

DISCUSSION: *Ukrainian Modernism**

The Journal *Svit*: A Barometer of Modernism

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The beginning of Ukrainian Modernism is usually linked with the 1903 appearance of M. Voronyi's almanac *Z nad khmar i dolyn*. Yet the almanac is but a compromise, with works of the Modernists (including Voronyi himself) published next to such stalwart Populists as M. Staryts'kyi, B. Hrinchenko, I. Nechui-Levyts'kyi, and V. Samiilenko. It was an attempt by Voronyi to proclaim a new sensibility toward art, although individual manifestations of "modernism" (especially in the realm of form) had appeared earlier. The works of O. Kobylans'ka in the 1890s, V. Stefanyk from 1897, H. Khotkevych also from 1897, Lesia Ukrainka, and even V. Vynnychenko, who first appeared in 1902, all exhibited elements of modernism and all preceded the 1903 almanac. Despite the writings of these authors, despite Voronyi's manifesto, modernism was not yet an accepted aesthetic movement in Ukraine.

Serhii Iefremov's reader's comments, "V poiskakh novoi krasoty" (In search of a new beauty), serialized in *Kievskaiia starina* in 1902, lashed out at the new literary tendencies, at what he called "symbolism," devoid of any social responsibility, propagating a new beauty which seemed to him to be no more than an espousal of pornography:

* The following pages contain three essays on Ukrainian Modernism by Danylo Husar Struk, Oleh Ilnytzyk, and Maxim Tarnawsky as well as a commentary on these essays by George Grabowicz and the authors' brief responses. The three essays are the first segment of a larger discussion of *Ukrainian Modernism* conceived and established by Danylo H. Struk. The forum for these discussions has been the annual National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. These three essays, which examine various conceptions of Modernism, were delivered at the AAASS meeting in Washington, D.C., in October 1990. A second round of papers addressing questions of genre, style, and influence took place in Miami in November 1991. Further rounds focusing on historiography, critical theory, and the profile of individual authors are planned for subsequent AAASS meetings. Eventually, the essays will be collected in a single volume that gives a broad overview of a neglected corner of Ukrainian literary history.

The farthest development of the symbolist scheme, and the essence of the discovery made by the young generation, the last word, so to speak, of our symbolism consists of the fact that the cult of love turns into the cult of . . . the naked body—of course, the female naked body predominantly if not exclusively. Yet that is exactly, if you will, what was bound to happen: if the *whole* meaning of life rests only on beauty and physical love, then sooner or later that beauty and love will undoubtedly focus on one point—straight sensuality and straight unadulterated pornography.¹

Iefremov's attack was specifically aimed at Khotkevych and Kobylans'ka. Those familiar with their works will find Iefremov's statements somewhat hyperbolic. Perhaps he felt that the threat of pornography would produce a greater effect on the reader. What he was really concerned with was the fact that such pursuits were a waste of talent which Ukraine could ill afford:

We have so few workers in all the spheres of intellectual life and their absence is felt always and everywhere so strongly and truly that any and every loss of [such workers] is doubly felt on our social organism. Every premeditated waste, even of one's own personal resources, becomes immediately not only thoughtlessness. . . but a crime against one's country and one's people.²

This fear of losing talented people to some fanciful aesthetic formula lies at the crux of the criticism. Similar feelings were expressed by Ivan Franko. Although his own collection of poetry, *Ziviale lystia* (The withered leaves; 1896), belongs in theme and lyrical mood to the modernist movement in Ukrainian poetry at the time, he was quick to pounce on the so-called Modernists lest they be seduced from the task at hand, i.e., the social and political development of a people still in search of its self-determination. With two such formidable voices against them—Franko in Western Ukraine and Iefremov in Ukraine under Russian rule—it is indeed surprising that the Modernists dared appear at all. Yet this very conflict between “fathers and sons” played a role, if not the primary one, in the decision of the young men of letters in Western Ukraine to unite informally into a literary group, Moloda Muza, and to commence the publication of the journal *Svit* as the group's “organ.”

