

The Anti-Imperial Choice:
The Making of the Ukrainian Jew
Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern

THE ANTI-IMPERIAL CHOICE

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*To my wife,
Oxana Hanna Petrovsky*

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Acknowledgments

In 2003, my colleague Mikhail Krutikov, from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, commissioned me to write an essay for *East European Jewish Affairs* on some aspect of Jewish-Slavic cultural interaction. Polish- and Russian-Jewish aspects had already been covered, and I was left with Ukraine. I decided to write on Moisei Fishbein, a Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent whose verse I had long admired. Writing about Fishbein puzzled me. Not only did he pen his verse in exuberant Ukrainian, but he also construed his images and metaphors by combining elements of Jewish religious and Ukrainian literary tradition. His quest for a Ukrainian-Jewish synthesis made me suggest that Fishbein was re-creating a certain preexisting, although latent, paradigm. Perhaps, I thought, it had long shaped Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement yet pundits of East European culture had overlooked it. If Fishbein embodies the momentum of an encounter between the two cultures, who then preceded him? And if he was preceded by others, why do we know next to nothing about them?

The research took several years of intensive archival work, interviews, and conversations, and also involved a search for private archives, which I was told had vanished or had been destroyed. During that time Stepan Zakharkin, Yaryna Tsymbal, and Mykola Klymchuk from the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, provided an infallible, timely, and invaluable help. Multiple conversations with Ihor Kachurovs'kyi from Munich and Oksana Chykalenko from New York, witnesses of the Ukrainian renaissance of the late 1920s and early 1930s, helped me delve into the Ukrainian cultural atmosphere of that period. My parents, Myron and Svitlana Petrovs'kyi, helped obtain copies of rare photo and documentary material from the most inaccessible archives. John Bushnell,

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The unusual thesis of my book made my search for additional funding a vain enterprise. Only my home university—Northwestern University—supported my research, allowing me to travel to archival depositories and rare book libraries to obtain copies of documents, manuscripts, and rare books. I thank Paula Blaskovits and the members of the Northwestern University Research Grant Committee for their enthusiastic support and financial assistance. The value of the advice, help, and support of my colleagues in the History Department at Northwestern is indescribable and cannot be conveyed in words. Particularly I would like to thank John Bushnell, Robert Lerner, Sarah Maza, Jacob Lassner, Joel Mokyr, and Benjamin Frommer, with whom I had a chance to talk about this project and whose insights helped me to make my argument more convincing.

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ernik in New York who shared the materials in their possession and allowed me to use them in my research. If not for their help, entire parts of the chapters on Raisa Troianker and Leonid Pervomais'kyi would not have seen the light of the day. Indeed, Moisei Fishbein, one of the subjects of this book, has been for years my sober critic and demanding interlocutor. I thank him for allowing me to see his verse and prose long before it found its way to press. The artistic collages he sent me over years have also been an inspiration.

Although I had long been thinking about a book on this subject, Patton Write of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute enthusiastically supported my book project in its present format and encouraged me in my work. I deeply regret that Pat did not live to see the publication of this book.

I would have never turned to things Ukrainian if not for my friends in Kyiv, who introduced me to Ukrainian language and culture, so different from the imposed Russified Ukrainian designed for, and consumed by, a *homo Sovieticus*. My Ukrainian upbringing started in the house of Iurii Shcherbak, continued under the long-lasting impact of Vadym Skuratovs'kyi, crystallized in the house of Eva Narubina and Bohdan Zholdak, and was reinforced in friendly conversations with Iurii Lysenko, better known as the Ukrainian avant-garde poet Iurko Pozaiak. It was shaped by the consistent philosemitism of Orest Tkachenko and the Ukrainophilia of Martin Feller. Because of them I discovered the depth and breadth of Ukrainian culture and eventually came to admire Hryhir Tiutiunyk's prose narrative, study Ukrainian language from Borys Hrynchenko's fin de siècle Ukrainian dictionary, paint icons imitating Mariia Prymachenko's Ukrainian folk art, publish literary criticism in Ukrainian periodicals, research Ukrainian borrowings from Yiddish, explore Ukrainian vernacular in Galicia and Bukovina, and write this book.

The chapter on Kernerenko appeared in an earlier form as "The Construction of an Improbable Identity: The Case of Hryts'ko Kernerenko," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2005): 191–241.

Part of the chapter on Troianker first appeared as "From the Shtetl with Love: An Episode in Ukrainian-Jewish Literary History," in *Jewish Literature and History: An Interdisciplinary Conversation*, ed. Eliyana R. Adler and Sheila E. Jelen (Bethesda: CDL Press/University Press of Maryland, 2008), 63–98.

Portions of the chapter on Fishbein appeared in "The Coming of a New Moses: Ukrainian-Polish Poet in the Making," *East European Jewish Affairs* 1 (2004): 12–28; available at <http://www.informaworld.com>.

The translations of Moisei Fishbein's poems "Apocrypha" and "A Mouth

Contorted in Pain” by Bohdan Boychuk and J. Kates are taken from *A Hundred Years of Youth: A Bilingual Anthology of Twentieth-Century Ukrainian Poetry* (L’viv: Lytopys, 2000), 506–509.

The translation of Leonid Pervomais’kyi’s poem “For Drinking and Eating I’ve Lost the Knack” by Peter Tempest is from *Poetry of Soviet Ukraine’s New World: An Anthology* (Woodchurch, Ashford, Kent: Paul Norbury Publications for UNESCO, 1986), 113.

Politics of Names and Places

A Note on Transliteration

This book advances a new vision of the colonial; discusses relations between empire and colony; questions the dependence of national minorities on, and interaction with, an imperial culture; and highlights the anticolonialist trend among national minority representatives in a culturally colonized country. It contextualizes contested narratives based on competing approaches to geography, history, and culture. The localities, texts, and names appearing in this book meant different things to different people at different times, particularly since some treated them from a minority perspective and others from an imperial or colonialist perspective. The choice of an angle informs my principles of transliteration. As the angle shifted, so did my way of transliterating one and the same place or name. What was Kiev for the Russian authorities in the 1890s became Kyiv for the Ukrainian intellectuals—and for the Ukrainian Soviet authorities—in the 1920s, turned into the colonialist Kiev in the 1930s to 1980s, and again reappeared as Kyiv once Ukraine became independent.

This book uses geographical and personal names as they were used by its main characters, who sometimes resisted and sometimes acquiesced to the imperial usage. What today is Kharkiv may appear as Khar'kov before 1917, as Kharkiv in the 1920s, as Khar'kov in the 1930s to 1980s, and again as Kharkiv after 1991. This usage reflects the changing balance between one and the same locale at different historical periods. Ukrainian geographical names appear in their Russian colonial format before 1917; after 1917 they switch, for some fifteen years, to their Ukrainian transliteration—with the exception of the cases when the discussion requires the emphasis on the colonial status of Ukrainian culture under communism.

Sometimes the context of the discussion requires unusual changes, for example Czernowitz (Austro-Hungarian spelling) instead of Chernivtsi (modern Ukrainian spelling). There are cases when a town appears in its colonial context and is referred to as “Kiev” on the same page that it appears in a quote with a postcolonial connotation and is thus “Kyiv.” In other cases the same people switched languages from Yiddish to Ukrainian to Russian (or in the reverse order) and changed the spelling of their names. Iukhym may appear as Iefim and later as Haim, whereas Il’ia Shliomovych may become Leonid Solomonovych. In most cases this book provides context substantiating and making sense of those variegated usages.

If names and places appear in quotes from other languages, the corresponding transliteration of names and places is chosen: Hebrew for Hebrew, Russian for Russian, and Ukrainian for Ukrainian. The Library of Congress system of transliteration is used for all these languages and nonstrict transliteration, for Ukrainian, for example, Pervomais’kyi instead of Pervomajs’kyj. The “soft sign” for palatalization is used in personal and in geographical names. In Hebrew the letter *tsadi* is rendered as *ts* and the diacritical signs are omitted. Names that have an established transliteration in English are used in their English-language format: Gorky and Yushchenko, not Gorkii and Iushchenko. Places and authors in bibliographic references are rendered in the language of the cited work. In the Russian-language volume of memoirs on the Ukrainian poet, Pervomais’kyi appears as Pervomaiskii.

This book draws heavily from documents in state and private archival collections. References to these documents follow the bibliographic criteria based on the language of the owner. Some documents from private collections do not have pagination.

By and large, the Ukrainian poetry discussed in this book is characterized by a full-rhyme and strict metrical system. For scholarly purposes, I translated the poetic texts literally. I did not try to convey to the English reader the meter and the rhyme of the Ukrainian original. Rhymes appearing in my English translations are occasional. That they sometimes reflect the rhyme and the meter of the original does not imply they can be used as poetic translations. All translations are my own except when indicated otherwise. The sensitive reader should keep in mind that this book was written in English by a Chicago-based author who teaches in English, speaks in Russian, prays in Hebrew, and dreams in Ukrainian.

Abbreviations

ark.	<i>arkush</i> (page)
ChIM	Chernihiv's'kyi istorychnyi muzei (Chernihiv Historical Museum)
d.	<i>delo</i> (file)
ETPC	Elena Turgan's private collection, Berlin
f.	<i>fond</i> (collection)
HPKM	Huliaipols'kyi kraieznavchyi muzei (Huliaipole Local History Museum)
l.	<i>list</i> (page)
LNV	<i>Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk</i>
op.	<i>opys</i> (inventory)
SPPC	Sergei Parkhomovsky's private collection, Austria
spr.	<i>sprava</i> (file)
TsDAHOU	Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'ednan Ukrainy (Central National Archive of the Social Organizations of Ukraine, Kyiv)
TsDAMLMU	Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literatury i mystetstva Ukrainy (Central National Archive Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine, Kyiv)
VRILNANU	Viddil rukopysiv Instytutu Literatury im. T. H. Shevchenka Natsional'noi Akademii Nauk Ukrainy (Department of Manuscripts of the T. H. Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv)
YSPSC	Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern's private collection, Chicago

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Introduction

This book advances an alternative vision of the Jewish encounter with modernity. We were told that nineteenth-century Jews became modern by leaving their ethnic quarters and integrating either into majority national cultures or into the imperial Ottoman, Habsburg, or Russian cultures. This book, however, focuses on Jews who broke the established pattern of modernization and refused to acculturate into the imperial societies. It contextualizes Jews who were sensitive toward the repressed nationhood of Ukrainians and whose very marginality fueled their sympathy for the fledging Ukrainian cause. Jews who were sympathetic to, and sought acculturation into, the colonial are the principal characters of this book. Suggesting an alternative, albeit marginal, modern Jewish identity, the discussion that follows recreates and makes sense of those Jews who associated with what they saw as a colonized, oppressed, powerless, and stateless people—the Ukrainians—and who integrated into Ukrainian society, which most of their East European contemporaries considered second rank, contemptible, backward, and antisemitic. Yet instead of considering Ukrainians and Jews in the domineering political contexts—tsarist Russia or Soviet Ukraine—this book places them in the cultural context of Ukrainian revivalism, which evolved sporadically over a century and a half. This specific cultural context helps reconstruct various forms of interaction between representatives of the two people. It also allows for reconstructing a Ukrainian-Jewish symbiosis ignored by modern scholarship too steeped in political history. Most important, this book argues for the need to bring Ukrainian colonial context and Ukrainian revivalism back into the study of East European Jews: once this is accomplished, the patterns of Jewish interaction with Ukrainian society, as well as Ukrainian-Jewish tensions, will make sense.

The story of Jewish integration into imperial cultures looms so large in modern discourse that the few significant examples of Jewish integration into the colonial have been routinely ignored. We are asked to believe that in a multiethnic state the imperial Jew represented a universal norm. Jewish modernization appears to be a process in which Jews integrated into an empire or into the culture of the majority population.¹ The idiosyncratic parameters of the empire informed the peculiar features of Jewish modernization: a corporative Russian Empire offered its Jews nothing but selective integration into a limited number of estates, most prominently into the liberal professions. For a Jew to be imperial meant to be modern, emancipated, acculturated, enlightened, and loyal. When Hungarians, Ukrainians (who called themselves Ruthenians), and Czechs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire abandoned their old state-oriented allegiances and construed their new loyalties along the nationalist lines, Jews found themselves among the last champions of the imperial.² Austrian Ukrainians competed with Austrian Poles for a higher national minority representation in the Austrian parliament, whereas the Jewish representatives in the Reichsrat were still addressed as Habsburg Jews. By the same token, Jews still cherished their loyalties toward the Ottoman Empire at a time when Turks were turning to radical nationalist agendas.³ In some cases, most notably in Russia, which was reluctant to emancipate its ethnic minorities, Jews on a par with other marginalized ethnicities became instrumental in overthrowing the old power and establishing a new one that would eventually make them emancipated, modern, and imperial, albeit in the Soviet vein. In a word, the more imperial the culture, the better for the Jew.

It could hardly have been otherwise. Nothing informed the Diaspora Jews' plea for power more than their vulnerability. In premodern times, European Jews were a marginalized religious group stigmatized politically, socially, and culturally. Although not always and not everywhere did European Jews have to wear the humiliating badge enacted by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), there were many other markers that singled them out from the rest of the population as an "alienated minority," to use the words of Kenneth Stow. Their precarious existence was predicated on the will of a secular ruler, on the stance of the church, and on the whim of the lord. In European towns privileged by the Magdeburg Law, municipal authorities were capable of expelling Jews or of granting them residential and economic rights. The attitude of the agents of power vis-à-vis the Jews was anything but stable. In the thirteenth century, the church no longer followed St. Augustine's conceptualization of the Jews as those "witnesses of His advent" who deserve the right to live and endorsed the most blatant anti-Judaic rhetoric, resulting mass anti-Jewish violence in 1391. Stricken with the Crusaders' zeal, secular rulers in medieval England, France, and Spain expelled the

infidel Jews from their newly emerging states, which they had come to associate with Corpus Christi. In 1519, Regensburg town authorities acquiesced to the petitions of Christian town merchants and forbade Jewish residence in town, thus banishing their efficient competitors. The situation was different in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where Jews depended on the gentry, which in most cases was benevolent to the Jews. Yet wherever they were, in order to remain there and stay alive, Jews had to negotiate their survival with power—the king, the church, and the lord.

The rise of the early modern state added to this equation a new powerful agent: the empire or the imperial bureaucracy. Urged by enlightened philosophers, utilitarian thinkers, and millenarian Pietists, the state began readmitting Jews (as in England), integrating them (as in Austria and Prussia), emancipating them (as in Italy and France), or acculturating them (as in Russia). Now the Jews found that they had to negotiate the conditions and forms of their integration with the state. The prayer for the well-being of the gentile state and its ruler included in Jewish prayer books implied, in early modernity, Jewish gratitude to the state for granting them the right of residence; now it started to signify Jewish emancipation. It was up to the state whether to grant it, and it was up to the Jews whether to wait or to fight for it. Jewish readiness to absorb imperial culture and the desire of empire to acculturate Jews would expedite this process. The Austrian, Russian, Prussian, and French imperial bureaucracy saw language as a useful tool for integrating the Jews; Jews were required to claim the language of the state as their own or to jeopardize the entire process of integration. In the 1780s, Joseph II of Austria made Germanization obligatory to Jews. His endeavor was such an astounding success that a hundred years later, when Czechs emerged as a new political force in the Austrian Empire, Czechs saw Jews as good people albeit corrupted by Germanization.⁴

The integration of Jews through state languages became paradigmatic throughout nineteenth-century Europe. For example, Alexander II of Russia saw Russification as a key condition toward further *sblizhenie* (rapprochement) between Jews and Russians. Realizing the importance of Russian acculturation, the East European champions of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, called for throwing off the rags of Yiddish and putting on the beautiful garments of Russian. The harbingers of Jewish equality expediently realized the advantages of imperial language. For not-yet-fully emancipated Jews, knowing the state language turned into a paramount negotiating point for their civil rights. Those few Jewish intercessors who late in the eighteenth century convinced Catherine the Great and Paul I of Russia not to use the derogatory “yid” in legal documents but rather the Russian neutral “Jew” did so solely because they

could read, understand the implications, and argue against this usage in good Russian or in good German. In 1806, Jewish notables managed to formulate what today could be called “politically correct” answers—that eventually shaped nineteenth-century Jewish integration in France—to the famous twelve questions Napoleon designed for them, solely because one-third of them were not Yiddish-speaking and Hebrew-writing “rabbis” but acculturated French-speaking and rational-minded “philosophers.”⁵ And only because Baron de Rothschild spoke the English of an upper-class “Englishman, gentleman, and sportsman,” did he managed to convince the Parliament that he, as well as other Jews, should be allowed to take a non-Christian oath when taking the office.⁶ While the knowledge of the language of the state enabled Jews to articulate their strivings toward equality, the equality thus obtained opened up for them an opportunity to deify the empire and to thank their God for having chosen the empire that had reinstated them “in their rights” and operated “their regeneration.”⁷

Acculturation into the empire changed the social profile of the Jews, firmly positioned them within gentile society, and shaped a new, secular type of Jewish social leadership. The new imperial identity brought Jews to the Austrian parliament and the Russian Duma. It enabled them to become war ministers in Hungary and Italy without undergoing baptism. It moved them into the forefront in the arts, both visual and verbal. As an addendum to integration and equality, the empire promised Jews security, visibility, and influence. Striving for security, sometimes for visibility, and less frequently for influence, Jews eagerly identified with the imperial. In the countries that in the twentieth century emerged as new national states or republics with their newly legalized vernacular—Belorussia (now Belarus), Lithuania, and Ukraine—Jews spoke the Russian language and identified with the imperial Russian Soviet culture. In Prague, Bratislava, Trieste, and Budapest, they preferred the imperial German, not Czech, Slovak, Italian, or Hungarian. Jews identified with the Dutch, French, and British in colonial Curaçao, Martinique, and Barbados. And they sent their children to French schools and identified with French culture in colonial Algeria.

