing; good fortune has passed, and yet hope again repeats its promise in my captivity. It bedevils me again, pouring regret into my heart.)

No matter how excruciating his hoping against hope, the poet is condemned to endure it. Hope is the curse of memory, or of the overdetermined images of desire, closing the past and the future in a charmed ring. The central object of that desire is for Shevchenko the hope of freedom—a hope that in itself already constitutes freedom, as the poem "Chernets'" ("The Monk") suggests:

Не вернеться сподіване,
Не вернеться... А я, брате,
Таки буду сподіватись,
Таки буду виглядати,
Жалю серцю задавати.

(The hoped-for will never return. It will never return... And yet, brother, I will persist in hoping, I will persist in expecting, thus pouring sorrow into my heart.)

Vacillation between the extreme points of hope and despair is an integral component of the émigré psyche.[28] Shevchenko usually, although by no means always, avoids the dangers that this implies, because in his texts one emotion undercuts the other in an almost constant movement of irony, or even outright play. Thus Shevchenko prevents his language from becoming an uninterrupted shout, be it a battle cry or a cry of woe, petrified in the dead air of exile. In his work the alternation between hope and despair, too often the curse of the émigré, becomes a means of constant self-renewal, and therefore it also constantly renews his poetic language.

6.

Everything, of course, depends on a poet's language; everything that can be said about Shevchenko as a poet is predicated upon his tremendous energy of writing. Except for a single, relatively short, "dry" period, Shevchenko's creative energy did not abate until the very last days of his life. It flowed abundantly even during his darkest moments, perhaps especially then. For the émigré writer the ability to create is crucial; for him to speak is to write, and words in his native language become his only viable means of support in the alien sea that surrouds him. More than other writers, the émigré writer is the twin of Scheherazade.

But Shevchenko's energy of writing, tremendous as it is, is fraught with

constant hesitation, constant doubts about its viability, constant oscillation between the poles of vivid speech and dead silence. His scruples and worries about writing, so characteristic of émigré writers, find their way into many letters and poems.[29] In a short lyric, written when Shevchenko was still in banishment, the poet turns his sarcasm against his own passion for writing:

На батька бісового трачу
І дні, і пера і папір!
А іноді то ще й заплачу,
Таки аж надто...

(Why, in the name of the devil's daddy, do I waste my days and pens and paper! And sometimes I even weep a little. And that is really too much...)

As we have seen, in the depths of his despair Shevchenko blames his writing for his personal misfortunes. We may suspect it to be just a romantic gesture, but when, in "Chy to nedolya chy nevolya" ("Is it misfortune or captivity"), he blames his misfortunes on those older intellectuals who severed him from the anonymous community of peasants by teaching him to write "bad poetry," all possible romantic poses are annihilated by sheer personal grief and its actual causes:

Бо ви мене з святого неба
Взяли між себе і писать
Погані вірші научили!
Ви тяжкий камінь положили
Посеред шляху... і розбили
О його—Бога боячись!—
Моє малеє та убоге
Те серце, праведне колись!

(You dragged me down from holy heaven and took me among you and taught me to write bad verses! You put a heavy stone across my path...and, fearing God, you broke against it my small, poor heart, once so virtuous!)

If, within this sarcastically desperate emotional frame (particularly during Shevchenko's punitive banishment), writing poetry is of any use at all, it may help "an old fool to fool himself" or may entertain his lonely soul in feverish self-dialogue. In the late lyric "Ne narikayu ya na Boha" ("I do not complain against God") he writes:

Я сам себе, дурний, дурю,
Та ще й співаючи...

(I, foolish man, fool myself, and singing at that...)

But the writing of poetry has more serious, existential functions than mere amusement, no matter how desperate such amusement may be. The process of writing itself is the vehicle by which hope is sustained and nourished. The poet, immediately after the lines just quoted, juxtaposes the poles of hope and despair within the context of the work of writing, which is compared to agricultural labour. Although it is indeed difficult to establish if it is hope or despair which finally triumphs, we are certain that the labour of writing must go on:

. . . . . Орю
Свій переліг—убогу ниву!—
Та сію слово. Добрі жнива
Колись то будуть. І дурю!
Себе таки, себе самого,
А більше, бачиться, нікого?

(I plough my fallow ground—my poor field—and I sow my word. Someday there will be a good harvest. And do I ever delude! Nobody but myself, myself alone, and, does it seem, nobody else?)