Modernism is as broad a phenomenon as any other literary movement and many works have been written which attempt to define the term. In Ukrainian literature, however, some work is still needed to provide a more precise definition of what is meant by Ukrainian Modernism. B. Rubchak's insightful introduction to *Ostap Luts'kyi—Molodomuzets'*, entitled “Probnnyi

¹ S. Iefremov, “V poiskakh novoi krasoty,” *Kievskaiia starina*, 1902, no. 12, pp. 404–5.

² Iefremov, “V poiskakh novoi krasoty,” p. 417.

let (Tlo dlia knyhy),”³ gives a broad survey of the history of modernism and of the various influences on the Ukrainian Modernists. Rubchak presents in succinct characterizations the strengths and weaknesses of many of the individual writers as well as the overall success or rather lack of success of the modernist movement in Ukraine. The title of his essay—“A Trial Flight”—confirms the fact that Rubchak sees Ukrainian Modernism prior to 1918 as a mere prelude. He refers to many of the Ukrainian authors as “presymbolists” and emphasizes their world outlook as neoromantic. He draws a broad picture of modernism in general in order to show how and which aspects of modernism filtered through to the writers in Ukraine. It soon becomes apparent that the Ukrainian writers accepted only certain elements of European modernism—aspects of a modernist world outlook consisting of “. . . pessimism, a lack of enthusiasm for life, a longing for mystical escapism, an aristocratic disdain for the rest of society.”⁴

A closer examination of the journal *Svit* confirms much of what was said by Rubchak and points quite clearly to the reasons why Ukrainian Modernism has remained such a marginal literary movement. *Svit* was a semi-monthly magazine published in Lviv in 1906 (20 issues) and 1907 (17 issues),⁵ yet it served as the organ of the *Moloda Muza* only until October 1906. Since the first issue was dated 24 February and the final modernist issue was number 18, dated 10 November, the experiment in a modernist journal lasted only nine months—hardly long enough to have an impact. It was, in fact, a dismal failure as far as magazine publishing is concerned: the journal could not support itself, there were not enough people interested in its content, and it folded because of lack of subscribers. A facile conclusion drawn from this would claim that modernism was not acceptable to the Ukrainian intelligentsia. This is, however, only partially correct. It is true that the slogans “art for art” and “this is art, do not push ideas into it” were not quite the sentiments that the majority of Ukraine’s intelligentsia espoused. The very same intelligentsia, however, did read and accept favorably the modernist works of some of the contributors to *Svit* (Kobylians’ka, Pachovs’kyi, Lepkyi, and others). Why then would the same reading public not accept a journal devoted to the movement as a whole? An examination of the contents may provide an answer.

³ B. Rubchak, “Probnyi let,” in *Ostap Luts’kyi—Molodomuzets’*, ed. Iu. Luts’kyi (New York, 1968).

⁴ Rubchak, “Probnyi let,” p. 26.

⁵ The last issue for 1907 appeared in 1908.

The journal began with an impressive promise to the reader. It is worth summarizing and partially quoting the introductory remarks of the editors (initially, V. Birchak with the aid of a board made up of P. Karmans'kyi, O. Luts'kyi, and M. Iatskiv).⁶ The introductory statement enthusiastically propounds the necessity for a magazine representing the new trends and the youth of the land. Since, at that time, the major literary magazine in Western Ukraine was *Literaturno-naukovyj vistnyk (LNV)*, over which the "older" generation held sway with Franko as the reigning critic, one may assume the editors were presenting *Svit* as a viable alternative:

With youthful enthusiasm, with a strong belief in the indisputable need for a new literary newspaper, armed with experience from previous unsuccessful attempts, we approach this new enterprise and present to you, friends, compatriots, this first visible example of our achievements. We come to you during these trying days of wide social and political activity and we point to the path of Goodness and Beauty, often forgotten in times of struggle and yet so longingly awaited. This path we have given the name *Svit* [World].⁷

The rather stilted, exalted tone continues for a page and a half. The editors introduce themselves and their advisers and proceed to enumerate what will follow in future issues of the journal. They divide the contents into four broad areas: poetry, prose, translations, and popular scholarly writings as well as reviews and commentary on current literary and cultural events at home and abroad. After stating in very general terms what is to appear under each of the groupings, they promise to maintain contact with writers in Ukraine under Russian rule for "the time has come when Ukraine is beginning to live its own life."⁸ The conclusion of these remarks is both a boast and a plea:

We will do everything in our power to bring forth *Svit* as best as possible. The names of our contributors, their respect for art—let these speak today to our honorable comrades and compatriots. We extend warm and sincere encouragement to such a good and necessary affair, we add our enthusiasm and our love—the rest is in your hands, respected public!⁹

What is indeed curious, bearing in mind the attacks by Iefremov and Franko, is this editorial's continually expressed concern for the needs and welfare of the community and "our fellow compatriots." The tone of social

⁶ B. Lepkyi, V. Shchurat, and V. Pachovs'kyi were artistic advisors. V. Budzynovs'kyi became editor for numbers 14–20, and M. Iatskiv took over in 1907.

⁷ *Svit*, no. 1 (24 February 1906), p. 1.

⁸ References to the reforms after the Revolution of 1905 and, most importantly, the abolition of the destructive and prohibitive Ems ukase.

⁹ *Svit*, no. 1, p. 2.

responsibility is not what one would expect from an avant-garde group, especially one accused of heading straight toward “pornography.” Certainly there is some equivocation here. It is probably in the group’s very uncertainty that one of the causes for its failure can be found. The members of Moloda Muza were too timid and too concerned with what was for the “good” of the society to which they wanted to introduce the “finer beauty of art.” This timidity, this inability to be truly, unequivocally modern, is reflected in the journal’s content.

Even in the first issue (and the issues weaken progressively in quality), one can see the editors’ ambivalence. Immediately following the editorial statement quoted above is a short, one-verse poem by V. Pachovs’kyi dedicated to Ukraine: the poet bemoans his inability to assuage Ukraine’s needs at this great hour. Of little intrinsic poetic value, the four-line stanza signals, however, the ever-present concern with the fate of Ukraine. The other selections of poetry in the first issue of the journal consist of lackluster, even funny by today’s standards, love poems by V. Shchurat (“Я чую голос. . . То любов твоя / так тужить глухо. . . / А так її докладно чує ухо. . . / Щасливий я!”);¹⁰ a typical poem of pessimistic pose by P. Karmans’kyi; and another lyrical song by Pachovs’kyi. The quality of the verse in the first issue is symptomatic of all the poetry selections in the journal, with a few exceptions (poems by Pachovs’kyi in number 12/13). Some, however (for example, O. Maritchak’s contribution in number 17), are quite awful.

The extent of modernist theory can be glimpsed behind the plot of the journal’s first prose selection, a small lyrical prose piece by M. Iatskiv, “Dolia moloden’koi Muzy” (The Fate of a young muse). In a transparent allegory the muse (a young and willful girl) decides to remain high in the mountains. Her beau can only aspire to a base physical possession and cannot fathom her higher desires. She tricks him into descending alone to meet her below, but she stays on the mountain. If he truly loved her, she reasons, he would understand intuitively her wish and stay with her in the heights. This very romantic notion of the muse and the artist’s calling seems to be at the core of the modernist aesthetic thinking of Moloda Muza.

The most original item in the first issue of the journal is Khotkevych’s reply to Iefremov, done as a literary spoof. In a bit of transparent mystification, Khotkevych claims to have discovered an old epistle by a certain S. E. (Iefremov wrote in Russian and therefore his name began with “E”), entitled “Slovo.” Written in a “learned” tongue full of Old Church Slavonic, the epistle consists of an exhortation against the sinful path of the

¹⁰ *Svit*, no. 1, p. 3.

"symbolists"—the "servants of Hell." In his explanatory note to this "find," Khotkevych points to the "unusual archaic thought" of this literary monument which, though dated to the eighteenth century, belongs to the eleventh or at best the twelfth. Closer analysis reveals, he maintains, that every phrase in the entire "Word" is plagiarized from various other "Words and Epistles," and the vehement hatred points to the impotence of the author, a certain Efrem Ryryn. Khotkevych dates his note January 1903—hence, a definite reply to Iefremov's attack of 1902. Unfortunately, this is the first and last such item in the whole journal.