The enchantment of the imperial was so irresistible that having escaped the Soviet Union and its state-orchestrated antisemitism, East European Jewish emigrants to the United States did not embrace traditional Judaic values (as their American brethren expected them to do) but instead created urban clusters of Russian Soviet culture based on the literary, musical, artistic, food, and fashion values of the USSR of the 1970s and 1980s. Because of this identification with the imperial, these Jews, wherever their point of origin—Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, or Latvia—were justly dubbed “Russian” Jews when they came to

the New World. The fascination with the imperial and scorn of the colonial explains why late nineteenth-century Jews shrugged their shoulders when somebody talked to them about Jewish settlement in Palestine, then a deserted land on the fringes of the Ottoman Empire associated with low-key husbandry, medieval artisans, dead shrines, and malaria. Based on cultural or agricultural revival, the proto-Zionist (“palestinophile”) projects brought meager results until Herzl came and struck a nerve with his *Judenstaat* (the Jewish State). He was well aware of what he was doing. He appealed to an idea whose lure Jews could not resist: the might of the state, of normalcy, of stability. Mind that according to his *Alteneuland* utopian vision, the Herzlean Jewish state would be polylingual, multiethnic, and secular and run by an elected bureaucracy—that is to say, a monarch-free version of his contemporary Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Modernization took Jews out of their peripheral ghettoized existence and moved them to the center of European political discourse. It goes without saying that on their move from the periphery to the center Jews adopted multiple identities, becoming Habsburg, French, German, Russian, or Anglo-Jews. As such, they have often been the focus of recent historical studies. Russian or Austro-Hungarian Jews seeking to assimilate into the dominant Russian- or German-language milieu have become a *sine qua non* for historians studying the Jewish encounter with modernity. German-speaking Jews from Czech-speaking Bohemia, then still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, first and foremost Franz Kafka, have become crucial for the study of modern Jewish identities. The rise of East Central and Eastern European national movements, followed by the establishment of a number of independent states, such as Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Poland, radically altered the Jews’ self-identification and their choice of language in the corresponding countries—the issue that has also become the focus of Jewish historians.⁸ In the Russian Empire, such poets and writers as Isaac Babel and Il’ia Ehrenburg, both born in Ukraine, have been much acclaimed and their contribution to the formation of Russian-Jewish literature well studied. We are taught that in what was before 1991 *the* Ukraine, Jewish writers who did not write Yiddish or Hebrew chose the Russian language, sought a Russian readership, and competed with one another to be the next Pushkin or Tolstoy.

Thus for those Russian-oriented Jews to become the next Taras Shevchenko—the great Ukrainian romantic poet—was out of the question: Imperial Russia seems to have promoted Jewish modernization, whereas Ukraine, part of the Russian Empire and named Little Russia, apparently did not. By the same token, Jewish involvement with Polish culture—once Poland became an independent national state—has also recently received a good deal of scholarly attention.⁹ Yet the Jewish-Ukrainian interaction has not moved past basic discussions

of Jewish participation in Ukrainian politics. Therefore we know very little about those Jews who, preferring to be part of the colonial rather than the imperial, chose to integrate into what appeared to nineteenth-century thinkers a non-historical nation, predominantly peasant, powerless, and bereft of statehood. We have finally learned that Kafka knew Czech better than other Jewish-German writers in his milieu, yet Kafka's engagement with Czech literature and culture remains a murky issue.¹⁰

The assumption that Jews acculturate solely into the imperial has completely eliminated the discussion of their acculturation into the colonial.¹¹ The imperial discourse implied that Slovak, Serbian, Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian Jews do not and cannot exist because Jews were urban by default, and urban implied metropolitan, and metropolitan signified imperial British, imperial Russian or imperial Habsburg. At the same time Slovak, Serbian, Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian were considered par excellence peasant not-yet-urbanized cultures. As a result, we know virtually nothing about those Jews who identified with Serbs in the Habsburg Empire, with Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, or with Ukrainians in late Imperial Russia. Accustomed to discussing the East European Jewish interaction as the Russian-Jewish or Polish-Jewish, students of East Europe have not been able to answer even superficially the question of whether there is or ever has been a Ukrainian Jew in politics, society, arts, and literature. Neither have they come up with a list of texts that might fall under the rubric "Ukrainian-Jewish" or tried to explain what the "Ukrainian Jew" implied.

Ukrainian-Jewish identity has been considered an unlikely one and hardly worthy of research. It contradicted the received wisdom of social historians. Since at the turn of the century Ukrainian society was predominantly peasant, they wondered why would urban Jews integrate into peasant society or develop peasant concerns? A minority within the minority, the nonimperial Jews—if they ever existed—have been considered an insignificant constituency, which could hardly alter our perception of Jewish integration into European societies or of the Jewish contribution to European cultures. Arguing to the contrary, this book suggests that one could obtain a more nuanced picture of the East European Jewry—representing in the nineteenth century two-thirds of the world's Jewish population—by looking at those Jews in the Russian Empire, and later in the Soviet Union, who preferred Ukrainian to Russian (more generally, the colonial to the metropolitan/imperial) and who paralleled their few Polish-speaking brethren in the partitioned Poland; some Czech-writing colleagues in fin de siècle

cle Prague in a not-yet independent Czechoslovakia; and even fewer Belorussian literati, such as the national classic Zmitrok Biadulia (Shmuel Plavnik, 1886–1941), who moved to the center of the Belorussian language and culture as early as 1911–12.¹²

In addition to the received wisdom that writes nonimperial Jews out of the story, Jewish-Ukrainian identities have also been obfuscated due to another significant reason. So far Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue has developed as a reductive competition of victimizations.¹³ If one attempts to answer the question “What is Ukrainian-Jewish?” à la Derrida, perhaps one would pause at the hyphen between the two words, the “silent witness” concealing mutual antagonisms, pain, hatred, and blood—those indisputable markers of victimized national memories. According to the traditional Jewish narrative, based on incumbent political patterns, Ukrainians were inherent antisemites, violent persecutors of the Jews, whereas Jews were victims and their history in Ukraine, one continuous pogrom. Selected examples illuminate this point, some of them well substantiated. Ukrainians decimated the bulk of East European Jewish communities during the Khmel’nyts’kyi’s Cossack revolution of 1648–49; the contemporary Jewish chronicles number the victims in the hundreds of thousands. Ukrainians also slaughtered flourishing Jewish communities, such as those in Uman, in the wake of the 1768 Haidamak rebellion. They destroyed thousands of Jewish businesses and households in the 1880s—because if not they, then who else?—in the wake of pogroms that followed the assassination of Alexander II and that triggered the rise of Jewish emigration to the New World.

Ukrainians aware of their Ukrainian identity, we are to believe, eagerly participated in the atrocities in Kiev and Odessa orchestrated by the Russian army, police, and the racist Black Hundred organizations in the course of the 1905 Russian Revolution. During the civil war, Ukrainians conducted mass slaughters of the peaceful Jewish population, most noteworthy in Proskurov in 1919. And they stood behind the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Jews by the Nazis during the Holocaust and sometimes volunteered in the mass executions. The harsh state antisemitism of the 1960s and 1970s in Soviet Ukraine, much harsher than in Russia proper, was the last episode in this ongoing mistreatment of Jews by Ukrainians that proved only too well the received wisdom: Jews and Ukrainians have nothing in common, they have never gotten along, and Ukrainians have always hated Jews, particularly in periods of political upheavals.¹⁴ Discussing the Ukrainian Jew was inconceivable as the received wisdom read political agendas back, associated the seventeenth- and nineteenth-century agents with to-date national identities, and ignored a simple fact:

Ukraine as a nation is a recent, even recently nascent, phenomenon. Ukrainian political identity, as well as Czech, Polish, or Russian, could not emerge before Herder and Romantics triggered the rise of modern nationalism.

Ukrainian narratives have mirrored the Jewish ones. Ukrainians became the victims and the Jews, the sycophantic servants of an imposed colonialist power. Starting from the conservatively romantic *Istoriia Rusov* (The History of the Ruthenians) in the early nineteenth century, Ukrainian historians portrayed Jews as bloodsuckers; exploiters of the Ukrainian peasants and economic parasites; servile assistants of the Poles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the Russian and Polish landlords in the nineteenth, and of the Bolsheviks in the twentieth century. Through the centuries, they enjoyed economic and political benefits at the expense of the oppressed Ukrainian people. As the leaseholders for Polish magnates, Jews brutally exploited Ukrainian peasants by overtaxing them and imposing heavy tolls for each and every kind of economic and social activity, purportedly even for going to the church and having their children baptized.

Later in the nineteenth century, in Austrian Galicia, Jews took advantage of their emancipated urban status to transform the voiceless Ukrainian peasant into a destitute proletariat toiling for inadequate compensation at the Jewish-owned oil boreholes and refineries. In this context, the civil war outburst of Ukrainian anti-Jewish atrocities was presented as a straightforward vengeance, an understandable Ukrainian response to Jewish exploitation. Yet, these narratives continue: to pay Ukrainians back for the pogroms and massacres, the cunning Jews turned into Bolsheviks, took hold of power in Soviet Ukraine, subsequently orchestrated the Ukrainian famine of the early 1930s, and later helped the regime to purge the Ukrainian intelligentsia. After World War II, the treacherous Jews systematically defamed Ukraine by making Ukrainians collectively responsible for the Holocaust atrocities. Although one can easily disprove these Ukrainian anti-Jewish and Jewish anti-Ukrainian narratives, as will become clear from the following discussion, they have shaped much of the Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue. In many cases Jews seeking integration into Ukrainian culture were fully aware of them. Paraphrasing Shimon Redlich, Jews and Ukrainians were much more often “apart” and almost never “together.”¹⁵

In the second half of the last century, both Ukrainians and Jews began questioning the veracity of these narratives. Obviously, the key studies appeared outside Ukraine, where the contested victimizations were moderated by a more balanced Western scholarly discourse. For Canadian and Israeli historians, unlike their Ukrainian colleagues, it was much easier to reconcile contested historical narratives since in the Diaspora, as Avtar Brah put it, the native is as much a Di-

asporian as the Diasporian is the native. Perhaps Taras Hunczak was among the first to start questioning the ways of thinking about the myths of the past by differentiating between the antisemitic popular violence of Ukrainian warlords and the philosemitic individual stance of such Ukrainian national leaders as Simon Petliura. Sympathetic to the Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement, Hunczak supported the organization of a conference that for the first time presented a nuanced vision of the most painful issues of the Ukrainian and Jewish past by briefly outlining moments of symbiotic relations between the two people.¹⁶

Howard Aster and Peter Potichnyj, who inherited the Ukrainian-Jewish conference from Hunczak, advanced the metaphor of “two solitudes” of Jews and Ukrainians, yet the idea of a cross-fertilizing dialogue between the two people soon replaced it.¹⁷ Leading North American scholars significantly contributed to this dialogue by introducing Jewish themes into their works on Ukraine’s history and culture.¹⁸ Ukrainian independence, obtained formally in 1991, fostered the rapid institutionalization of a dialogue between Ukrainian and Jewish scholars informed by the incorporation of the Diaspora intellectual pursuits into Ukrainian public discourse. Ukrainians began considering Jews from a new postcolonial perspective as an ethnic and national *doppelgänger* of the Ukrainians. As Jews and Ukrainians established states of their own, intellectuals on both sides traced parallels between the two people spread all over the Diaspora world from Australia to Canada and yet attached to their historical motherland in East Europe or in the Middle East. Zionist-minded Jews fought against the imperial British colonialism, and Ukrainians resisted the Russian one; as Jews strove for national independence and cultural revival in a newly established postcolonial state, so did Ukrainians. Jews proved highly successful in both—Ukrainians should emulate their example, argue modern Ukrainian thinkers.

After 1991, Ukrainian public figures and journalists repeatedly pointed to the revival of the Hebrew language in Israel as to a remarkably successful achievement of the Jewish nation-making project. Jabotinsky, with his Jewish nationalist agenda, his support of the Ukrainian culture, and his rejection of Russian imperialism, turned for Ukrainian writers and journalists into one of the most-quoted Jewish politicians. Informed by new political realities, the last fifteen years have seen a revision of a plethora of issues in East European Jewish history, particularly in the field of Ukrainian-Jewish relations. Ukrainian scholars have advanced a multifaceted approach to Ukrainians and Jews in the early modern and modern context by outlining the social incoherence and political diversity of both people.¹⁹

And yet, an imbalance between political and cultural history has characterized and is still characterizing the study of Ukrainian-Jewish encounters. De-

spite multiple efforts to revise the received wisdom, new narratives have followed slightly refashioned old schemes and outdated patterns. To help straighten this out, this book suggests that focusing solely on the political aspects of Ukrainian-Jewish encounter might be important but not very productive. Consider, for example, what Ukrainians and Jews did between 1649 and 1768, 1768 and 1881, or 1919 and 1941. Did they hate one another and seek opportunity for revenge? Hardly. Suggesting that victimization issues should be put aside, Paul Robert Magocsi observed that for centuries Ukrainians and Jews coexisted in symbiotic relations that historians should scrutinize and reevaluate. But this reevaluation requires an entirely different approach, because conceiving of Ukrainians and Jews as two cultural entities capable of cross-fertilization yet radically different also imposes a priori limitations on historical possibilities. Difference and diversity as analytical devices for dissipating grand narratives can ultimately produce a leveling effect.²⁰

To avoid this, I suggest a new perspective and a new context. Instead of discussing Ukrainians and Jews as suprahistorical national constants, this book presents linguistic, ethnic, and national identities as historically informed variables that are created and rejected, adopted and adapted, traded and negotiated, modified and transformed. Yet since they are defined by a specific cultural and historical context and expressed in literary writings, this book treats them as phenomena that “may be variable across time and across persons, but they may be stable.”²¹ While it is hardly feasible to define Ukrainian Jews as a sociopolitical group identity, it is doable in the case of individual Jews who expressed their quest for self-understanding in Ukrainian prose and poetic narratives. Reconstructing their self-understanding is even more plausible given their consistent tendency to retain their residual hold on Jewish cultural associations.

I suggest going beyond the political context into the cultural context, in which Ukrainians and Jews transcend their differences and share the same pool of ideas, concepts, and images. In this book, I discuss individual Jews for whom Ukraine was a desirable environment, for whom Ukrainian culture was a source of inspiration, and for whom Ukrainian themes became part of their artistic pursuits. Recurrent waves of Ukrainian revivalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and again in the 1920s and the 1960s, facilitate brand new forms of Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement. Ukrainophile Jews emerge from the following discussion alongside Ukrainians for whom Jewish themes were an important part of their own spiritual quest, their own search for a colonized minority striving for emancipation. As Moses and Israel became for such Ukrainian poets as Lesia Ukrainka and Ivan Franko idiosyncratic metaphors of Ukrainians’ striving for nation and statehood, Ukrainians became for some Ukrainian-Jew-

ish poets the metaphor of the marginalized Jewish people. But who were these obscure Jews seeking integration into the colonial Ukrainian culture? Why did they chose to adopt colonial identities, so shaky, murky, limited in scope, and perhaps not profitable, and why did they reject the sparkling glow, the stability, and the solidity of the widely available imperial identities?