This time the poet does not stop here. He proceeds to answer his timorous question in a powerful passage in which he expresses his unequivocal conviction that his labour of writing will lead to the liberation of his people. The metaphor of agricultural labour acquires Biblical, almost metaphysical overtones. At the end of the poem, nevertheless, he again undercuts that conviction, but with an important difference: sowing his poetic word, which turns out to be both capricious and good at the same time, is an ethical activity, the authenticity of which can never be doubted no matter whether the harvest will be successful or not. In an existential paradox, the labour of writing turns even self-deception into an act of authenticity:

Чи не дурю себе я знову
Своїм химерним добрим словом?
Дурю! Бо лучче одурить
Себе таки, себе самого,
Ніж з ворогом по правді жить
І всує нарікать на Бога!

(Am I not fooling myself yet again with my capricious good word? Yes, I am! Because it is better to fool oneself and nobody else—oneself alone—than live with one's enemy on faith and vainly complain against God!)

The Kierkegaardian leap must be taken, because it is the only authentic resolution of the inauthentic existence in the studios and salons of the capital. Although writing in captivity may prove hopeless, it alone authenticates one's

existence.

As Shevchenko externalizes the splitting of the émigré self in numerous self-dialogues, in order to keep that self intact, so he creates a split between himself as a poet writing and his written products. In his early texts, the poet sends his poems-children to Ukraine, while he himself must remain in exile: they are emissaries to his happy self of long ago. In the works from his middle and late periods, the poems-children are instructed to reverse the direction of their flight; they are to fly from Ukraine to the place of the poet's exile. The self that has remained in the past—that is, in the homeland—now seems to be the source of creativity. In the poem "Na dlya lyudey, tiyeyi slavy" ("Not for people, nor for fame"), we encounter an exceptionally concrete image of the poet's "migrating" words:

> З-за Дніпра мов далекого
> Слова прилітають
> І стеляться на папері,
> Плачучи, сміючись,
> Мов ті діти, і радують
> Одиноку душу,
> Убогую.
>
> (It seems that the words fly here from the distant Dnipro and arrange themselves on the sheet of paper, laughing and weeping like children, to cheer my lonely, poor soul.)

The important reason that the split between the self and its creations is not harmful but healing is that these two poles are never petrified in permanent forms. Shevchenko's words, flying back and forth between the homeland and the host country, are indeed movement, energy, *act*. Such migrating poems-thoughts are obviously not *already written*, but image the process, even the physical gestures, of writing. They are the energy that links the past self in the homeland and the present self in exile into a self that transcends them both—the self of the poet as a self writing, writing almost literally between the homeland and the host country.[30]

Next to the preservation of the self and intimately linked with it, writing fills the empty time of the émigré with articulated meaning. It is no wonder, therefore, that in most of what I call Shevchenko's "new-year" poems—preludes to the given year's yield which might have been meant as opening pieces for the various phases of *Kobzar*—melancholy meditations on the empty passing of slow days and speeding years are immediately counterbalanced by strong passages about the process of writing. Writing is expected to anchor the self in the flux of time, as the opening and closure of a "new-year" poem for 1850 suggest:

Лічу в неволі дні і ночі—
І лік забуваю!
О, Господи! Як то тяжко
Тії дні минають!
А літа пливуть за ними,
Пливуть собі стиха,
Забирають за собою
І добро і лихо...
Забирають—не вертають
Ніколи, нічого...
.....
Нехай гнилими болотами
Течуть собі між бурянами
Літа невольничі! А я...
(Такая заповідь моя!)
Посижу трошки, погуляю,
На степ, на море подивлюсь,
Згадаю дещо, заспіваю,
Та й знов мережать захожусь
Дрібненько книжечку... Рушаю!

(I count the days and nights in captivity and forget their number. O God! How heavily those days are passing! And the years flow after them, they flow quietly, taking with them both good and evil. They take and do not return—never, nothing!... Let my years in captivity flow through rotting morasses, among weeds! And as for myself? Such is my resolve: I will sit around a little, walk around a while, look at the steppe and at the sea, I will recall a thing or two, sing a tune, and then I will again embroider my little books with tiny writing...I am setting out!)

In the slow, almost putrid flow of time, in the context of meaningless, incidental activities of boring daily life, there is a single, strong resolve to set out (*rushaty*), to move, to write, as the only authentic movement into the future.