As if to emphasize the absurdity of Iefremov's charges, the literary spoof is followed by a translation of "La vie profonde" from Maurice Maeterlinck's *Le Trésor des Humble* (1896), in which the author propagates the Platonic and symbolist belief in the serious, the unexpected, in beauty and God, to be perceived even in the mundane and in everyday life. Maeterlinck defines the aim of poetry as "the opening of and holding ajar the gates leading from that which can be seen to that which cannot be readily glimpsed."¹¹ Obviously, there's little of "the devil or sin" in this "symbolism." The other translation in the first issue is of the Italian Edmondo De Amicis. The benevolent mood of this prose piece, consisting of the musings of a father on the wonders of a child, fits well the mood of the Ukrainian Modernists—a mood of rather pessimistic longing and bemusement with the wonders and beauty of life.

The translations in all the issues consist of short pieces from French (Maeterlinck, Guy de Maupassant, and Anatole France), English (Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde), German (Friedrich Nietzsche, Heinrich Heine), Yiddish (Sholem Asch, Isaac Peretz), Serbian (D. Jakšić), as well as works of other lesser-known European writers. The Italian Ugo Foscolo's *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* began in the second issue and ran through eleven issues. Serialization was, in fact, the most prominent feature of the semi-monthly. The editors must have felt that readers would buy the journal just to read the next supplement. Some of the later issues consisted almost entirely of various continuations, interspersed with small poetic fillers. This method of keeping the reader's interest might have been successful if the material serialized had, in fact, been interesting.

Foscolo's epistolary novel, consisting of the letters of a sensitive, patriotic young man torn between his love for a woman whom he cannot have (she is betrothed to another) and his love for his country, was, though rather tedious and boring, an ideal vehicle for Karmans'kyi and other *molo-domuztsi* who could empathize with the unrequited love of the hero for the

¹¹ *Svit*, no 5, p 76.

girl and with the longing for his country, not yet free. Though what was being translated was dependent, of course, on the linguistic prowess of the contributors, the selections still seem to favor such works with which the Modernists could easily identify, for example, Anatole France's "Why We are Sad" (for we have lost the faith of our fathers), which appeared in the ninth issue. Yet the ambivalent attitude of the *molodomuztsi* is seen once again in Iatskiv's note to that translation:

Sending forth among the honorable community a ray of [from] the most intelligent contemporary aesthete and writer, I have the satisfaction that at least in this small way I will *pay back my sincere debt*.¹²

Another item of interest in the first issue, and again not repeated (except for the continuation in the second), is a critical review of Ukrainian literature for 1905 by O. Luts'kyi. Although his survey is engaging in its own right, it is Luts'kyi's assessment of the reading public and the conditions confronting authors in Western Ukraine that is interesting, as it points to one of the reasons the young Modernists felt they had to have their own journal. Before discussing any of the literary works published in 1905, Luts'kyi complains that:

... a great number of Galicians are content with reading political newspapers, and find neither money, nor time, nor, what is most important, interest for literary works. So what is going on? The fact of the matter is that 1) to publish novels, poetry, etc., is, for the most part, an outright financial loss; 2) books have to be as cheap as possible, or no one will buy them (with small sales, it again becomes impossible financially!); 3) in such circumstances it is extremely difficult to get even the smallest royalties from the publisher; 4) authors cannot live on their writings and are forced to work in completely alien, often quite repulsive, surroundings and, not finding the proper atmosphere there, often waste their talents.¹³

Also of interest is Luts'kyi's definition of what he considers new in literature, for it offers some notion as to what the *molodomuztsi* considered "modernism" to be. In the second installment of his survey, Luts'kyi tries to explain this phenomenon:

The new literary and philosophical currents also do not bypass our literature; here and there we come across something new in the realm of conception and form, new melodies, new descriptions. In the [realm of] content the old dry descriptions and solutions of various "questions" are replaced here and there by psychological understanding and feeling, again the mood of the current; and in place of the old

¹² *Svit*, no. 9, p. 133. Emphasis is mine—DHS.