To answer this question, I have chosen to portray five Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent who constructed their dual Ukrainian-Jewish identities through their literary activities. Instead of debating who among my Jewish protagonists became “genuinely” Ukrainian and to what extent, or who is not and why, I suggest defining as Ukrainian not so much the writers discussed but rather their experiences as mediated through literature. The following discussion argues that one can read literary narratives composed by Ukrainian Jews as their reflections on the colonial status of Ukraine and a plea for its national revival; it reads their behavioral patterns—such as their support of the Ukrainian revival of the 1900s, the national communism of the 1920s, and the national-democratic dissident movement of the 1960s and 1970s—in the context of contemporary political and literary debates; and it integrates their choice of language into a broader ethical, cultural, social, and intellectual context.

I argue that the choice of the Ukrainian language by Jewish writers was imbued with an implicit anti-imperial message. Those Jews who joined the Ukrainian cultural revivalism in the 1900s articulated a message no less significant than those Yiddish-speaking Polish Hasidim who early in the nineteenth century defended the Polish national cause and readily went to Russian prison for their convictions. For a heavily oppressed shtetl Jew from the Pale of Settlement to identify with another persecuted minority—such as the Ukrainians or Lithuanians—rather than to seek a safe haven under the aegis of the Russian-language imperial or Soviet culture, was unusual if not abnormal. The colonial was everything that the imperial was not; identifying with it signified an odd choice. Indeed, vis-à-vis all those Jews—as well as many Russian-speaking Ukrainians—who chose Russian culture, this choice was a challenge, and not infrequently, those who made it were suspected of lacking loyalty toward the empire. But adopting a Ukrainian colonial identity instead of the imperial all-Russian did not necessarily signify turning one’s back on Russia. Ukraine has boasted quite a number of pro-imperial figures among the Ukrainian literati of Ukrainian, Russian, and Jewish descent who wholeheartedly supported the regime and endorsed the imperial Kremlin-orchestrated repressions against national-minded Ukrainian intellectuals. Besides, over last two centuries both the Russian and the Soviet empires successfully integrated the representatives of the Ukrainian elites who shared with the empire its religion or ideology, high culture, and ruler

and yet preserved “the remnants of distinctiveness.”²² As far as the writers discussed in the following chapters are concerned, the anti-imperial implies their anti-*all*-Russian proclivities and does not signify anti-Russian.

Ultimately, the rejection of the chauvinistic Russian political praxis could well coexist with the endorsement of Russian literary tendencies, particularly since some Russian democratic-minded writers sympathized with the Ukrainian cause. This is particularly evident in cases where Ukrainian-Jewish poets attached to Ukrainian classics mediated their Ukrainian concerns through the poetic themes and images of the Russian-language literati. To present Ukrainian-Jewish identities, the following discussion uses “anticolonialist” and “anti-imperial” indiscriminately yet with a difference in emphasis. The former emphasizes the Jewish sympathy for colonial Ukrainians and the support of their national, democratic, or emancipating tendencies. The latter underscores the spiritual rebellion against a colonizer, the rejection of its power, and sometimes an open protest against its imperialist modus operandi. Indeed, the anticolonialist and the anti-imperial are two sides of the same coin: one could not simultaneously sympathize with Ukrainian strivings for independence and approve of an all-Russian patronizing attitude toward the Ukrainian little brother.

Here a question must be asked: Was Ukraine a colony? Students of modernity understand colonialism and imperialism as a situation in which “people who live in one region of the world . . . subjugate those of another part of the world. So the concept suggests not only the largeness of the operation, or the ethnic, racial, or cultural differences of the parties, but the global scale upon which it is carried out.”²³ Apparently Ukraine does not fit in this scenario. Unlike “classical” colonies—distant; militarily subjugated; racially, ethnically, or culturally different; and economically exploited—Ukraine bordered its alleged oppressors, Poland and Russia. It shared with Russia its autocrat, its Russian Orthodox Christianity, and its imperial high culture, if not an imagined common historical past. Territorially what today is Ukraine was under Poland between the fourteenth and the late eighteenth centuries and under Russia between the late eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Poland did not capture Ukraine; it attached the Ukrainian territories as the result of its unification with Lithuania into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Lithuania had conquered these lands—formerly belonging to Kievan Rus—desolated by the Mongols in the thirteenth-century. The Polish crown granted some privileges to the Ukrainian elites and shaped their sense of distinctiveness. In turn, Russia attached the eastern part of Ukraine (on the left side of the river Dnieper) through the personal union with

Ukraine as the result of Pereiaslav Treaty of 1654 and western Ukraine during the partitions of Poland in the period between 1772 and 1795.

Both Poles and Russians significantly contributed to the rise of the Ukrainian economy, statehood, and nationhood. In the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, Poles successfully developed their newly acquired underpopulated territories, creating, with significant help from the Jews, multiple urban clusters—private Polish towns and a sophisticated manorial economic framework. Ukrainian towns, particularly on the right bank of the river Dnieper, were of Polish origin and preserved through the nineteenth century their Polish infrastructure. A student of Ukrainian history observed that the more urbanized the towns in nineteenth-century Ukraine, the less they were Ukrainian. Forms and ways of colonization have shaped and continue to shape the modern Ukrainian political divide between the pro-Russian Ukrainian southeast on the one side and the pro-European, particularly pro-Polish, center-west.

In the nineteenth century Russians efficiently continued the urbanization and industrialization of Ukraine, expanding its territory into the Crimea (captured from the Ottoman Turks) and helping develop the Novorossiiskii province and the Donbass coal basin, which later became key economic and industrial centers in southern and southeastern Ukraine. Relations between Russia and Ukraine also seemed symbiotic and cross-fertilizing. The rise of Ukrainian culture was inconceivable without the Russian imperial framework: the national classic Taras Shevchenko rediscovered himself as a Ukrainian poet and artist only after he had encountered the St. Petersburg literary and artistic milieu and had familiarized himself with the poetry and metrical system of the Russian romantics. And the founders of Ukrainian political thought, such as Mykhailo Drahomanov, combined their defense of the Ukrainian distinctiveness with the loyalty to the imperial state and support of its imperial historical narratives. The Ukrainian contribution to Russian culture was no less significant. Kievan monks were responsible for the creation of the messianic myth that presented Moscow as the Third Rome and the Russian state as the savior of Christianity—it still serves as an operational idea in twenty-first-century all-Russian geopolitics. The ethnic Ukrainian Nicholas Gogol laid the foundations for the development of Russian prose for centuries to come. To say that Ukraine was a colony and continued to maintain its colonial stigmata through the twentieth century is to ignore the fact that out of half a dozen Soviet state rulers, two—Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev—were Ukrainian born and bred.

Yet this book is based on the assumption that Ukraine *was* a colony, at least during the periods of time it focuses on. Between the eighteenth and the twentieth

eth century, neighboring Poland and Russia treated Ukraine as a bordering territory (*Ukraina* literally means the borderland), the resources of which were exploited, the people economically subjugated and socially oppressed, the elites successfully assimilated, the national-minded discourse shuffled or neutralized, and the culture and language considered uncivilized and scornful. Although one may argue to what extent Ukrainian political elites under Poland, Russia, or the Soviet Union experienced marginalization, the situation in the cultural realm clearly indicated Ukraine's colonial status. First Russian imperial authorities, and then the Soviet rulers successfully outwitted Ukrainian elite. They rewrote Ukrainian historical narratives to convince Ukrainian elites that Russia and Ukraine had always been one; that Ukrainians, dubbed Little Russians, had always cherished the unity between the two polities and striven to live with and under the protection of Great Russia; and that Ukrainian national-minded writers were malicious traitors of eternal Slavic brotherhood. When this did not work and Ukrainians too vociferously attempted to remind Russia of their distinctiveness, Russian imperial authorities suppressed Ukrainian culture by outlawing the Ukrainian language. While Russian democratic-minded intellectuals helped Shevchenko out of serfdom, the Russian imperial administration drafted Shevchenko into the army where he was forbidden to write and draw. As we will see, a hundred years later, under the Soviets, those merely hinting at the possibility of Ukraine's existence as a separate polity or an independent culture ended up in Stalin's Gulag or in Brezhnev's correction colonies. This book furnishes multiple examples illustrating how this mechanism of colonial control over Ukraine operated at certain periods of time in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The path of Ukrainian colonialism, from colonial to postcolonial to national, was long and by no means straight. The difference between Little Russia (Ukraine as part of the Russian Empire) and the Ukrainian Soviet Republic was striking, yet from a certain perspective the tsars' treatment of Ukraine in the 1870s and 1880s did not differ greatly from Stalin's in the 1930s or Brezhnev's in the 1970s, since the USSR, as some have shrewdly argued, was no less a colonialist polity than the Russian Empire.²⁴ Over the past one hundred and fifty years Ukraine experienced various forms of colonialism. While the colonial status of Ukraine will continue to be debated among students of East European history, it might be productive to compare Ukraine's problematic colonialism with that of Ireland. In the nineteenth century, Ukraine was viewed as an agricultural addendum to the Russian Empire, as was Ireland vis-à-vis the British Empire. The 1932–33 Ukrainian famine devastated the countryside and shaped the national memory of Ukrainians just as the mid-1840s Great Famine devastated the

Irish village and shaped the memory of the Irish. The abolition of the last vestiges of the Hetmanate self-rule in the eighteenth century and the administrative incorporation of Ukraine as Little Russia into the Russian state administration might be seen as a possible parallel to the abolition of Lord Lieutenancy and submission of Irish local government to London.

Like the Irish in British imperial discourse, Ukrainians were stereotyped in Russian imperial discourse: they were uncivilized, unruly, pathetic, funny, prone to sudden violence and the regular consumption of alcohol, sentimental toward their Cossack past perfect and indifferent to their stagnating present continuous. Politically integrated into the Russian Empire and later the USSR, Ukraine ceased to be a subordinate nation, but as Terry Eagleton warns us, a country may be politically equal to another while being socially and culturally subjugated. Just as Ireland oscillated between its submissive imperial provinciality and its budding national revolt, Ukraine perceived itself either as a subservient southern province of the empire or as the freedom-loving rebel. The Ukrainian colonial situation was as mixed as the Irish, where “at different times and in different places, various . . . forms of colonialism have complexly co-existed.”²⁵ Yet unlike Ireland, Ukraine’s passage to the national and postcolonial was obstructed by colonialist recidivism (i.e., in the early 1930s to late 1980s) that followed brief leaps forward to apparently complete national independence. Even if we admit that Ukraine underwent economic modernization during the Soviet era, benefited greatly from the Soviet cultural and industrial revolutions, and differed from agrarian economic dependencies, we cannot fail to recognize traces of colonialism in modern Ukrainian society, culture, and language. And since cultural history informs this book, I will make references to Ukrainian colonialism and spell out what I imply by it in every historical period under discussion.

In addition to opting for the Ukrainian in a highly Russified Russian metropolitan or Soviet culture, for the protagonists of this book the choice of the anti-imperial signified a preference for the particular over the general, the individual over the collective, the powerless over the regime, the victim over the violence, and certainly the colonial over the colonizer. Yet these dichotomies were not absolute: the principal characters of this book climbed social ladders, published their writings, and gained fame in and through the imperial cultural framework. Therefore my protagonists should be seen in their specific context, for only then do they demonstrate the historicity and the paradoxicality of the anti-imperial choice.

As far as the East European context is concerned, choosing to work in the Ukrainian language did not make Ukrainians or Jews automatically anticolonialist. Nor were those Jews who sought integration into the Russian culture neces-

sarily pro-imperial. The Berdichev-born Vassili Grossman grew up as a Russian writer and a supporter of the rising Soviet Empire but eventually turned sharply anti-imperial, a stance that made some chauvinistic-minded thinkers accuse him of Russophobia. Grossman emerged as an anti-imperial Jew not only when he, for the first time in Russian literary history, equated the Third Reich with Stalin's regime, but also when he traced the path-breaking parallels between the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and the Ukrainian victims of the early 1930s famine known as the Holodomor. Becoming a dissident-minded writer of any ethnic origin did not necessarily render one's views anticolonialist: unlike Grossman, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn remained imperial—ethically, politically, and culturally, among other things—because of his anti-Jewish bias, his dismissive gestures toward independent Poland, his all-Russian political myths, and his aversion to Ukrainian national strivings.

The anti-imperial choice was not exclusively a Jewish privilege: it was also an option for the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians. When Mykola Rudenko, the all-powerful secretary of the Communist Party Committee within the Union of Ukrainian Writers underwent a political reawakening and became a national-minded dissident, he took a crucial anticolonialist step. Similar conversions to anticolonialism can be found far beyond the Russian-Jewish-Ukrainian triangle: Lord Byron, who joined the Greeks in their fight for independence; John Chilembwe, an American-trained Baptist preacher who started the 1915 anticolonialist rebellion of the Nyasa people (today Malawi); the legendary Argentinean Martín Fierro, who deserted the governmental troops and went to live among the South American Indians; Louis Riel, a white Canadian Catholic who headed the 1885 rebellion of Native Americans—those canonical figures were no less anticolonialist-minded than the characters of this book. They pointed out the indispensability for the anticolonialist choice of the imperial/colonial framework. Indeed, without the presence of a powerful oppressor—political, ethnic, religious, or cultural—the choice of the powerless, oppressed, and colonial could not emerge as a manifestation of political resistance. Yet unlike these members of the anticolonialist pantheon, Ukrainian-Jewish poets who identified with the oppressed Ukrainians did not organize full-fledged political resistance and never denied Russian cultural values. Moreover, due to restrictive imperial censorship they were not able explicitly to articulate their spiritual resistance in their writings.

The anticolonialist resistance implied in this book is not an armed struggle of the Ukrainian branch of the Frente Farabundo Martí Para La Liberación Nacional, nor is it a Jewish version of Gandhi's *ahimsa*, the ideology of nonvio-

lence channeled to millions through the mass media. Rather, to assert one's Ukrainian-Jewish self-identification suggests a noncoercive resistance. This resistance was implicitly articulated through images and themes, the production and circulation of which rejected the mere possibility of coercion or ideological imposition. Texts produced by Ukrainian-Jewish writers had no chance of becoming a mainstream product because of their inherent marginality, hybridity, and complexity. They were not composed with an eye to their becoming political mottoes or ideological constructs. By virtue of their marginality in cultural discourse, the Ukrainian Jews could never become mainstream figures nor could Ukrainian-Jewish literary texts acquire a domineering position in the national culture. The Ukrainian-Jewish discourse was shaped by an inherent tragedy: it was about failure, not triumph. Ukrainian-Jewish poets represented a marginalized and powerless minority affirming the significance of the marginalized and powerless identity within the Ukrainian culture. They underscored an absolute value of the marginality and hybridity. Because of that, the presence of Ukrainian-Jewish texts in the Ukrainian culture helped resist coercive agendas (either of nationalist or of imperial origin) and contributed to the creation of a democratic and pluralistic cultural space in post-1991 Ukraine.

This book draws from the methodology of colonial studies and postcolonial theory and from the productive critique of these schools of thought. I carefully considered the objections to postcolonial scholarship advanced by Robert Young.²⁶ When analyzing literary texts I make large historical generalizations based on them only in a dense historical context. Because this book is historical and cultural, I reconstruct the cultural contexts of my literary personalities and their literary products, pinpointing their historicity. My analysis focuses on what the texts in question represent, for whom, when, and why. I analyze the cultural field that generates and shapes the functioning of a text: it is in this field that I am able to reconstruct the meaning of "what is going on." For me, literary texts are cultural and historical events that have a certain impact on the available pool of dominant popular "meanings and feelings," as Jean-Christophe Agnew would have it. Texts in this book are read historically to uncover the suppressed individual experiences embedded into them, although I am aware that literary texts cannot be read as transparent windows on experience of a given time and place. Composed of five case studies connected methodologically and thematically, this book dwells on the differences—literary, historical, ideological, and even ethical—between its principal characters. It thus avoids homogenizing the participants from both sides of the Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue. In a sense, I am trying simultaneously to suggest the existence of an anticolonial tradition among

East European Jews and to recover its complexities, modifications, versions, and deviations, if not schisms.