Committed writing—and recall how burdensome that commitment in itself can occasionally be for Shevchenko—structures the creating self, causing it to transcend the poet's mundane existence. It does so by articulating the void counters of émigré temporality, thus giving them meaning. But it can do much more than that. The writing of poetry, in and through its metaphorical language, can structure the futurity of the homeland. Hence from a bothersome curse or from an amusing game, the poetic word evolves into a tool of magic and, finally, into the world-creating Logos. A poem, quoted here on several occasions, begins with the lines:

Ну, що б, здавалося слова?!
Слова та голос—більш нічого!...

А серце б'ється, ожива,
Як їх почує!... Знать, од Бога
І голос той, і ті слова
Ідуть між люди!...

(And what, one may ask, are words? Simply words and voice, nothing more! And yet, when the heart hears them, it beats more quickly, it comes alive. No doubt it is from God that this voice and these words go among the people...)

In a romantic gesture, writing annuls the divine right of the Tsar by the much more viable "divine right" of the poet—the lonely, abandoned, alienated, totally peripheral émigré poet. It challenges, moreover, the source from which all divine right is reputed to emanate. In this thematic phase, it is not some metaphysical region, and not even fecund, innocent nature, but the poetic word itself which is paradise:

Слово моє, сльози мої,
Раю ти мій, раю,

(My word, my tears, oh my paradise, my paradise.)

What saves Shevchenko from the typically romantic "fallacy" of logocentrism (and what may be regarded as a partial result of his existential situation) is once again the energy that alternates between two extreme poles, rather than the poles themselves. Shevchenko's view, on the one hand, of the poetic word as a paltry thing, a toy which "makes nothing happen," and, on the other, his view that the poetic word is a world-creating power do not cancel each other out; one view is never permitted to hold sway over the other for very long, let alone permanently replace it. One may again visualize these two views, these two poles, as extending in lines that run parallel to each other, constantly checking, questioning, challenging, even undercutting, but never obliterating each other. One is indeed tempted to go so far as to say that Shevchenko seems to intuit the shifting, sliding nature of language itself, especially when he writes about language, which he does so frequently. In such passages about the Janus-like nature of poetic language, we again see how in Shevchenko the marginality and "insecurity" of the émigré writer become a lifesaving force.

7.

I have attempted to show in this essay the movement in Shevchenko's texts of a thematic structure of an émigré creating self, of an émigré self creating itself. Let me now briefly sum up my claims.

Many unhealthy elements of the émigré mentality find their way, at one time or another, into Shevchenko's texts. They do not vanish and are never

vanquished; in fact, the poet searches out such potentially dangerous elements in order to exploit them as points of stress in his difficult work of attaining authentic freedom. I have discussed at length Shevchenko's multivoiced style. It is predicated upon the poet's much wider state of motion, which is almost like dancing. Indeed, the most obvious way Shevchenko overcomes the lethal petrification that threatens the émigré writer is his constant dynamism (involving a constant readjustment of his point of view), which embraces everything, including Ukraine and even God. Such a perpetually moving field creates the impression of "émigré" incompleteness, provisionality; *Kobzar* certainly creates this impression. The reader is called upon to work—to complete the *oeuvre* or even the single texts within it, to finish writing them. The reader's work, of course, is not totally free. It is directed at every step by the energetic underground stream of the poet's prepersonal self embodied in the unique sound of his voice, disseminated in, and uniting, his multiple voices.[31] It is in this, although not exclusively in this, that Shevchenko is so reminiscent of a postmodern poet. His *Kobzar* is an "open structure," militating against, let us say, the authoritative finality of a sonnet, a realistic novel, or a "well-made" play.

Shevchenko's poetic thought is lived thought, thought actively thinking and re-thinking itself, always in the process of becoming; his texts become a single text, a text without borders unfurling itself by its variation of constant thematic and stylistic motifs,[32] by its variegation of voices above the voice of the prepersonal self, and by its dynamic contradictions. Shevchenko, therefore, directly opposes himself to any monumentality. It is only in this constant search for new perspectives, in constant motion, in the refusal to be finished—in this state of freedom—that authentic commitment is possible. In the poem "Try lita," written immediately after his first visit to Ukraine, Shevchenko states:

> І я прозрівати
> Став потроху...
>
> (And I slowly began to regain my sight...)