¹³ *Svit*, no. 1, p. 11.

topographic or ethnographic notations we find a new combination of lines, spots, and sunny reflections.¹⁴

It is intriguing that the definition is quite poetic and rather vague: the *molodomuztsi* had more of a feeling than a concrete program for what the “new” literature was to be.

The first issue of *Svit* is rounded out by several reviews which, here and throughout the other issues of the journal, show that the reviewers were exacting and did not shrink from being critical. The reviews are followed by an obituary of R. Sembratovych by Karmans'kyi; a commentary on current affairs—in this instance, a scathing description of the pettiness of the Galician theater-going public; an editorial note about the timely reception of future issues; and a biography of Mozart on the 150th anniversary of his birth. The last item again points to the ambivalence of the editors. It is a straightforward biography of Mozart, meant to “educate” or enlighten the public—one of the obligations of the intelligentsia as perceived by Franko and Iefremov, and one which the young *molodomuztsi* could never forget.

The most striking feature of the first issue of *Svit* is the fact that it contains no really good original literature. Birchak's “Pid nebom poludnia” (Under the sky of the south), although a delightful vignette, a Ukrainian mini-Oblomov study in procrastination, was anything but modern. The interesting features (Khotkevych's spoof on Iefremov and Luts'kyi's survey) were not to be repeated in future issues. The translations from Maeterlinck and De Amicis were of limited appeal. There was really very little that would attract a reading public to a new journal. The following issues did little to improve the situation. Birchak's story, the translation of Maeterlinck, and Luts'kyi's survey were all continued in the second issue—the beginning of the trend for serialization to which the editors diligently adhered.

What becomes quite apparent as one goes from issue to issue is that the editors lacked good material and seemed to have various other difficulties: they double up numbers 10 and 11 and 12 and 13; Luts'kyi drops from the editorial board with number 10/11, leaving the editing to Iatskiv; Iatskiv leaves Lviv with number 14 and V. Budzynovsky becomes the chief editor. The editor and publisher then become one, and the publisher sees that he is losing money. This leads to the announcement in number 18 that the journal will assume a new profile. This editorial note is extremely important, for it points to the reasons for the demise of the “Modernist” journal, as perceived by the publisher, who is not himself a Modernist. Basically, he claims that the public did not accept the journal:

¹⁴ *Svit*, no. 2, p. 25.

Svit was to have been a literary-scholarly organ of the younger generation of our writers. The publisher did not intrude into the editorial decisions, leaving it up to the public to decide if a periodical edited as *Svit* had been had a reason to exist. . . .

How did the Ruthenian [Ukrainian] society judge our newspaper?

It judged it in such a way that, despite the fact that the editor and staff worked for free, the subscriptions received covered only half of the cost of publishing. In addition, almost all of the subscribers demanded that *Svit* not represent *only one* literary trend, in general incomprehensible to the Ruthenian intelligentsia. Thus the majority of the subscribers to *Svit*, as well as persons who understand the needs of our society, appeal for reading material which is both understandable and useful for our intelligent public—material which today they can get only from German and, what is even worse, Polish journals.

... (when the editors, due to their departure from Lviv, closed the editorial office) the publisher of *Svit* decided to change the direction of the periodical. . . in line with the spiritual needs of the majority of our intelligentsia. . . . The content of *Svit* shall be increased by 80 percent, as of the new year, and every issue will be amply illustrated.¹⁵