My story begins late in the nineteenth century. By that time Jews lived throughout Ukrainian territories, which constituted the southwestern region of the Russian Empire (*Iugo-zapadnyi krai*) and the southern part of the Pale of Settlement, the territory of the legal residence of East European Jews. Because only selective groups of Jews (university diploma holders, licensed artisans, guild merchants, and Nicholas I army soldiers) were allowed to reside in interior Russia and because residence in rural areas was illegal for them, about two million Jews crowded in towns and shtetls of the southwestern region. Jews in general constituted 4 percent of the total population in the Russian Empire, 10 percent in the southwestern region, 14 percent in right-bank Ukraine, 32 percent in Ukrainian cities, and 53 percent of the Ukrainian shtetl population. At the same time, some 80 percent of seventeen million Ukrainians resided mostly in rural areas. No wonder the Jews played a predominant role in the urban economy. Ninety-five percent of all Volhynia Province factories were Jewish owned or leased. In the southwestern region, Jews owned or leased from the gentry 500 of the 564 distilleries, 148 of the 199 breweries, and 5,700 of the 6,353 mills. Thirty percent of Jews were involved in business (versus 10 percent of Ukrainians). While Jews in Ukraine were better off economically than their brethren in the northern regions of the Pale, salaries were low and poverty was rampant. The density of Jewish residence is best illustrated statistically: there were 510 Christian residents per 100 houses (5 people per household) whereas there were 1,299 Jews (13 per household).²⁷

The contradiction between the Russian-Jewish, formerly Polish, town and the Ukrainian village became particularly acute with the rise of Russian capitalism. In the late 1870s when recently emancipated yet landless peasants moved to the cities in search of jobs, they became first-generation urban dwellers and recognized the already urbanized Jews as their major competitors. In 1881, the assassination of Alexander II sparked the first full-fledged anti-Jewish violence in the nineteenth century. It originated in southern Ukraine's cities and towns and took the form of pogroms that claimed several dozen lives, caused ruin to thousands of small businesses, and 10 million rubles worth of damage to Jewish property. Russian authorities momentarily blamed the violence on the victimized Jews. Despite the Jews' key role in creating highly competitive trade with very small income and rapid turnover, which kept prices low, Jews were identified as parasites and exploiters of the peasant, as those who exercised full economic control in the southwestern region, and as the innkeepers who made the peasant

drunk. To separate harmful Jews from peasants, in 1882 Minister of the Interior Nikolai Ignat'iev introduced the May Laws, which further segregated Jews by banning their settlement in villages, banishing them from certain localities, and establishing rigid university and college quotas for them. This cast a hard blow on the economic life of thousands of Jewish who now, together with the ruined yet free peasants, moved to towns in search for employment.

Facing increasing economic hardships, Jews underwent rapid pauperization and proletarianization. Whereas in 1818, 86 percent of all employed Jews went into trade and 12 into handicrafts, in 1897 only 32 percent engaged in trade and as many as 38 percent were artisans and employed workers. Empoverishment of the Jews was further exacerbated by the industrialization of late Imperial Russia, which made most handicrafts redundant. An independent Jewish shoemaker in Berdichev could not compete with shoemaking factories that employed hundreds. In the 1890s, Jews joined en masse the newly established industrial enterprises, creating the basis for the Jewish proletariat movement and bringing forth such Jewish socialist organization as the Bund. Others went in search of better economic opportunities overseas: between the 1880s and 1910s, some 1,270,000 Jews fled the Russian Empire.

The overwhelming majority of Jews in Ukraine (97 percent) spoke Yiddish and identified with the Jewish traditional values based on Jewish schooling through *heder*, on the religiously informed lifecycle, on Jewish dietary laws, and on local rabbinic leadership. But since the Russian administration conducted a policy of forceful Jewish Russification, there were increasing numbers of Jews, particularly in such big urban clusters as Kiev, Odessa, Kremenchug, Ekaterinoslav, Zhitomir, and Kharkov, whose children attended Russian schools and spoke fluent Russian. Those Russian-speaking Jews did their best to circumvent severe educational limitations and enter the liberal professions. For example, in Odessa at the turn of the nineteenth century, 49 percent of all medical doctors, 93 percent of the dentists, 80 percent of the pediatricians, 48 percent of the lawyers, and 65 of legal assistants were Jews. One hundred nineteen out of one hundred forty-four first guild merchants residing in Kiev were Jews—that is to say, 83 percent. They represented the most Russified part of the Jewish population in Ukraine and constituted not more than 1.2 percent of its total. The nationalist Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, himself a brilliant Russian writer, mocked their pro-Russian drive by depicting assimilated Jews who turned out to be “the only bearers and disseminators of the Russian culture” celebrating “Russian literature” in a city bereft of a Russian cultural presence.²⁸ Indeed, while some city Jews were well integrated into the imperial economy and exemplified the imperial Jew, the overwhelming majority of their brethren in the shtetls could hardly

make ends meet, lived from hand to mouth, and were residentially, socially, and economically oppressed. Yet some of these Jews chose to associate not with the Russian Empire but with the nascent Ukrainian nation and Ukrainian national strivings and become Ukrainian Jews.

This book traces the making and the unmaking of the Ukrainian Jew from the 1880s to the 1990s. It starts with a discussion of Hryts'ko Kernerenko's attempts to integrate into Ukrainian culture and recreate the image of colonial Ukraine. In the late 1890s, Kernerenko's literary activities made him visible within the milieu of Ukrainian thinkers in Austrian Galicia and later in Kiev, and the Ukrainian feedback to his literary experiments manifests early attempts by the Ukrainian intelligentsia to integrate Jews into Ukrainian literary discourse. The second chapter portrays Ivan Kulyk, a staunch supporter and later one of the leaders of the Ukrainian cultural revival who sought to synthesize his Ukrainian identity with his Marxist convictions. A renowned poet, politician, diplomat, journalist, and manager of cultural life, Kulyk became the first head of the umbrella organization of Ukrainian writers but tragically failed to remain loyal to Ukrainian Marxism. His fall marked the renewed efforts of the emerging Soviet empire to suppress Ukraine's anticolonialist drive. The third chapter tells the story of Raisa Troianker, who placed herself between village poetry and the avant-garde and who crafted unparalleled Jewish and Ukrainian poetic images. Troianker sought emancipation by integrating into Ukrainian culture through her literary and erotic endeavors. Troianker's later switch to Russian demonstrated that the Soviet Union provided its subjects with ways to choose between various modes of self-identification. Troianker, as well as many others, used this opportunity to camouflage her Ukrainian-Jewish self-awareness—a decision made by many in Ukraine and Russia at a time when the regime chose to unify its multiethnic culture and suppress marginal nonimperial voices.

Troianker's contemporary Leonid Pervomais'kyi is the focus of the fourth chapter. This prolific Ukrainian literary figure started his career as a Ukrainian-Jewish writer, later abandoned his Jewish endeavors, yet after World War II reemerged as a writer of Ukrainian-Jewish themes who managed to translate his sympathy toward the colonial and his rejection of the imperial into an Aesopian language of ethics and semiotics. In the postwar years he did not subscribe to the official Soviet ideology nor did he cross over into the dissident rejection of the regime, yet his anticolonialist humanism far transcended the limits of the Soviet canons within which, critics thought, he was operating. Perhaps one of the most consistent anticolonialist writers, Pervomais'kyi became a paradigmatic Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent, one whose creativity has influenced and continues to

influence the literary endeavors and self-identification of many Ukrainian-Jewish literati.

The fifth chapter focuses on Moisei Fishbein, in a certain sense Pervomais'kyi's heir, who imagined himself a Jewish Messiah coming to redeem Ukrainian culture from its colonial marasm. Fishbein emerged as one of the most eminent champions of the Ukrainian linguistic revival and perhaps the first in the sequence of Ukrainian-Jewish literary figures aware of the long tradition he represented. Although the following chapters entail monographic portrayals of the Ukrainian-Jewish figures, they are connected methodologically (colonial studies), thematically (Ukrainian-Jewish identities), and also in terms of cultural genealogy. Kulyk endorsed the literary activities of the young Leonid Pervomais'kyi; both Kulyk and Pervomais'kyi shared the literary milieu of Raisa Troianker and knew her personally; Pervomais'kyi blessed the literary endeavors of Moisei Fishbein; and Fishbein worked for years with the literary translator and scholar who rediscovered Kernerenko. Another feature common for these figures is the way Ukrainians received them and perceived their writings. Despite obvious differences in the quality of their literary creativity, Kernerenko was welcomed by some L'viv- and later Kiev-based Ukrainian critics; Troianker established herself among Ukrainian writers and poets; Kulyk was well known to the contemporary mass reader; Pervomais'kyi was considered a living classic and was revered by hundreds of thousands of readers; and Fishbein enjoyed the overwhelming support of Ukrainian cultural elites in the 1990s and 2000s. The story of their reception is another concern of this book.

I look at these five anti-imperial Jews as representing dozens, if not hundreds, of Ukrainian figures of Jewish descent who contributed to Ukrainian culture over the twentieth century. To be sure, they also represent those Ukrainian Jews who preferred the Ukrainian language to Russian, identified with Shevchenko rather than Pushkin, yet enjoyed a lesser degree of public exposure. Thus Hryts'ko Kernerenko turned to Ukrainian poetry and prose on a par with other Jews sympathetic to Ukrainian national revivalism. Among them were, for example, such literati and public figures as Kesar Bilylovs'kyi, H. Hurovych, Maxym Hekhter, and Serhii Frenkel: the first was a prominent Ukrainian poet, the second wrote a number of Ukrainian poems as early as the 1860s, the third wrote Ukrainian political articles for the L'viv-based periodical *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* (Literary and Scholarly Herald) edited by Ivan Franko, and the fourth was a member of "Pleiada" group and a close friend of Lesia Ukrainka.²⁹

In the 1920s and 1930s, along with Ivan Kulyk, literary critics, poets, and writers of Jewish descent joined by the dozens what was later called the Ukrai-

nian renaissance. Suffice it to mention the playwright Leonid Iukhvid, the writer Natan Rybak, the critics Volodymyr Koriak and Iukhym Martych, the literary historians Ieremiia Aizenshtok and Abram Leites, the musicologist Abram Gozenpud, or less well-known literati, such as Liber Rabinovych, whose Ukrainian verse on proletarian themes not infrequently appeared in the Ukrainian press in the 1920s.³⁰ Among literary figures of the generation of Leonid Pervomais'kyi, Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent became a norm on the Ukrainian cultural horizon: in different periods of his life Pervomais'kyi knew of, and was in complex relations with, such poets as Sava Holovaniv's'kyi (1910–89), Naum Tykhyi (b. Naum Myronovych Shtilerman, 1912–96), David Kanevs'kyi (1916–44), Abram Katsnel'son (1914–2003), and Aron Kopshtein (1915–40). Although Kopshtein and Kanevs'kyi died fairly young during World War II and did not leave texts on Jewish themes, Tykhyi and Katsnel'son underwent a period of personal reawakening at the very end of their literary career, well into their seventies and eighties, probably under the impact of the new Ukrainian state-building efforts and perhaps not without the influence of Moisei Fishbein's Ukrainian-Jewish imagery. To this list one should add dozens of Jewish literati who lived and were culturally active in Ukraine, who consistently identified with Ukraine but wrote in either Yiddish or Russian. Some of them appear in the backdrop of my narrative.

Yet only five individuals became my protagonists: for them the Ukrainian language was not only a medium of literary discourse but also an object of anti-colonialist reflection. Furthermore, the turn of these five to Ukrainian does not mean they abandoned Jewish motifs: on the contrary, they incorporated Jewish themes, creating what might be cautiously defined as the Ukrainian-Jewish literary tradition. For some of them, quite possibly, Ukraine and Ukrainians were a foil for their reflections over the fate of the Jewish people and Jewish statehood. Of course, one finds Jewish themes in the writings of Ukrainian writers and poets of Jewish descent not addressed in this book. For example, Nathan Rybak portrayed Jews who joined the Khmelnyts'kyi's Cossack revolution in the 1640s; Naum Tykhyi penned a series of politically oriented plays based on Jewish cultural myths and arguing against antisemitism; and Grigorii Fliarkov's'kyi, the author of a number of poems on the Holy Land, called himself “the only Ukrainian poet who addresses Jewish themes.” And yet one does not find a consistent anti-imperial message in their writings. Their integration into Ukrainian culture clearly manifests their sympathy to colonial Ukraine, but their anti-imperial stance is questionable. Compare, for example, Pervomais'kyi's texts, in which he imagines himself standing among the victims of the Nazi-conducted massacre in the Baby Yar, and the poem of Naum Tykhyi, who imagined the same massacre,

expressed similar emotions about it, but observed it from the “safe” distance of the firing squad, as if assimilating his and the executioners’ viewpoint. To complicate the question of this book, the choice of the Ukrainian language does not render a Jew from Ukraine into an anti-imperial Ukrainian Jew: other factors should be taken into consideration in addition to the language ones.

This book explores the cultural accomplishments of multilingual Jews of various social backgrounds during various periods in which Ukrainian acculturation seemed neither beneficial nor propitious. The following discussion traces the spiritual biographies of the Jews who considered identification with the Ukrainian national cause part of their personal spiritual quest. This integration buttressed their attempts to reconcile Jewish and Ukrainian historical narratives traditionally regarded as incompatible. The following chapters focus on five Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent who attempted to craft an improbable identity: Ukrainian-Jewish. The anti-imperial Jew emerges from this book as a harbinger of postmodernity, when the nations treated in the nineteenth century as nonhistorical, achieved independence, and started making their way out of colonial domination, as happened to Ukrainians after the collapse of the Soviet regime or in Israel after the end of the British Mandate and the War for Independence.

This book appears to represent a new subfield in European Jewish history. It applies the devices of colonial studies and postcolonial theory to modern Jewry. It discusses dozens of historical and literary texts never reviewed in any language; recovers previously unknown archival documents; and will, I hope, contribute to European, Slavic, and Jewish studies. For a student of Europe this book offers a very different concept of modern European Jewry and suggests a possible way to revise its historical itinerary. If not the imperial, but the anti-imperial Jew was the protagonist of modern Jewish history, then one must rewrite the entire story of the Jewish agency in the Russian Revolution, in modernism, in the Holocaust, in national-democratic and dissident movements, and in Zionism. In this book I advance the importance of the anti-imperial Jew and challenge the myth-making conception of Jews as nomadic triumphant colonialists.

A Prayer for Ukraine

The Improbable Identity of Hryts'ko Kernerenko

The East European intelligentsia was indifferent to Ukrainian cultural endeavors at the time the descendant of an affluent Jewish family, Grigorii Kerner, made up his mind to identify with the Ukrainian national strivings, dedicate himself to Ukrainian poetry, and adopt the pen name Hryts'ko Kernerenko. His actions seem to make no sense. In the late 1850s and early 1860s, Ukrainian books and primers appeared in print for the first time in the modern era, Taras Shevchenko was allowed back into the capital, and a couple of Ukrainian periodicals, such as *Osnova* (1861–62) and *Chernyhovs'kyi lystok* (1861–63), were authorized, albeit in the imperial Russian language. This brief political thaw was followed by an almost total ban on things Ukrainian.¹ The 1863 Valuev decree and 1876 Ems edict uprooted the timid Ukrainian populism by dramatically limiting the legally endorsed culture of Little Russia, as Ukraine was then officially named. The authorities endorsed Ukrainian discourse grudgingly but only if it contained no hint of the nationalist strivings of Jena romantics, let alone of the revolutionary enthusiasm of Sturm und Drang. The notorious claim that the Ukrainian language “has not, does not, and cannot exist” defined and exhausted the situation of Ukrainian culture in tsarist Russia.²

For Ukrainian writers who sought publishers within the borders of the Russian Empire, moderate Ukrainian populism of a vaudevillian character or bucolic lyricism became the only relatively innocuous form of expression available. At the same time, Austrian-published Ukrainian books and periodicals were forbidden in Russia, translations from Western European languages were put under a total ban, and the Ukrainian theater repertoire was altogether eliminated.³ Afraid that Ukrainian publications would sooner or later trigger separatist ten-

dencies detrimental to the integrity of the empire, the authorities also uprooted Ukrainian from education, liturgy, and the press.

Some changes took place under the brief term of Minister of the Interior Loris-Melikov toward the end of the reign of Alexander II (1856–81). Whatever was allowed to be published in the *Malorosskii* (Little Russian) dialect, as Russian authorities condescendingly dubbed Ukrainian, had necessarily to be transcribed in *iaryzhka*, in which the characteristic Ukrainian vowels were substituted by Russian equivalents to make the language font look similar to Russian. Ukrainian scholarship, such as ethnography, was endorsed only if it was in the Russian language. The suppressed literature was sublimated into collecting Ukrainian folklore, predominantly folk songs and ballads or imitations thereof.⁴

The authorities expediently stifled any attempt of the Ukrainian-minded intellectuals to display in public their innocent folklore sympathies. For example, when several national-minded women reacted against the anti-Ukrainian stance of the authorities by appearing in the streets of Kiev donned in Ukrainian attire, the governor general of Kiev immediately responded by publicly allowing city prostitutes to wear the national dress. In this context, the Russian authorities considered suspicious—and the liberal-minded Russian intelligentsia ridiculous—any attempts to promote Ukrainian literature. Ukrainian was stigmatized as a *lingua peccata*: even the Bible could not be translated into Ukrainian or used by village parish priests. To paraphrase a medieval rabbinic metaphor, the Ukrainian language was a devaluated currency with no apparent signs of recovery. What, then, were Grigorii Kerner's reasons for investing in it?