He continues to cherish this lucidity until the end of his life—this merciless gaze from which no deception, particularly self-deception, can escape for long. Under, or perhaps because of, his countless moments of self-indulgence, the poet ultimately searches out and banishes all traces of it. It is only thus that authentic commitment can become viable.

Being denied, or refusing, a native culture, in the slow stream of which he could be at home from day to day, the émigré writer seems to have a choice of either fabricating a surrogate of his native culture by slavishly adhering to petrified tradition, while everything around him is changing, or freely interpreting or "reading" the text of his native culture, producing his own "version" of it, in

which he could authentically live. Not many have sufficient strength to take the hazardous leap into that authentically creative alternative—a leap vitalized by the ultimate faith in one's own self. Shevchenko was obviously sufficiently strong not only to take that risk but to see and poetically define all its alarming implications. He was strong enough to create a world of language, a metaphorical world with its own light and darkness, joy and grief, desire and frustration, life and death. We all know the result: although most of Shevchenko's world has remained in the text of his poetry, much of it has imperceptibly seeped out into the open work of actuality, helping to write the text of the modern Ukrainian consciousness. And yet, Shevchenko's world (not unlike that of the Bible) is strong enough to resist depletion by such seepages into history. It forever remains new as a text and it continues to offer promises and suggest possibilities, as if it were being written at this very moment, even as I write this sentence.

Can all émigré writers create such a world of their desire, parallel to (but never slavishly imitative of) the actual world of their homeland? Of course not. But all of us are condemned to attempt it. To hazard such attempts means to write. To write authentically. To write by the skin of our teeth. To write so as to save our lives. To write so as to make everything, including the homeland, possible.

NOTES

1. A reading version of this paper was delivered in Edmonton as the Twenty-Second Shevchenko Lecture (and subsequently in Saskatoon and Winnipeg) in March, 1987. Also, this paper should be considered a pendant to my "Images of Center and Periphery in the Poetry of Taras Shevchenko," *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences: Studies in Ukrainian Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 41-42 (New York: Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986), pp. 81-118. As should become obvious from the two papers taken together, I consider the question of Shevchenko as an émigré poet to lie within the context of his peripheral situation.

2. Immediately before his visit to Ukraine, he wrote to Yakiv Kukharenko: "I have no hope for Ukraine... there are no people there, the devil take it, but merely accursed foreigners [Germans] and nobody else... I have decided not to go to Ukraine, curse it, because there I would hear nothing but weeping." *Povne vydannya tvoriv Tarasa Shevchenka*, 14 vols. (Chicago: Mykola Denysyuk, 1961; based on the edition: Warsaw-Lviv: Ukrains'kyy Naukovyy Instytut, 1930-39), X, 26.

3. Ibid., X, 20.

4. Ibid., IX, 163.

5. Ibid., IX, 221 *et passim*. He wrote Vasyl' Tarnovs'ky, Jr. on October 9, 1859: "Here I am in Petersburg, as if I were in my own living room" (X, 232). In November of 1859, however, he wrote to Varfolomey Shevchenko: "I cannot stay in Petersburg; it will choke me to death. God preserve any christened and unchristened soul from such boredom" (Ibid., X, 234-235).

6. Ibid., IX, 32.

7. From Petersburg, he instructed Mykhaylo and Mariya Maksymovych to find him a suitable bride in Ukraine (Ibid., X, 221). He put a similar request to Yaryna Shevchenko (Ibid., X, 235). On May 25, 1859, he wrote to Marko Vovchok: "Should I hang myself? No, I will not hang myself, I will run away to Ukraine, marry there, and then return, as if washed clean, to the capital [Petersburg]" (Ibid., X, 228).

8. Some scholars of émigré literature call for more refined distinctions. Glauco Cambon points out that "it is unfair to equate the conditions of freely chosen expatriation with exile under duress" ("Ugo Foscolo and the Poetry of Exile," *Mosaic*, 9, No. 1 [Fall, 1975], 126). And Mary McCarthy warns: "There is little in common between the exile and the political prisoner. The latter is not merely set apart as a dangerous undesirable; he is marked for destruction" (quoted in Rosette C. Lamont, "Literature, the Exile's Agent of Survival," *Mosaic*, 9, No. 1 [Fall, 1975], 2). For my purposes, I need a more general definition, although I must differentiate between the exile and the political prisoner.

9. *Povne vydannya tvoriv Tarasa Shevchenka*. All quotations of Shevchenko's poetry are taken from the first four volumes of this edition, but the translations are mine.