Although twenty-four issues were promised for 1907, only seventeen appeared, and the journal folded. Neither a different, more comprehensible content (e.g., I. Karpenko-Karyi's drama *Sava Chalyi* and M. Staryts'kyi and L. Staryts'ka's novel *Pered bureiu* [Before the storm]) nor illustrations seemed to make any difference. The fact is, however, that with very few exceptions (some translations of Poe, Nietzsche, France, and Maeterlinck and Pachovs'kyi's "Zhertva shtuky" and Kobylans'ka's serialized novelette *Nioba*), there was very little of worth which would distinguish the journal as "a literary-scholarly organ of the younger generation of our writers." Moreover, the vagueness of its direction allowed the inclusion of several items which can be explained only by a very serious shortage of publishable material. Such items as Fed'kovych's previously unpublished poems (in no. 2) or the printing of the autograph version of the story "Bez-talanne kokhannia" (Unfortunate love; no. 4); comments on language editing of the first publications of Fed'kovych's poems (no. 3); Shchurat's historical-literary commentaries on the cult of Shevchenko in Galicia (no. 2) and on Fed'kovych (no. 3) and his notes about Iulian Dobrovols'kyi (no. 4); the interesting articles on early relations between Galicia and Ukraine by Kyrylo Studyns'kyi (in nos. 8, 9, 10/11); and the newly discovered poems by Shevchenko (no. 19) could be accepted as attempts by the editors to make the journal not only a literary one but also one of literary scholarship. But with such items, as well as with the numerous reviews, the editors succeeded more in competing with *LNV* than in pursuing a modernist type

¹⁵ *Svit*, no. 18, p. 273.

of publication. This was due, again, to the editors' ambivalence toward their espoused literary direction and to a lack of good original material.

Though the inclusion of literary scholarship could be excused and even welcomed, there is little one can say about some of the other items which appeared in the journal. Only dearth of publishable material can explain the banal and misogynist *feuilleton* by M. Derlytsia, "Novyi vynakhid"—a story without any characterization or depth that would never have appeared in any serious journal as a lead story as it did in number 5; or the completely misplaced bit of humor entitled "How Cossacks Drink," as well as other anecdotal humor in number 10/11; or the typical nineteenth-century populist poetry of Ostap Derev''ianko in number 12/13; or the ethnographic notation of wedding ritual and songs in the village Semerivka by Iu. Kmit in numbers 12/13, 15, and 17. Lack of suitable material was compounded by a lack of specific and consistent editorial direction.

This apparent lapse in quality control is quite surprising since one of the main elements in the editors' motivation for starting a new journal was the keen awareness of the lack of literary quality in populist literature at the turn of the century. Their high standards are quite apparent in the various reviews which appear in the journal and which form one of the most enjoyable segments. Such, for example, is the review of *Primula veris*, a collection of first poems by several different authors in which the reviewer, under the pseudonym of "Smikhunchyk" (The joker), is merciless. The reviewer is not loath to assume a condescending tone and to give the new poets a necessary lesson on poetry:

Several names and already we have two directions which constantly struggle in our literature: the artist and the publicist; the rest are casual lyricists. The artist is high priest of the sacred fire of eternal beauty; the publicist is sower of the ideas of the day through art; he is socially motivated, he is a benefactor through art. . . .

But the poet must remember that current ideas are but the foam of surface and changing waves, and poetry is the eternal language of the very depth of the human soul; the superficial waves change in color depending on the inclination of the sun and the direction of the wind; and the depth is always the same; and in this depth one has both the foam of ideas, the pearls of feeling and the blood of dolphins wounded by sharks. . . . All this can be said only in images, allegorically. Therefore, the language of poetry is imagery. If as a poet you do talk to the human heart, then your every word throws an image onto the eye, or imitates the sound for the ear, or talks through the emotion of one heart to another. Poet, take then only those words which recreate the image and the music of nature and the heart; and throw the others behind you like rocks. . . .¹⁶

¹⁶ *Svit*, no. 4, p. 63.

Certainly the reviewer, if not the editors, had some notion of what made poetry. A similar sense of artistic quality is seen in the other reviews as well as in the editorial rejections. Most of the latter are scathing and some are even quite clever, as is, for example, the tongue-in-cheek reply to the would-be poet in number 7.¹⁷ The sad fact of the matter is, however, that the concern for quality as seen in the reviews and in the replies to would-be contributors did not always touch the published material. Of the many contributors (P. Karmans'kyi, O. Luts'kyi, M. Iatskiy, B. Lepkyi, V. Shchurat, V. Pachovs'kyi, S. Charnets'kyi, K. Hrynevycheva, P. Kapel'horods'kyi, M. Khotkevych, Iu. Kmit, O. Kobylans'ka, M. Kotsiubyns'kyi, O. Kovalenko, O. Kysilevs'ka, S. Liudkevych, O. Makovei, V. Masliak, K. Studyns'kyi, S. Tverdokhlib, M. Voronyi, and some other lesser known ones) only Pachovs'kyi, Kobylans'ka, and Kotsiubyns'kyi submitted items which could be considered as both belonging to "Modernism" (as the *molodomuztsi* defined this term) and of sufficient artistic quality to sustain the interest of the reader. Excluding the reviews, scholarly articles, and translations (and even some of these were of doubtful interest, if not quality), the majority of original contributions was quite mediocre.