Nor were Ukrainian-Jewish relations stimulating any mutual rapprochement. An unexpected manifestation of what could be called one of the first stages of the Ukrainian-Jewish cultural encounter ended abruptly and ugly. Although in 1859 such Ukrainian figures as Taras Shevchenko and Panteleimon Kulish had denounced the notorious antisemitic publication in the Russian journal *Ilustratsiia*, in 1861–62 the Ukrainian press canonized the image of the Jew as an enemy alien of the Ukrainian people, in full accordance with the populist stereotype of the Jews as petty bourgeoisie. Leading Ukrainian writers presented Jews as selfish innkeepers and leaseholders. Jews were represented as humiliating the poor, insatiable capitalist entrepreneurs sucking blood of the Ukrainian urban hired workers, greedy exploiters of the voiceless Ukrainian peasants. The activities of Jewish army purveyors were seen as having ruined the army and local economy, and rapacious Jewish stock-exchange adventurers, Jewish nouveau riches, and landowners were unscrupulously taking over holy Ukrainian lands.⁵

Due to Kostomarov's contribution, the myth of the seventeenth-century Jews who leased Eastern Orthodox churches firmly embedded itself in the im-

perial antisemitic discourse. In 1875, Panas Myrnyi portrayed a quintessential Ukrainian village in which a Jew (and a German) mistreat and rob the Ukrainians, former serfs. In the 1870s and 1880s, Ukrainian publications in Austrian Galicia (subjected to a more lenient Austrian censorship) expressed even less sympathy for the Jewish cause. The arguments of enlightened Jewish polemicists for the abolition of the Pale of Settlement and the emancipation of Russian Jews, inundating the Russian-Jewish press at the time, seem to have not resonated among Ukrainian public figures. The initial reports of the Vienna-based journal *Hromada* on the 1881 pogroms in Ukraine, unique in their moderate sympathy toward the Jewish victims, perhaps conveyed Mykhailo Drahomanov's solitary viewpoint rather than the feelings of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, which was quantitatively insignificant and bereft of its own media in the Russian Empire.⁶

In the literary circles the climate was far from benevolent to the idea of Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement. In the late 1850s, Panteleimon Kulish was an ardent adept of the Ukrainian-Jewish encounter: he wholeheartedly supported and publicly praised the literary endeavors of Kesar Bilylovs'kyi, a Jew who entirely sacrificed his Jewishness for the sake of his newly adopted identity of a Ukrainian poet; yet later Kulish claimed that a Jew cannot become a Ukrainian any more than a camel can pass through the eye of a needle, a sudden switch that naturally caused Bilylovs'kyi's consternation, bitterness, and distress.⁷ In the 1880s, the philosemitism of Ivan Franko and Lesia Ukrainka, who at the beginning of the twentieth century challenged the inherited bias of Ukrainian anti-Jewish attitudes, had not yet become part of the new Ukrainian sensibilities.⁸ And there was no Volodymyr Vynnychenko to create the complex, predominantly positive Jewish characters that appeared in his plays and prose in the 1910s and after.⁹ To say that Grigorii Kerner emerged as the Ukrainian poet Hryts'ko Kernerenko from a welcoming milieu that fostered a Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue is to misunderstand completely his bold, independent, and apparently lonely deed.

Kerner was no less a curious figure among those Jewish intellectuals who, from Osip Rabinovich in Odessa to Arnold Margolin in Khar'kov, routinely associated with and integrated into the Russian imperial milieu. To the enlightened Jews seeking integration into the general society and arguing against any ghettoized Yiddish-based and shtetl-shaped Jewish mentality, Russian was an imperial language, the language of power and protection—therefore, a praiseworthy language, a *lingua laudata*. This is not surprising, given that in the new burgeoning urban centers of Ukraine, such as Khar'kov, Ekaterinoslav, and Odessa, Russian was the spoken language of the overwhelming majority, Jews in-

cluded, whereas Ukrainian was unheard of. Ievhen Chykalenko poignantly noticed that in the 1900s there were only five families in Kiev that spoke Ukrainian at home, and his bitter remark does not seem an exaggeration.¹⁰

In the hierarchy of Jewish linguistic preferences, German—the language of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment—and later Russian occupied the first and foremost positions, followed by Hebrew and Yiddish, the last being the least important. Ukrainian was simply not in the Jewish linguistic repertoire, despite the fact that Ukrainian words and colloquial expressions were prominently present in both spoken and written Yiddish; they were well familiar to Jews.¹¹ Furthermore, for the Jews, Russian was not only the official language of the empire but also the language of high culture, university education, and public discourse, whereas Ukrainian was at best the language of the peasantry. For an urban dwelling, petty-bourgeois German- or Russian-oriented Jew, the Ukrainian language signified nothing but a marketplace babble of no cultural value. Jews considered Shevchenko talented, albeit rough and uncombed. To use David Roskies's metaphor, in the shtetl-based Jewish linguistic imagination, Russian functioned as a *High Goyish* and Ukrainian as a *Low Goyish* dialect, with *goyish* referring to the non-Jewish or gentile.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, East European Yiddish writers, above all Mendele Moykher Sforim, included in their prose narratives many colorful, albeit episodic, Ukrainian characters and even brief dialogues in Ukrainian. Later in the 1900s, Isaac Leybush Peretz and Sholem Aleichem traced humorous parallels between the Ukrainians and the Jews in their short stories. Ukraine-born Ze'ev Jabotinsky's arduous defense of the Ukrainian language and culture, articulated in his impeccable Russian, was another important episode of the Jewish-Ukrainian cultural rapprochement at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹²

Yet Ukrainian-Jewish literary interaction did not yet signify the integration of Jewish intellectuals into the Ukrainian milieu. And in the 1880s, it was simply inconceivable for a Jew—as well as for an acculturated urban dweller with a university degree—to be willing to associate with, or acculturate into, the Ukrainian language and culture. A colonial nonentity in the family of East European languages, Ukrainian could not be a decent means in which to express oneself. There seemed to be no reason for a Jew, who perhaps occupied the lowest rank in the imaginary Russian imperial hierarchy, to identify with those mute, rustic, uncultivated peasants, the Ukrainians, bereft of their own voice and tongue. But Grigorii Kerner, alias Hryt'sko Kernerenko, thought otherwise.

Hirsh—Grigorii—Hryts'ko

Biographical data on Kerner is insufficient for a coherent narrative. What is known about him raises more questions than provides answers. Ihor Kachurov's'kyi's short yet very informative essay on Kerner's life and a brief note included in Kerner's file at the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Literature manuscript collection, in Kyiv, with some variation, simply follow the succinct introduction to Kernerenko's poetry from the 1908 anthology *The Ukrainian Muse*.¹³

From these sources we learn that Hryts'ko Kernerenko was born Grigorii Borisovich Kerner in 1863 in Huliai-pole, Ekaterinoslav Province. Perhaps his Ukrainian neighbors called him Hryhorii Borysovych, while in the synagogue he was addressed as Hirsh ben Borukh. He graduated from Simferopol high school, a modern Russian educational institution opened to Jews. The notorious *numerus clausus* introduced and enforced in the Russian Empire in the early 1880s, however, dramatically limited further educational opportunities for Jews, making university education very problematic for Kerner, who, instead of a Russian university, chose the agronomy department of a polytechnic college in Munich. Kerner's choice, however, was not an uncommon one for heirs of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie who also preferred Central European higher educational establishments. Suffice it to mention such prominent twentieth-century Ukrainian thinkers as Dmytro Dontsov, who studied in Vienna, and V'iacheslav Lypyn's'kyi, who studied in Geneva. Brief notes that follow Kerner's early verse indicate that in 1883 he traveled through Europe and visited Austria and Italy.¹⁴ The few available sources lead us to believe that upon finishing his studies abroad, Kernerenko returned to Huliai-pole and became a manager of his own estate.

Kerner's family was not atypical for the Jewish nouveaux riches that emerged in the 1870s and 1880s. Like the Guenzburgs and the Brodskys, Kerner's grandfather was involved in the century-old *propinacja* business (distilling and selling liquor), had amassed capital, and by the time of the liberal reforms of Alexander II was able to invest his entrepreneurial skills into the burgeoning south Russian industry. In the 1870s, together with the merchant A. A. Ostrov's'kyi, he built a comparatively large liquor plant that employed thirty-two workers and earned 32,000 rubles annually. In 1892, Kerner established his family company, Kerner B. S. and Sons, and built the second machine-building factory in Huliai-pole (the first belonged to a certain Krieger). By the end of the century there were seventy workers at Kerner's factory, which generated revenues of 65,000 rubles and was marketed through the local Kerner-owned trad-

ing house. In 1901, together with other wealthy merchants and industrialists, the Kerners sponsored Mutual Credit Bank, a formidable edifice built in the center of the town. Later under the Soviets, the building hosted the Jewish Colonization Society (Agro-Joint), which supported Jewish agricultural settlements in southern Ukraine.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Huliai-pole, situated in the center of a triangle formed by the three cities Ekaterinoslav (Dnipropetrovs'k), Iuzovo (Donets'k), and Melitopol, was a nicely planned town. In 1898, it boasted seventy-six plants, factories, and artisan shops, and some twenty stores. By 1914, it had 16,150 inhabitants, of them 1,173 Jews, three churches, one synagogue, five primary schools, one parish school, one workers' school, one German and two Jewish schools, a library, a theater, and a cinema. The Kerners significantly contributed to the town's economic blossom.¹⁵

Anatol Hak (pseud.; real name—Ivan Antypenko), a Ukrainian writer, literary critic, and journalist born in 1893 in Huliai-pole personally knew the Kerners and provided elucidating insights into Kerner's life. Among other things, Hak notes that Kerner's family comprised a father and his three sons. The family owned an agricultural machinery plant, a mill, a large store, and about five hundred hectares of land outside Huliai-pole, which they leased to German colonists.¹⁶ Here is Hak:

As to the rich dwellers of Huliai-pole, who shared pro-Ukrainian sympathies, it is worthwhile to mention the poet Hryts'ko Kernerenko. Unfortunately, there is not a word about him in the *Ukrainian Encyclopedia*. A member of a rich Jewish family (his real name is Kerner), Kernerenko, who got his higher education degree in Munich and Kharkiv, composed genuine Ukrainian poetry, and also translated into Ukrainian the poetry of Heine, Pushkin, etc. In 1909, he published in Huliai-pole a collection of his poetry *Menty naikhnennia* [Moments of Inspiration]. Yet it is obvious that his nationality and social position prevented Kernerenko from having firm contacts with Huliai-pole's intelligentsia, let alone with the peasants. However, when my relatively "Ukrainian" moustache began bristling, I found my way to Kernerenko: I used to go to him for Ukrainian books. Hryhorii Borysovych [Kernerenko] treated me benevolently. Besides the books he gave me to read, I remember him giving me the address of the [Kiev] bookstore *Ukrainskaia starina* [Ukrainian Antiquities], from which I eventually began ordering Ukrainian books.¹⁷

Hak's insights are illuminating in different ways. They suggest that Kernerenko belonged to the well-to-do of Huliai-pole; that he was known to be a lonely Jewish Ukrainophile at odds with his bourgeois Jewish, Russified Cossack, and intellectual Ukrainian milieu; that he had a collection of Ukrainian books; and that he seems to have inspired and encouraged those interested in things Ukrainian.

Unfortunately, except for a brief reference to the post-1917 turmoil, when Kerner was made to pay ransom to local anarchists, Hak does not provide any details on Kerner's later years.¹⁸

Under his pen name Hryts'ko Kernerenko, Kerner composed five books in Ukrainian, all of which are rarities: the short tale *Pravdyva kazka* (1886 and 1890), and four books of poetry, including *Nevelychkyi zbirnyk tvoriv* (1890), *Shchetynnyk* (1891), *V dosuzhyi chas* (1894), and *Menty natkhennia* (1910). Although we can only speculate about why and how Grigorii Kerner started to write Ukrainian verse, we do know that Kernerenko's poetry, appearing between 1890 and 1910 in four different collections, did not go unnoticed by Ukrainian literary figures. Ivan Franko included a couple of Kernerenko's poems in his representative anthology *Akordy* (The Accords, 1903). Oleksa Kovalenko, himself a poet and translator, published three of Kernerenko's poems in his literary anthology *Rozvaha* (Entertainment, 1905) and seven poems prefaced by a biographical note and a portrait in his classic anthology *Ukrains'ka muza* (Ukrainian Muse, 1908). Even in the 1920s some of Kernerenko's verse made its way into the Diaspora collection *Struny* (The Strings, 1922). In addition, Kernerenko's verse and translations appeared in such Ukrainian periodicals as *Hromads'ka dumka*, *Rada*, *Ukrains'ka khata*, and also in the almanac *Skladka* in the 1890s and the periodical *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* in the 1900s, where first, Aleksandrov and second, Franko noticed Kernerenko and found him worthy of joining the select Ukrainian literary milieu.¹⁹

Volodymyr Stepanovych Aleksandrov (1825–93), a medical doctor, writer, and folklorist from Khar'kov, belonged to the “old style” Ukrainian-oriented intelligentsia generated from the clergy and integrated into the East European populist movement of the 1870s. Aleksandrov served as a military doctor in left-bank Ukraine and was known for his *Narodnyi pisennyk* (The People's Songbook, 1887) and his populist folklore-based plays. Apparently he studied Hebrew and translated parts of the Bible, including the books of Genesis, Psalms, and Job, into Ukrainian. In the 1880s, he edited two issues of the highly representative almanac *Skladka* (The Collection). A memoirist notes that Aleksandrov's house in Khar'kov served for irregular meetings of some old-style Ukrainians.²⁰ Kernerenko, who shared the same principles of Ukrainian populism and imitated Ukrainian folk poetry, seems to have been very close to Aleksandrov, calling himself the latter's disciple and perceiving his death as a personal loss. It is likely that Aleksandrov introduced Kernerenko to local publishers (all but one of Kernerenko's books appeared in Khar'kov's Zilberberg printing press, apparently owned by a Jew sympathetic to the Ukrainian cause)

and to the cast of Ukrainian actors at the famous Khar'kov theater, for which probably Kernerenko penned his folklore-based play.

Hardly aware of the fact that he was writing to the only contemporary Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent other than himself, in February, 1898, Kernerenko penned a letter to Kesar Bilylovs'kyi, who continued editing the *Składka* after the death of Aleksandrov. Here is Kerner:

I would like to thank you for starting your good job of enlightenment by having already brought to light two almanacs. May God help you! It is really a pity that I could not have joined the participants in the collection in memory of the late Vladymyr [*sic*] Stepanovych. Had I known that you have such a dear soul and had I known where you live I would have written to you and sent something; since I am one of the acquaintances and disciples of the late VI[adymyr] Stepanovych; alas, what has passed cannot be returned! At this point I would like to ask you, your kindness, should you plan to publish something literary in memory of the late VI[adymyr] St[e]panovych, do not exclude me.²¹

The letter seems to suggest that Kernerenko (unlike Bilylovs'kyi) was *not* part of the narrow circle of Ukrainian literary figures rallying around Aleksandrov's almanac and that he was not even known to the friends of the person whose disciple he considered himself. Kernerenko's spiritual solitude is further corroborated by the letter's closing: as he did in many other cases, he signed the letter with his pen name but asked Bilylovs'kyi to respond to Hryhorii Borysovykh Kerner in Huliai-pole.²² While perhaps a mere convenience or formality, it may also suggest that in his native town, Kerner, already the author of three books in Ukrainian, was hardly known to anybody as the Ukrainian poet Hryts'ko Kernerenko. In the 1900s, however, the constellations on the literary firmament were more benevolent toward Kernerenko, who was then blessed with the acquaintance of Ivan Franko.

Kernerenko's encounter with Ivan Franko requires a brief digression. Back in 1880, the Kiev governor general Dondukov-Korsakov had allowed Ukrainian plays to be staged only on two conditions: first, they should be about the simple folk, not about intelligentsia, and second, a theatrical troop had to offer Russian plays to the public simultaneously. Apparently in the mid-1880s, Kernerenko tried his pen as a playwright. For the plot of his play—the only one we know he penned—Kernerenko chose a village-based love story. The play was entitled “Khto pravdy vkryvaie—toho Boh karaie, abo Liubov syloi u ne vizmesh” (Those Who Conceal the Truth, God Punishes; or You Can't Force Love). The play, ornamented with all the accessories of a sentimental folk drama and permeated with the populist idealization of the village, may have been written for the

Khar'kov Ukrainian troupe. Kernerenko's cast of characters includes the astute and cruel village scribe Rad'ko and his romantic-minded sister Nastia; the ambitious nouveau riche Mykyta Syl'a and his rebellious daughter Horpyna; the village orphan Levko; the innkeeper Lukeria, who is engaged in witchcraft; and Semen, a handsome young man about to be drafted into the army. The play was set in the safe and distant first half of the nineteenth century: in the opening scene potential village draftees discuss the humiliating custom of "forehead shaving," the marking of conscripts in the imperial army cancelled as part of the Great Reforms of Alexander II.