10. See my "Images of Center and Periphery...", pp. 110-111.

11. Leonid Pliushch's intriguing and important cycle of essays *Ekzod Tarasa Shevchenka: Navkolo "Moskalevoyi Krynytsi"* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987) reached me too late to be of benefit for this article.

12. That he, indeed, intended such parodies we see in the first draft of the prologue to the poem "Tsari" ("The Kings") which he subsequently discarded:

> А я трохи згодом
> Захожуся коло царів
> Та 'штилем високим'
> Розмалюю помазаних
> І спереду, й збоку.
>
> (And somewhat later, I will take care of the tsars, painting the anointed ones in the 'high style,' both in face and in profile.)

Anybody familiar with that bitterly sarcastic poem knows what kind of portraits

of the "anointed ones" Shevchenko finally produced.

13. See my "Images of Center and Periphery...," *passim.*

14. See David Williams, "The Exile as Uncreator," *Mosaic*, 8, No. 3 (Spring, 1975), 8-9.

15. W. D. Redfern, "Exile and Exaggeration: George Darien's *Biribi*," *Mosaic*, 8, No. 3 (Spring, 1975), 169.

16. The exiled Spanish writer José Marra-López is especially eloquent on this danger. See Paul Ilie, *Literature and Exile: Authoritarian Spain, 1939-1975* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1980), p. 90.

17. Ibid, p. 22.

18. Ibid, p. 56.

19. Russian formalists have shown how in poetry mundane details, surrounded as they are by "poeticalness," can in themselves become devices of distancing.

20. See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 108-109, 117, 124 *et passim.*

21. Specifically referring to the topos of the homeland as paradise and offering numerous examples from Spanish émigré literature, Paul Ilie speaks of "immobile idealism" or "infantilist constructions" which pretend to reinforce reality while, in fact, evading it. See Ilie, p. 84.

22. The word *kazhut'* indirectly suggests the fact that these lines are based on a folk song:

> Ой я в чужім краю
> Як на пожарині,
> Ніхто мене не пригорне
> При лихій годині.
>
> (Oh, I live in a foreign land as in the midst of smouldering ashes, and nobody will embrace me in this evil hour.)

It is interesting that Shevchenko reverses the location of the fire-ravaged wasteland.

23. John G. Gunnell, *Political Philosophy and Time* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), p. 11.

24. Cambon, p. 125.

25. The "I" dominates in Shevchenko's texts. The numerous subtle distinctions of the self in his poetry need not concern us here. I discuss them, together with the various half-masks and full masks which that self employs, in "Shevchenko's Profiles and Masks: Ironic Roles of the Self in *Kobzar*," *Shevchenko and the Critics 1861-1980*, ed. George S. N. Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 398-427.

26. Williams, pp. 3-4 *et passim.*

27. Shevchenko's widely discussed instances of metaphysical rebellion do not require further elucidation or illustration here. Suffice it to say that they too are characteristic of émigré literature, particularly in the romantic period. Other examples of the motif of metaphysical rebellion are found in the works of the quintessential émigré poet Adam Mickiewicz and in Juliusz Słowacki. It seems that the émigré considers himself to be exiled not only from his homeland but also from God, or, more precisely, he considers himself to be exiled from God because he is exiled from his homeland, which itself suffers from political and social injustice. We are again reminded of medieval views on the émigré.

28. "The two sets of alternatives, despair or hope, death or survival, cleave to the common moral foundation of all exiles" (Ilie, p. 87).

29. In 1859, for example, he writes to Varfolomey Shevchenko: "If it were not for my work, I should have gone mad long ago. Meanwhile, I myself do not know for whom I work so hard. Fame is not doing me any good, and it seems to me that if I do not build my own nest [the letter is about buying real estate in Ukraine], my work will once again lead me to the devil "(*Povne vydannya tvoriv*, X, 235).

30. The danger facing the émigré poet in the act of writing is that, as Paul Ilie explains, "the truth, the true self, is elsewhere, distanced from the circumstantial, time-bound self of the poem, and easily traceable to its native soil" (Ilie, p. 45).

31. The notion of the prepersonal self in Shevchenko, which I base on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception and José Ortega y Gasset's theory of personality, is developed in my "Shevchenko's Profiles and Masks: Ironic Roles of the Self in *Kobzar*," pp. 399-400.

32. Especially the numerous minimal units, which elsewhere I have called "monads." See Ibid.