For whatever reason, the editors left the journal and the publisher took over and would have all believe that the journal failed because the public was not ready for this type of "artistic" periodical. Although further study is required to ascertain reader response, it is clear that the journal was an attempt to grant a new venue to the younger writers and that in this it failed. Several of the younger writers could not get their say in the established and venerable *LNV*. They were attuned to the changes occurring in Europe and were also aware of the fact that in some respects the populist tradition was weighing heavily on Ukrainian literature. *LNV* was edited by the old guard; it was easier to produce a new journal than to take over or try to change the established one. *Svit*, then, was intended as a new voice, but it became no more than a very pale imitation of the old *LNV*. A sympathetic critic and younger observer of the scene in Lviv at the time, Mykhailo Rudnyts'kyi, wrote in his introduction to a collection of novellas by the *molodomuztsi*:

When you open the concurrent volumes of *Literaturno-Naukovyi Vistnyk* and compare them with *Svit*, you will not find in *Svit* anything new—neither in the works published nor in the ideas.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Svit*, no. 4, pp. 111–12.

¹⁸ Mykhailo Rudnyts'kyi, "Shcho take 'Moloda Muza'," in *Chorna Indiia "Molodoi Muzy"* (Lviv, 1937), p. xvi.

The public, of course, was not overly enthusiastic about a journal that was in fact neither very new nor very modern. Had there been a really talented author or two among the *molodomuztsi*, perhaps the venture would have succeeded. Unfortunately, even the three most talented members of Moloda Muza—Pachovs'kyi, Karmans'kyi, and Iatskiv—were at best second-rate authors. Luts'kyi's abilities as an organizer and a critic were not enough to launch a journal and make it successful. Although the members of Moloda Muza declaimed "art for art," they could not rise above psychological realism tinged with slight elements of decadence and Nietzschean voluntarism. Again Rudnyts'kyi's assessment was accurate:

Svit did not discover any new writers—neither native [Ukrainian] ones nor foreign ones. When we peruse its pages, we cannot even recreate the attitude with which people longing for a new literature would sit down to read it.¹⁹

Finally, as the contents of the journal *Svit* shows, the *molodomuztsi* were themselves of two minds. The editors could not abandon their concern for and sense of duty toward society. They felt obligated to "educate" the public. To quote Rubchak once again: "In their inception they were swallowed by 'social duty,' pulling some of them into its organism (Lepkyi, Luts'kyi, Pachovs'kyi, Oles') and psychologically destroying others (Karmans'kyi, Kozlovs'kyi, Iatskiv)."²⁰

Rudnyts'kyi's essay, written thirty years after *Svit*'s demise, ends by posing the question: what of the Moloda Muza will survive another thirty years? Eighty-four years later we know that *Svit* remains a literary curiosity. Its value is only historical. What has become most puzzling, however, is the position held by Franko and Iefremov. One cannot but wonder what the fuss was all about. As evidenced by their works and by their journal, the *molodomuztsi* were anything but decadent, and, certainly, they remained true sons of their fathers, never forgetting their duty toward Ukraine. As a barometer, *Svit* indicates that modernism as an aesthetic and philosophical movement never really captured Ukraine, individual exceptions notwithstanding. Although symbolism and futurism came later, after 1917, they were already part of a different world outlook heavily tinged with the psychology of a national revival and must be studied as a separate literary period.

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¹⁹ Rudnytsky, "Shcho take 'Moloda Muza'," p. xvii.

²⁰ Rubchak, "Probnii let," p. 28.