Kernerenko's drama is built around a complex system of love relations and rivalry. Semen, the orphaned son of a district clerk, is going to be drafted into the army. His name has been forged onto a conscription list due by Rad'ko, the clerk, whose sister Nastia is in love with Semen. Rad'ko seeks to marry Horpyna, who also loves Semen. Sending Semen into the army, Rad'ko plans to kill two birds with one stone, paving the way for his future marriage with Horpyna, the daughter of Mykyta Syl'a, the local rich man, and for his further control over his sister Nastia.²³ But Horpyna, who now moves into the focus of the plot, rejects Rad'ko's unscrupulous advances and plans to inform the authorities about the forgery. To bring Semen back to her and to make Nastia, whose love Semen reciprocates, an inappropriate match for him, Horpyna turns to Lukeria, the innkeeper, who supplies her with magic herbs. A moving fare-thee-well before the draft brings Semen and Nastia together for what happens to be their final embrace, marking the end of the first act of the play.

The second, shorter act, which takes place two and a half years later in a nearby provincial town, finds Horpyna in prison, accused of poisoning and thereby blinding Nastia. On the day of the trial, Semen, temporarily released from the army, goes through the town toward his native village in search of Nastia. In the town square in front of a church, Semen meets a blind woman and her guide asking for alms; he recognizes his Nastia and embraces her. At the same moment, convoyed to the court, Horpyna pushes aside the soldiers, rushes toward Semen and Nastia, prostrates herself in front of them, confesses her crime, prays for clemency, and dies.²⁴

Neither the inoffensive plot nor the artificial characters could help Kernerenko. Both Russian and Ukrainian literature have long portrayed the horrors of Nikolaevan conscription, the arbitrariness of communal elders, the corruption of the administration, the prejudices of the peasants, the passions of the simple folk, and witchery. But the situation in Ukrainian literature was different. Censors thought that Ukrainian authors should to be content writing about the

beauties of the Ukrainian landscape and the pastoral innocence of the Ukrainian peasantry.

The censor, who did not sign his report, read Kernerenko's play closely, angrily marking each and every socially explosive theme. He did not like Rad'ko's deliberate forging of the conscription lists to include Semen. He also underlined the passages that echoed Ukrainian folk songs critical of the Nikolaevan draft and that depicted draftees streaming into a local inn to "waste their freedom in drink." The entire second act of the play, according to the aggressive red-pencil marginal notes, enraged the censor: he had no desire to authorize the portrayal of the horrible conditions female inmates faced in Russian prisons and the sexual harassment and brutal language of the prison supervisor.²⁵ The play was banned and returned to its author despite the fact that its moderate social criticism never went as far as the classical dramas of the Russian Aleksandr Ostrovskii (1823–87) or the Ukrainian Ivan Karpenko-Karyi (1845–1907). Kernerenko's play was not published until 1910, when it appeared as part of his collection *Menty natkhennia* under the title "Syla pravdy" (The Power of Truth).

To Kernerenko's good fortune, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the center of Ukrainian culture moved across the border to Ukrainian Galicia, part of the Austrian Empire.²⁶ In the 1880s, known as the "dead years" for the development of Ukrainian culture, most writers, thinkers, and literary critics either had to emigrate, like Mykhailo Drahomanov, who began his *Hromada* (first published as a collection of articles, then made into a journal) in Vienna, or remain in the Russian Empire and take the risk of sending their works for publication to L'viv, where in 1898 Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi and Ivan Franko launched *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* (Literary and Scholarly Herald, hereafter *LNV*), a key journal for twentieth-century Ukrainian thought.

On June 13, 1899, Kernerenko wrote a self-disparaging letter to the editorial board of *LNV*, asking it to publish his translations and poetry, and promising a play. The editors welcomed Kernerenko, publishing his work twice in the course of the year. Inspired by this new opportunity, on May 1, 1900, Kernerenko, having made some changes to his play and shortened its somewhat pretentious and cumbersome title to *Syla pravdy*, sent it to the *LNV* editors. In January 1901, *LNV* informed Kernerenko that his poetry and play would be published, yet two years passed without any publication. Kernerenko sent one inquiry after another, then asked that his manuscripts be returned, sent payment for the return postage, but again received no response. Finally, in February 1903, he turned to Ivan Franko.²⁷

By the 1900s, Ivan Franko's literary depiction of Jews had drifted from por-

traying them predominantly as corrupt capitalists to seeing them more sympathetically, as rank-and-file proletarians. Moreover, he reworked some of his earlier novels, turning rapacious Jews into entrepreneurial, progressive-minded, and positive characters. He also became personally acquainted with Theodor Herzl and developed a deep appreciation for the Zionist cause. As reflected in his diaries and newspaper publications, Franko's interest in the Jewish Enlightenment suggests that the Galician thinker, writer, and poet supported and was ready to promote a Jewish encounter with the vernacular language and culture, be it German, Polish, or Ukrainian. Kernerenko represented for Franko a rare yet commendable case of the Ukrainian acculturation, particularly dear to him given the colonial status of the Ukrainian language and culture in both the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian empires. Franko's acquaintance with Kernerenko hardly changed his perception of the East European Jewish problem, yet it widened his vision of Jewish intellectual endeavors.²⁸

Franko's answer to Kernerenko is not available, nor do we know how their relations evolved between 1903 and 1906, but one of Kernerenko's later letters helps us to understand the character of his epistolary relations with Franko:

I thank you so much for your kind letter. You have asked who Sholem Aleichem is. This is the pen name of S. Rabinovych, one of the most outstanding modern writers in jargon [Yiddish—*YPS*]. S. G. Frug is no less talented in poetry, also in jargon. On Sholem Aleichem and S. G. Frug you may learn a bit from the encyclopedic dictionary Brokhaus, vol. 22, page 495 "Jewish-German dialect or jargon." I am sending you a poem "Wine" that I translated from S. Frug's Yiddish poetry. The tale I have sent you is entitled "Der Veter Pini mit der Mume Reizi," though I translated "Reizi" as "Khyvria;" it seems to sound better in our language [*bil'sh po-nashomu*]. As for an article on the most recent Jewish literature, I am afraid I would not be able, nor would I dare, to write it, yet as for the translations from Yiddish [*z'ievreis'koi*] I will be sending you from time to time poetry and prose, and also something from my own writings.²⁹

Kernerenko's answer to Franko is remarkable in many ways. It demonstrates that Kernerenko apparently was responsible for introducing Franko to such classic Yiddish writers as Sholem Aleichem and Frug and eventually to the phenomenon of Yiddish as a national Jewish language possessing high-quality literature and outstanding literati. Also, Kernerenko emerges from his letter as a modest, self-ironic, even shy individual, who understands both his capabilities and his limitations and who addresses Ukrainian *as his mother tongue*.

There were very few, if any, Jews around Franko who shared Kernerenko's sensibilities. Unlike the situation in the 1910s, *LNV* publications in the first decade of the century imply that in Franko's milieu at that time, no Jews except Kernerenko were familiar with modern Jewish culture and at the same time able

to write in Ukrainian. In addition, Franko could have welcomed Kernerenko both as a poet and as a translator who helped enrich the *LNV* rubric “From Foreign Literatures” that Franko launched and edited. It is not clear whether Franko knew Kernerenko before 1903, but there is little doubt that he eagerly supported the Huliai-pole poet: between 1904 and 1908, Kernerenko appeared at least ten times in *LNV*, sometimes twice in one issue. Kernerenko was not the only Jew published in a major Ukrainian journal, but he was the only Jewish literary figure who merited the regular attention and readership of the Ukrainian audience of *LNV*, serving as a conduit between Jewish literature and the Ukrainian reader. Kernerenko’s active collaboration with *LNV* is the last clearly documented episode of his life.³⁰ Save for his scarcely documented efforts to publish a volume of his selected writings, there is very little evidence of his life and literary endeavors after his last publication in *LNV* in the 1908 issue.

Inspired by his relations with *LNV*, sometime around 1907 Kernerenko began planning his *Menty natkhnennia*. It seems that with all his contacts with editorial boards and his rising number of publications in the periodical press, Kernerenko still did not belong to any literary circles and remained outside the Ukrainian literary mainstream. His letter to Oleksa Kovalenko of November 5, 1907, implies that he did not know how to go about getting his book published:

Dear Mister Oleksa Kuz'mych!

It occurred to me to publish my writings (though not numerous) in a separate book, yet I do not know what to begin with. Will you be so kind as to instruct me where and to what censor committee I have to send my writings first to obtain from them permission for publication? Many things have changed since the time I published my small books, and together with them, indeed, conditions for publication have changed. You, my dear sir, are an expert in this field, therefore I turn to you for advice on how to start this issue.³¹

The three-hundred-page volume *Menty natkhnennia* appeared in 1910 and was extensively reviewed by the leading Ukrainian literary critics. Yet we know virtually nothing about the life of the poet after 1910. It is not difficult to imagine what might have happened to Kerner, a Jew and capitalist, in the midst of the civil war turmoil, the White Army advance and retreat, the military campaign of the Directory of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, the Red Army advance, and Makhno’s anarchist revolt, each of which coincided with or was followed by pogroms and Jewish casualties.

Whatever the circumstances of Hryts’ko Kernerenko’s death, it is significant that before 1934, according to the legend circulating among today’s Huliai-pole intelligentsia, there was a grave inscribed “Kernerenko” at the local cemetery, a site that did not survive the twentieth-century upheavals.³² There is little doubt

that Hryts'ko's brothers and father not have wanted to have this name inscribed on their gravestones. It could have only belonged to Hryts'ko, who in his life was routinely addressed as Hryhorii Borysovych but whose last wish apparently was to be buried as a *Ukrainian* poet.

The Imaginary Ukraine

Among Kernerenko's first writings, the short story *Pravdyva kazka* (*A Truthful Tale*, 1890), published as a brochure when he was twenty-seven, testifies to the author's early emerging concern with Ukrainian-Jewish relations.³³ This story deftly amalgamates the rhetoric of the Enlightenment, Shevchenkoesque romantic imagery, imitation of Ukrainian folklore, populist illusions, and the recent pogrom narratives inundating the Russian and Russian-Jewish press in the early 1880s. Kernerenko's narrative is a recounting of a wave of pogroms in 1881–83, the first case of full-scale anti-Jewish violence in the nineteenth-century Russian Empire that stemmed from, and had a sweeping effect on, the southwestern districts of the Russian Empire, that is to say, Ukraine. Although the reasons and circumstances of these pogroms have long been at the center of scholarly debate, the consensus is that they radicalized the Jewish community in Eastern Europe, eventually triggering Jewish emigration to Palestine and the United States and pushing Jews into the rising nationalist and socialist movements. The 1882 Provisional May Laws issued by Minister of the Interior Ignat'iev in the wake of the pogroms clearly indicated that the Jews were blood-suckers and were themselves the cause of the pogroms. The Russian-language press in Ukraine expediently picked up and popularized this view.

Kernerenko was deeply saddened by the Russian press's attitudes toward the anti-Jewish violence. But instead of arguing against these views, Kernerenko decided that the opinions manifested in the Russian-language press in Ukraine did not reflect the thinking of "true" Ukrainians. Kernerenko believed that there were voices among Ukrainians, by and large stifled, that rejected the imperial propaganda and proclaimed solidarity with the Jews. To epitomize the "real" Ukrainian attitudes not marred by the imposed imperial perceptions, Kernerenko construed a story of a truth-loving girl who became insane while vainly trying to protect the Jews, an image whose constituent elements Kernerenko borrowed from Shevchenko.

Shevchenko had tightly linked insanity—a key theme in nineteenth-century Russian and Ukrainian romanticism and populist literature—to the idea of social justice. In his poem "Sova" (*An Owl*, 1844), a widow cherishes her only son but loses him as soon as he grows up and is conscripted into the Russian military.

Her search for her son turns into a quest for social justice; she travels the breadth and width of the Russian Empire and eventually becomes insane.³⁴ Insanity is the result of, and a response to, the imperial indifference to the fate of a suffering individual.

This theme cuts through several of Shevchenko's texts. His Marina ("Marina," 1848), in her spontaneous revolt against the brutality and violence of a magnate, turns mad and sets the magnate's estate on fire. "Marina" constitutes a parallel to Shevchenko's long Russian-language poem "Slepaia" (A Blind Woman, 1842), in which Oksana, a blind woman's daughter, replicates her mother's tragic itinerary, becomes a victim of injustice, loses her mind, and dies in the flames of a fire that symbolizes her desire to see the final judgment fulfilled on Earth. On the contrary, Shevchenko's female image in "Vid'ma" (A Witch, 1847), also an insane truth-lover, comes across some gypsies who cure her from insanity and turn her into a pious and honest herbal healer. A sincere believer in justice, she resists violence with *caritas*, returns to a man who ruined her life and the life of her children, and attends to him until his last minute.³⁵

It is not only female characters who are Shevchenko's truth-seekers and justice-lovers. In his "Iurodyvyi" (God's Fool, 1857), Shevchenko's alter ego, a madman, curses the tsarist regime and its corrupt satraps; bemoans the absence in the Russian Empire of a legalistic ruler, a George Washington with "his new and just law"; blasphemes the Almighty's indifference to people's sufferings; and epitomizes both social justice and individual insanity. In "Oi, vyostriu tovarysha" (Oh, I Will Sculpt a Friend, 1848), Shevchenko's lyrical hero travels through the country teaching elementary justice to Jews, Poles, and monks. Significantly, Shevchenko's sympathy to the insane champions of justice is vividly expressed in his filial attitude to his characters: he calls his witch not only "my witch" but also "my mother and sister."³⁶

By the same token, Kernerenko's protagonist, a Ukrainian girl named Domakha (the name associated with house or witchery, or the noble Cossack past), is as dear to the narrator as his own "sister." Kernerenko seems to have found a direct path to the hearts of his Ukrainian readers. He created a listener within the text, a little Ukrainian boy whose parents and brothers go to a wedding in a nearby village, leaving him with a nurse, an elderly Ukrainian lady, the embodiment of the people's truth and wisdom. At night the boy cannot fall asleep and asks the nurse about a local village girl, the crazy Domakha, who had lost her mind and died—because, thinks the boy, the children in the village had mocked her. "No," replies the nurse and starts her story.

In Kernerenko's quite sophisticated, if not modernistic, tale, intertextuality performs a key function. Like the little boy hearkening to the nurse's story and

eventually coming to identify with Domakha, so, too, the reader is supposed to believe Kernerenko's narrative and sympathize with Domakha's tragic fate. As it turns out, Domakha was a beautiful village girl who valued truth and justice above everything else. Yet her main character trait was put to test when some "evil people" enticed the villagers to beat the Jews. A pogrom swiftly ensued. Creating a direct Christian reference to 1 Corinthians 6:7 ("Why not rather put up with injustice?"), Kernerenko emphasizes that Domakha could not put up with injustice, rushed to the center of the village, and tried to stop the pogrom. But she appealed in vain to the Christian conscience of the looters: the robbery and destruction of Jewish homes went on until the Jews were completely ruined. This outburst of violence was a major disgrace for Domakha. Her own failure to prevent injustice broke Domakha's will, made her sick, and eventually drove her to insanity.

The insane Domakha exemplifies what Cervantes called *discreta locura*, a clever madness. Like most of Shevchenko's characters, Domakha in her soliloquy preaches enlightened justice. Yet unlike most Shevchenko characters, she imagines herself a victimized Jew. Rushing to the center of the village, she bursts out, bewailing as a Jewess who lived through a pogrom: "Good folks, what have you done to me, why are you banishing me, why are you taking my belongings, am I not like anyone else, is there not one God for you and me, are we not living on the same earth?"³⁷

Domakha's cry for human equality falls on deaf ears. Her fellow villagers mock her craziness, her mother grieves over her illness, and nobody, not even the doctors from the town-based psychiatric clinic (something closer to Vsevolod Garshin's madmen than to Shevchenko), can cure her. The only "listener" who sympathizes with Domakha (except the nurse, the second narrator) is the boy, the reader/listener-in-the-text. A somewhat pathetic description of Domakha's sickness and death finally convinces him that she was a wonderful girl and that her understanding of justice, for which "it was all the same, a Jew, or somebody else," was true justice.³⁸ The boy's slowly emerging empathy toward Domakha, a "genuine truth-lover," a Ukrainian female champion of Jewish rights, culminates Kernerenko's narrative.

Apparently in the 1890s Kernerenko disrupted his efforts to portray Ukrainians who identified with Jewish victims of violence. He seems to have realized that Ukrainians might need Jewish support more than Jews needed that of the Ukrainians. Instead of developing the theme of Ukrainian sympathy toward Jews, Kernerenko began incorporating Ukrainian female voices into his poetry, demonstrating the Jewish poet's sympathy toward Ukrainians. He construed Ukraine as but another Domakha, a colonial Ukrainian girl with all her "Oriental" attributes—naïveté, charm, emotional sincerity, innocence, a natural long-

ing for justice, and an inexplicable fear before the corrupt world around her. Kernerenko showed the Ukrainian girl as volatile and moody yet at the same time full of joy, generosity, and kindness.

The female image, a commonplace colonial victim of the Ukrainian literature at the turn of the century, comes to dominate Kernerenko's small world and to frame his poetic concerns. Women appear in his poetry as a classical singer, as a hard-working lady labeled a "whore" and "lazybones," as a Turkish girl in love with a captive Cossack, as a bucolic village milkmaid, and as a gypsy. Yet all of them are portrayed as idiosyncratically Ukrainian. Jewish girls also enter Kernerenko's poetry in the image of uncivilized and easily intimidated yet beautiful Ukrainian girls. Kernerenko's sympathy toward subjugated, mistreated, and suffering women transcends the limits of his ethnic and cultural realm: in the poem *Renhattsi* (To a Female Renegade), he uses Pushkin's "God grant that you may be loved so by another" to magnanimously address a Jewish woman who married out of her religion and converted. A preoccupation with the female makes Kernerenko ponder existential issues and compare them with the characteristic features of a changeable woman's "nature."³⁹

Kernerenko's relations with his female Ukrainian characters are mostly platonic, transformed into images of nature and nonsexual. He imagines his muse as a beautiful Ukrainian girl, shapely as a poplar, brisk as a butterfly, dressed for a village festive occasion with a wreath of field flowers. Her language is a bird's language. In Kernerenko's melodramatic verse, she comes to the poet early in the morning, as an angel, and sings her wonderful songs that the poet, now the happiest person in the world, hides deep in his heart:

As the bird's song is her language
 And she all is a bright light.
 She is a Passion, she is Love,
 She is a sinful temptation,
 A hope, a Will and a Consciousness,
 Are her nature and blood.
 She is dressed in a vest,
 In a woolen skirt, in nice boots,
 A small blue-flower wreath
 Wraps her black hair.
 She comes to me as an angel
 Early in the morning
 And starts her nice songs
 And again disappears in the blue.⁴⁰

Kernerenko listens to his muse's imaginary songs, reacting to her advent as the Huliai-pole public to a visiting opera singer: by crying. He bemoans his only too platonic love of Ukraine, his unattainable romance with Ukraine, and his con-

templative romanticism. Yet it is crucial to understand that he envisions his muse solely as a Ukrainian female image; only Ukraine inspires his uplifting creativity. His admiration for Ukrainian femininity—symbolizing poetry and inspiration—makes him withdraw into himself when his muses start to speak or sing.⁴¹

Now Kernerenko assumes the role of the invisible mediator who revives Ukrainian female voices by imitating populist Ukrainian poetry and Heinrich Heine's romantic imagery. Kernerenko's attempts to equate Ukraine with his muse and with a woman-poet might be seen either as a plea for the advent of a Ukrainian female poet or as a prayer obliquely addressed to Lesia Ukrainka; unfortunately, we know nothing about Kernerenko's attitudes to this contemporary Ukrainian poetess.

Kernerenko's romantic proclivities gain momentum in his three long poems "Halia," "Bozhevil'nyi" (Madman), and "Shchetynnyk" (The Bristle Vendor).⁴² All three capitalize on epigone romantic motifs, juxtaposing love, madness, and death. The poem "Shchetynnyk" features a certain village dweller, Marta, whose faithful love to Hryts'ko results in an incurable disease and untimely death. "Bozhevil'nyi" introduces village dweller Volodymyr, driven to insanity by a vision of a forest brook mermaid. But "Halia" provides the most elaborate romantic female image.

"Halia" is written in the alternating four-foot trochee and two-foot amphibrach characteristic of the metrical system of Shevchenko's long poems. The two principal characters, Halia and Petro, come from two different worlds. Halia is a volatile, joyous, passionate, talkative, freedom-loving, yet jealous gypsy girl from a gypsy encampment. Her features are reminiscent of Pushkin's Zemfira (from his "The Gypsies"). Petro, Halia's awkward lover, is a slow, taciturn, and morose village lad. He fakes gloom, trying to cover up his disloyalty to Halia. A bucolic river landscape frames their erotic encounter. Halia bends over backward to help dissipate Petro's gloom, and Kernerenko resorts to the best of his poetic devices to demonstrate Halia's natural flexibility. Her heated monologues and strange behavior sometimes make one question her sanity—as such, she replicates some of Shevchenko's female characters—particularly when she takes her lover to the bridge, embraces him one final time, and throws him and then herself into the waters.

Halia's madness perfectly matches with her integrity: not without reason do the village dwellers who pull Halia and Petro from the waters admire Halia's genuine "capacity to love." A reference to the mermaids at the end of the poem revives Heine's imagery of "Lorelei" and points to the romantic roots of Kernerenko's poetry.⁴³ Furthermore, Kernerenko seems not to differentiate between the "Ukrainian" gypsy Halia, his Ukrainian Muse, and his Ukrainian fe-

male images: all are dressed in recognizable folklore attire and ornamented with idiosyncratic Ukrainian adornments. Although Kernerenko emerges from his pre-1900 poetry as an epigone of Ukrainian romanticism, he exemplifies an unheard-of phenomenon: a Jew in love with Ukraine, for whom Ukrainian cultural integration begins with the appropriation of the legacy of Shevchenko and Ukrainian poetic folklore. The death of his male image at a woman's hands is a high price for that love.

Nothing Ukrainian Is Alien to Me

Before the 1900s, three themes permeated Kernerenko's poetry: love, Ukraine, and Shevchenko. Common to a good many Ukrainian poets at the turn of the nineteenth century, these themes had an unexpected spin in Kernerenko's writings. Kernerenko praised love as a family or at least family-making feeling, different from the topical romantic Eros. He depicted Ukraine as a utopian country of redemption and lofty freedom rather than a godforsaken land of spiritual and economic slavery. And he worshipped Shevchenko as the Messiah of the Ukrainians. The focal role of the family in the preservation and reenactment of the Judaic tradition; the centrality of the Holy Land as the country of freedom, milk, and honey; and the redemptive function of the national poet and prophet were among the ideas Kernerenko translated into Ukrainian, making Jewish concepts serve the Ukrainian cause.

Not surprisingly, only the first theme (love) found its way into Ukrainian anthologies; the love poems "Na vse svoia pora" (Everything Has Its Time), "Marne dozhydannia" (A Vain Expectation), "Pevnomu druhovi," (To a True Friend), "Mädchens Wunsch," and "Na pozychenyi motyv" (On a Borrowed Tune) represent Kernerenko's whole published universe. Other Kernerenko poems, especially those dedicated to Ukraine and to Shevchenko (whose very name infuriated Russian authorities), could not make it through the censor. For example, in 1894 a Russian censor allowed Kernerenko's collection *V dosuzhyi chas* to be published on the condition that the poet remove a poem entitled "The 37th Anniversary of Shevchenko's Death." Kernerenko wrote to the editors of *LNV*: "The 37th anniversary of Shevchenko's death is approaching. I am sending you poems that I wrote to commemorate the anniversary. If you find fit, please publish them for we cannot do it here: censorship does not allow it, and there is neither a journal nor a periodical."⁴⁴ To a great extent these circumstances, unknown to the public, explain the anger of Pavlo Hrabovs'kyi, who in his acclaimed essay "Deshcho pro tvorchist poetychnu" (On Poetic Creativity, 1896)—to be discussed later—pronounced his verdict on Kernerenko, finding

him guilty of pursuing “art for art’s sake.”⁴⁵ In fact, Kernerenko’s poetry to a great extent exonerates him as no rhapsodist of pure love and broken hearts.

The images of Ukraine, his motherland, are crucial in Kernerenko’s writings. His poem “Na chuzhyni” (In a Foreign Land) introduces the dichotomy “Ukraine” and “Europe.” The unnamed but recognizable Europe is “sunny,” “sociable,” and “warm,” yet it does not alleviate the poet’s profound solitude and sorrow. Kernerenko compares himself to a bird in a golden cage: the allegory significantly suggests that Ukraine—and only Ukraine—is the poet’s freedom. In his “I znov na Vkraini” (And Again in Ukraine), Kernerenko associates his native land with an island of utopia: there no evil exists, no calamity, no sorrow. Ukraine embodies solely an immense happiness. Kernerenko uses the biblical metaphor of the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey but recasts it as a different promised land, Ukraine.

For Kernerenko, Ukraine allows for poetic enthusiasm and creativity. Ukraine, a metaphysical rather than social category, is about holiness and freedom. It is associated with the dearest and most humane images. Ukraine is not only its people’s “mother” but also the poet’s own “mom,” his nurse, his closest and dearest kin. The poet is overwhelmed with the joy of return:

And now, again, my holy Ukraine,
I returned to your sacred land;
Do accept me, my nurse, for I am your child,
And for you I sing my song!⁴⁶

Yet Kernerenko’s love does not blind him: he is aware of Ukraine’s colonial underprivileged and humiliated status.

Kernerenko conveys this vision through the Shevchenkian peasant metaphors (and even direct quotes). In his “Na stepakh Ukrainy” (On the Ukrainian Steppes), an itinerant Truth wanders throughout the land and sings the song bemoaning its native Ukraine, a decaying flower: the sun burns it, the winter dries it out, and the people abandon it. My unrhymed literal translation hardly conveys the folk charm and succinct metaphors of Kernerenko’s verse:

What field is this stretching
That the sight cannot envelope?
Look at it: it’s only a dream
That something will rise.
This it is,—Ukraine,
Where the Truth wanders
And sings to everybody
A song with rebuke:
“Good folks, Ukraine

Fades as a flower.
The sun burns it, the wind dries it out,
Nobody cares about it.
The ploughed field over there
Is covered by weed.
And through that weed hardly grows
The planted seed.
It would have grown much better
If there had been more room.
If somebody cuts off the weed
The seed would start to rise!"⁴⁷

With a hidden rebuke to the negligent listeners, Truth depicts Ukraine as a field covered by weeds, preventing the growth of its grain-bearing stems. The final stanza is a crescendo of the national idea: uproot the weeds and let the field grow! Placed in a broader context, this second-person-singular vocative seems to suggest that it was Russification that prevented the Ukrainian field from growing—a dangerous and not inoffensive idea for a turn-of-the-century Ukrainian poet, let alone for a Jew.

As for most Ukrainian poets of his generation, Shevchenko had become for Kernerenko coterminous with both poetry and the Ukrainian people. In his “Rokovyny smerti Shevchenka” (Shevchenko’s Death Anniversary, ca. 1890), Kernerenko makes everybody in Ukraine aware of Shevchenko’s omnipresence:

A poor widow
And a girl impregnated by a lord
For whom you have shed your tears,
A barefoot bastard
Forgotten under a fence,
Who does not know his father’s name,
The high mountains
And steep slopes
And wide infinite steppes,
And the entire Ukraine
And even a child
Nowadays remember you!
Your mighty word,
The Dnieper has carried
And the wind spread it all over,
And your healthy grain—
Your honest word
Has planted in our hearts.
This great word
For us, disabled humans,

You have left in your songs:
 How to live in the world,
 How to love—
 And you have glorified yourself forever.
 While we, step by step,
 Follow you
 And plant your Fatherland
 And sing songs
 In which we pray the Lord
 To give us at least one stem with grain.
 Maybe it will come
 That desirable time
 And the stem will begin to blossom—
 “The brothers would embrace one another
 And the mother
 Will look at them and smile.”⁴⁸

A redeemer who suffered for his people and died an untimely death, Shevchenko is on everybody's mind and tongue. His word is that of a Messiah who heals the dumb. Under his impact, the ability to speak miraculously returns to a poor widow, an illiterate orphan, a child, as well as to the Ukrainian mountains, Ukraine's endless steppes, and its sharp slopes. What Shevchenko ascribed to his native land and his language, Kernerenko ascribes to the author of the *Kobzar*. Through Shevchenko Ukrainian nature learns to speak. Shevchenko gives voice to his voiceless and oppressed country. He teaches the colonial Ukrainian to speak. In his poem, Kernerenko resorts to biblical agricultural imagery with strong messianic overtones: Shevchenko planted a redeeming Word and is followed by “us,” new planters who sow the seeds of the Ukrainian language and consciousness and who pray for a crop. This “us” should not be lost on the readers: Kernerenko emphasizes Shevchenko's all-encompassing, universalistic, and humane character, calling the author of the *Kobzar* “a fighter for the common good.”⁴⁹

There is little doubt that Kernerenko ignores those Shevchenko writings, such as “Haidamaky,” in which Jews are “them” and the “enemies” and Ukrainians, “us.” Kernerenko boldly includes himself, a Jew, among those associated with Ukraine and with “us.”⁵⁰ Continuing to elaborate the idea of Shevchenko's all-embracing humanity, Kernerenko resorts to the *Kobzar*'s “family” metaphors, conveying his own self-identification with the Ukrainian people, in “Pam'iaty Shevchenka” (To Shevchenko's Memory, 1909). As human beings are children of God, all Ukrainians are Shevchenko's children (*Usi na Vkraïini / Buly ioho dity*). Shevchenko, sensitive to human suffering and grief, is a fighter

for universal freedom (*za spil'niu voliu*). His death was the greatest sorrow for the Ukrainian people, but his immortal soul continues to live in the songs and in the “houses and palaces of Ukraine.”⁵¹

Traduttore—Tradittore

It is difficult to identify which factor was more likely to trigger Kernerenko's sudden national awakening: the rising Zionism, the Jewish socialist movement, or the fin de siècle focus on self-absorbed individual that made many acculturated Jews across Europe use their experience to construct their new dual identities. Be that as it may, it is obvious that in the first decade of the 1900s Kernerenko unexpectedly switched to Jewish themes with articulated social if not political overtones, making use of his entire arsenal as a Ukrainian lyrical poet. Some of his Jewish motifs could have been inspired by his friend Ia. D. Revzin, to whom he devoted a passionate panegyric “Kaznodievi-sionistovi” (To a Zionist Preacher) built on the clichés of romantic revolutionary poetry. Kernerenko praised his friend's message as one that restores hope, returns faith, strengthens the sinner, and promises the time of the Messiah:

Sing, my eagle
 My mighty eagle!
 Your brothers do not know you yet.
 Nor do they know your songs
 And they do not know what you are.
 Many poets sing among us
 And each one has his own song.
 But among them there are no songs
 Better than yours, my friend.
 Those whose heart has immersed into dirt
 Who has left all hope
 Who has abandoned Faith and God—
 In all those it raises the spirit.
 And your song brings a new strength
 And it strengthens the soul of a sinner
 And again he asks God, who is One,
 For the strength to believe and to love.
 Neither a doctor nor a herb will be able to do
 What your words are able to perform:
 Due to them a bandit falls in love,
 And a fallen soul revives.
 So sing, my eagle, to my brothers,
 And pray together with them:

And may be not so fast,
 But still it will come,
 The time of Messiah sooner or later!⁵²

In order to convey the importance of the Zionist message (unnamed yet quite clear from the poem's dedication), Kernerenko resorts to traditional Judaic metaphors. The poet employs canonic, almost clichéd Judaic liturgical references, secularizing religious metaphors and sanctifying the Zionist cause. Although Kernerenko's treatment of traditional Jewish concepts was not uncommon for the turn-of-the-century Zionist discourse, it should not be lost on us that before Kernerenko, no one had ever tried to make Jewish liturgy speak Ukrainian.

It turns out, however, that some of his "Jewish" poems, which occasionally appeared in journals and anthologies as his own, were in fact his translations of Semen Frug (1860–1916), who wrote in Russian and Yiddish. Kernerenko turned to Frug for a number of reasons. Frug, nowadays semi-forgotten, was one of the most popular Jewish poets in Russia at the turn of the nineteenth century. His songs commemorating the 1881 and 1903 pogroms were sung at public meetings and demonstrations throughout Russia. Perhaps much more important for Kernerenko was that Frug, like Kernerenko himself, was born in southern Ukraine, in a free settlement (and not in a shtetl), that he was a self-educated man, and, like Kernerenko, was not indifferent to the charms of the Ukrainian landscapes. That Frug was the first Jewish poet to write in Russian was perhaps significant for Kernerenko, who considered himself the first Jewish poet to write in Ukrainian. No less important for Kernerenko was Frug's enthusiasm for, and spiritual attachment to, Ukraine and the Ukrainian language.⁵³

Kernerenko's translation repertoire is telling. Frug's famous poetic lamentations and cumbersome biblical epic verses were of little interest to the Huliaipole poet. On the contrary, some of Frug's brief, ironic, and almost apocryphal poetic reinterpretations of biblical plots—and especially their strong national and patriotic content—inspired Kernerenko. From a considerable number of Frug's lyrics, Kernerenko picked those that encouraged national thinking and ignited Zionist enthusiasm. Kernerenko chose those Yiddish poems in which Frug views Jewish historical experience in the Diaspora as nothing but what they call in Yiddish *golus*: exile, life under oppression outside the Promised Land, and perennial and unresolved anguish. Thus Kernerenko translated "Dve Troiki" (Two Troikas), a poem depicting a Jew *Srul* (Yiddish diminutive for Israel) who, through times and epochs of the exile, across lands and countries, is riding in his Gogol-like troika, a symbolic van of Jewish fate driven by three horses named Faith, Hope, and Endurance. Kernerenko creates a Slavic version of Frug's Yid-

dish poem, de-Judaizing its Hebrew-language finale. Frug's "three horses" personify three Judaic terms *teshuvah*, *tefilah*, and *tsedakah*, which are repeatedly evoked during the Day of Atonement liturgy and which stand for "repentance, prayer, and charity [cancel the divine decree]." Kernerenko translates these notions into Ukrainian as *vira*, *nadiia*, and *terpinnia*, simultaneously neutralizing both their Judaic liturgical and their Christian colloquial ramifications by substituting a more common third notion *liubov* (Love) with the Stoic *terpinnia* (Endurance or Patience).⁵⁴

Kernerenko penned a version of Frug's poem "Novyi rik" (A New Year), in which Jewish exile is symbolized in the metaphor of a harp that knows only one type of song—a classic image from the famous Psalm "By the Babylonian Rivers." The forlorn exilic song bemoans the loss of the Zion and constantly reminds Jews of a distant yet imminent happiness, freedom, and liberation from bondage.⁵⁵ Frug's vision of the exile had a refreshing impact on Kernerenko's utopian perception of Ukraine as the land of joy and freedom. Perhaps not without Frug's impact, in the 1900s Kernerenko's own poetry on Ukraine became less flattering and more socially engaged.

Kernerenko's fascination with the classic Frug poem "Zamd un Shtern" (The Sand and the Stars; Ukr.: Pisok ta zirky) suggests that he perceived "national" issues not only in a sociopolitical but also in a theological sense. In the poem, Frug addressed the Almighty's prophecy of Abraham's magnificent future, which, according to the plain sense of the Hebrew Bible, extended to all the chosen people. The quote that generates the metaphors and shapes the imagery of "The Sand and the Stars" originates in Genesis 22:17: "I will indeed bless you and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore." There are numerous exegetical insights into this verse, as well as traditional medieval Midrashim (compilations of homiletic narratives), which explain on various levels the apparent contradiction between the stars and the sand. Frug discusses the second part of the verse, challenging Providence's control over the prophecy. The Jewish people, he argues, did become as useless and scattered as the sand that everybody disgraces and mercilessly tramples down. The first part of the prophecy was fulfilled: Jews have been turned into sand. Yet should not everything that God promises come true? What about the stars?

Frug boldly challenges the power and omnipotence of the Almighty—"Di shtern, di shtern, vu zaynen zey, Got?"—yet Kernerenko's theological humility does not allow him boldly to follow Frug. Instead he submissively pleads to the Almighty to expose the Jews to the light of the stars, if the fate of the stars is unattainable.⁵⁶ Frug challenges, Kernerenko begs. As we will see later, however the-

ologically indecisive, Kernerenko seems to have resorted to the revolutionary motifs of Ukrainian poetry in order to find an appropriate Ukrainian vocabulary for Frug's imagery. Kernerenko's evolution in the first decade of the twentieth century suggests that his translations from Frug should be placed in the context of his consistent search for a better synthesis of his Ukrainian poetic upbringing and his Jewish themes.

In the early 1900s, Kernerenko added a new socioeconomic angle to his representation of the Ukrainian-Jewish synthesis, when among other things he sent to *LNV* his highly politically charged and socially oriented poem "Monopolia" (The Monopoly). Ivan Franko liked it so much that he placed it on the first page of *LNV*. In "Monopoly," Kernerenko pondered the ramifications of the prohibition on Jewish engagement in *propinacja*—the privilege to keep inns, brew beer and mead, and to distill and sell liquor, which dated back to the earliest privileges given to Jews by Polish magnates in the late medieval—early modern times. With some modifications, the Russian government endorsed Jewish *propinacja* until the pogroms of 1881–83. In the late nineteenth century, however, the government introduced a state monopoly on alcohol production—as it explained, to save Christian peasants from Jewish exploiters. Amazingly, what seemed a dreadful economic blow to the thousands of Jewish families had different repercussions for Kernerenko.

Very much sympathetic to his Jewish brethren, Kernerenko assessed the post-1880s situation not so much from the Jewish viewpoint as from that of the Ukrainian peasant. Kernerenko found it more important that from then on Jews were no longer engaged in the ethically dubious business of distilling and selling alcohol. Now, maintained Kernerenko, no one had the right to insult a Jew with the nickname *shynkar*, an innkeeper, usually associated with one who exploited peasants by making them drunk. This unexpected conclusion (placed at the very end of the poem) demonstrates that Kernerenko, without betraying his Jewish themes, identified with the social concerns of the Ukrainian peasantry and, significantly, called Jews by the normative Galician ethnonym (*zhidy*) that was used by Ukrainian peasants and not by the urban Russified equivalent (*ievrei*). Indeed, the poetic quality of his poem falls short of its social significance:

Who could think that this could happen?
 The lords have entirely fallen from grace
 And have begun running the inns!
 On top of that, they have started lending money on interest!
 Although the lords have spent everything they had on drink,
 They obtained more loans, and the banks opened for them their accounts.
 This did not help: the lords and quasi-lords

Have lost their lands and their garb because of vodka.
But the lords are special, for they are who they are,
Unlike the Jews, those notorious beggars!
The lords' clothes are clean, their pants have stripes,
Their jackets have buttons and their badges are sparkling!
How could they fall so low [they thought]
Whereas a Yid is sitting in an inn making his big buck!
Therefore Jews were kicked out of the inns
And the lords became innkeepers in their stead.
Would they be able to manage?
Whatever the lords do there, run inns or drink,
It is not our business: time is the best judge.
However, Jews are no more selling vodka
And nobody can insult a Jew cursing him an "innkeeper"!⁵⁷

Kernerenko claimed that whatever was more appropriate ethically was more appropriate for Jews. He suggested that egoistic and national economic concerns be sacrificed for the sake of the ethical reputation of his nation. Let Jews suffer from poverty but let them not be taken for the agents of Polish or Russian colonialism. In this case, they would sooner become as marginalized yet ethically impeccable as their Ukrainian brethren and would find common grounds to talk to one another.

By the 1910s the national theme in Kernerenko's work gained momentum. In 1909 the poet published his version of Frug's Yiddish-language Zionist poem "Shtey oyf," which could have very well become the Jewish national anthem had it been penned in Hebrew. The poem is written as a rhymed political motto. Frug claims that the East European exile, a new Egyptian bondage, with its hard labor, suffering, and oppression, has enslaved the Jew not only physically but also mentally. The sweat has covered the Jew's eyes, making him blind. Wake up, Jew, trumpets Frug, recognize your old mother's voice calling you to get back, raise your old banner, the banner of Zion, and triumphantly return home.⁵⁸

To convey Frug's message in Ukrainian, Kernerenko resorts to commonly used revolutionary metaphors articulated in the Ukrainian language by Lesia Ukrainka and Ivan Franko. "Vstavai, khto zhyvyi, v koho dumka povstala" (Raise, whoever is alive, whoever's thought has rebelled), wrote Lesia Ukrainka in her celebrated "Dosvitni vohni" (Predawn Lights). "Upered za krai ridnyi ta voliu" (Forward, for the native land and freedom), penned Pavlo Hrabov's'kyi. Kernerenko coins his version in the language of the approaching national revolutionary awakening, reworking the same clichés: it is the banner of Zion that has to be "raised," whereas his somewhat conservative movement "back home" is the opposite of Hrabov's'kyi's socialist-minded "forward." One could cautiously

surmise that translating Frug's verse into Ukrainian and finding equivalents in Ukrainian turn-of-the-century revolutionary metaphors, Kernerenko began shaping Ukrainian-Jewish poetry. And just as he started to forge the Ukrainian-Jewish poetic language, he realized that the point of the encounter between the two was also the point of departure.

Kernerenko cast this idea in his "Ne ridnyi syn" (A Stepson). Kernerenko firmly placed the poem within his own personal, intimate relations with Ukraine. One could find in "A Stepson" various confessions of loyalty to, and love of, Ukraine typical of Kernerenko's earlier writings. But it is more subtle. In "A Stepson," Kernerenko juxtaposes the romantic Shevchenkian image of the lonely poet-orphan with the populist image of Ukraine as a mother-nurse, creating an unprecedented dichotomy: a stepson who is a Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent, and Ukraine, his stepmother.⁵⁹ Of course a stepmother is not the same as a mother-nurse and all too often connotes wickedness. Yet for Kernerenko, filial empathy and the sense of the family have the upper hand over his personal sufferings.

Perhaps the two opening lines of Heine's preface to his "Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen" (Germany: A Winter Tale)—the preface later excluded from the editions of "Germany"—inspires the opening lines and the meter (four-foot iamb) of Kernerenko's poem no less than Shevchenko's imagery: "Ade, Paris, du teure Stadt, / Wir müssen heute scheiden," that is, "Adieu, Paris, My dear town, / I need to leave you."⁶⁰ Curiously enough, the amalgam of Shevchenko's and Heine's imagery informs dramatic relations between Kernerenko's Jewish and Ukrainian identities. Here is my line-by-line translation of the poem, perhaps Kernerenko's best, by no means pretending to substitute a genuine poetic version of it:

Fare-thee-well, my Ukraine—
 I need to leave you;
 Though for you I have sacrificed
 My life and freedom and soul!
 But I am your stepson,
 And I know this only too well.
 Among your other children
 I live not but I suffer.
 I cannot any more
 Tolerate their mockery
 Of the fact that your sons and I
 Are of different faiths.
 Yet you, my Ukraine,
 I will love forever:

Albeit you treat me as a stepson,
Still you are my mom!⁶¹

An orphaned child under custody, the poet dedicates his muse, his love, and his life to his stepmother (*za tebe ia otdav zhyttia i voliu i dushu*) who, in turn, segregates him from her own children, poisoning his life with mockery (*pro mizh druhykh ditei tvoikh ia ne zhyvy—strazhdaiu*). The poet does not hesitate to realize that his faith—different from the faith of the other children in the family—is the only reason for the scornful attitude toward him (*za te shcho ia i tvoï syny / Ne odnu maem viru*). Attached to his family but no longer able to withstand humiliation, the poet pronounces his final farewell to his stepmother, who apparently had done nothing to protect him from the insults of her own offspring (*proshchai, Ukraino moia*). Nevertheless, though scorned, mocked, and humiliated, the poet does not take the tone of an accuser. He claims that mistreatment and misunderstanding will never prevent him from eternally loving his stepmother (*tebe zh Ukraino moia / Ia budu vik kokhaty*).

Here Kernerenko articulates his Ukrainian-Jewish identity as an impossible cultural concoction that has no chance of survival outside his poetically shaped feeling, and that perhaps is not shared by anybody in his imaginary family, including his stepmother. A Jew is deeply attached to his Ukrainian family, calls it his family, yet is mistreated by his nearest kin. Does this imply he should abandon his mother's house and take to the road? Two last lines of the poem, almost a prophecy, became what could be dubbed the paradigm of Ukrainian-Jewish encounter for a century to come. Their pathos transforms the bitterness of a humiliated yet egotistic self into the lofty hymn of a truly disinterested, selfless, and unrequired platonic love of a magnanimous poet. A Byron-like romantic hero adapted to Ukrainian folklore imagery, Kernerenko claims that although Ukraine treats him as her stepson, he rejects addressing her only as his legal guardian and insists on considering her his own "mom." He overcomes his sociocultural segregation, his profound solitude, and his national bias, elevating his feeling to the level of European romantic humanism. A Jew and a poet, he is rejected—but does this imply that the object of his desire should not be cherished and poetically uplifted? His personal Ukrainian-Jewish identity is utopian through and through, yet Kernerenko seems to argue that Ukraine is a universal value that supersedes personal ambitions.

One can only guess whether Kernerenko sent this poem to the editors of *LNV* or to Franko himself. It is evident, however, that his Ukrainian fellows did not rush to publish the poem, which appeared only once in *Rada*, later in *Menty natkhnennia*, and unlike other Kernerenko verses it was not reproduced in poetic

anthologies. The reason seems to be self-evident. Not only did Kernerenko forge in this poem an unheard of Ukrainian-Jewish self-awareness, but he also pointed to its imminent, if not incipient, dramatic end and to its romantically shaped utopian nature. This could hardly have pleased Ivan Franko, who argued for a feasible Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement. Not without bitterness, Kernerenko seems to have lost his hope.

To Criticize the Critic

Kernerenko had little success among his contemporary readers. It could hardly be otherwise. He entered the Ukrainian literary scene with his populist, didactic, and sentimental verse when leading Ukrainian writers, and especially critics, rejected populism, didactics, and sentimentalism. He glorified the bucolic Ukraine and criticized its social conditions whereas his critics shunned the tendentiousness and associated Ukraine-centric motifs with provincialism. Leading Ukrainian writers and journalists, although not numerous, turned to European modernism. They draw inspiration from French symbolists in poetry, Henrik Ibsen, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Knut Gamsun in drama, and Friederich Nietzsche elsewhere. Their pupil moved from the village to the city. They saw the aesthetic quality of literature its utmost value and formal dexterity a *sine qua non* for assessing art. Kernerenko could find favor in the eyes of the *LNV* editors who appreciated social critique and romantic pathos, but he could not impress a new modernist-oriented generation of Ukrainian literati. Despite its high ethical principles, unusual angle, and mastery of traditional form, Kernerenko's epigone-esque poetry had no chance to pass the scrutiny of his critics. He was too sentimental for the nineteenth-century populists and excessively parochial for the twentieth-century modernists.

There were additional circumstances complicating his encounter with his readers. Because of the inclement censorship, it took Kernerenko's nationally oriented verse some fifteen years to make its way into the Ukrainian press. Meanwhile the publication of his poems imbued with folk eroticism made him an easy target for the literary adepts of social positivism and utilitarianism. The lifting of the ban on Ukrainian publications in 1905, which opened the pages of the newly established Ukrainian periodicals to previously unpublished Kernerenko texts, could not save him from critical attacks, yet it certainly allowed his critics to revisit the received perception of the poet.

In the 1890s, hardly aware of possible attacks against him, Kernerenko unintentionally triggered the sharp criticism of Pavlo Hrabovs'kyi (1864–1902), one of the democratically oriented nineteenth-century Ukrainian poets. Hrabovs'kyi's

only reflection on Kernerenko was his famous pamphlet “Pro tvorchist’ poetychnu” (On Poetic Creativity, 1896), which has since become a manifesto of the social trend in Ukrainian poetry. Hrabovs’kyi penned it after having read a review of Kernerenko’s collection *V dosuzhyi chas* (In the Time of Leisure). The review was signed “M.K.,” most likely penned by Mykhailo Komarov; it appeared in the Odessa-based journal *Po moriu i sushe* (By Sea and Land). Hrabovs’kyi was not personally familiar with Kernerenko’s poetry, nor did he know the poet: in his critical essay he did not quote a single line of Kernerenko, relying solely on Mykhailo Komarov’s review.⁶²

It is even more certain that Kernerenko’s Jewish origins were unknown to Hrabovs’kyi, whose philosemitic stance has not gone unnoticed in twentieth-century Ukrainian thought. But the fact that his essay targeted Kernerenko, whom Hrabovs’kyi apparently judged solely on the basis of a negative review, is of particular importance. Mykhailo Komarov’s review, later reprinted in the Galician bimonthly *Zoria*, singled out Kernerenko as an inept author of weak verse, in which poor poetic motifs were almost entirely limited to erotic coquetry (*horobtsiuvannia*) and in which “limpy” rhymes and lengthy nonsensical plots revealed nothing but the poet’s graphomania.⁶³ Indeed, Kernerenko was neither a first-class poet nor an influential thinker. But one has to keep in mind that Kernerenko served as a pretext for Hrabovs’kyi’s *ars poetica* pondering rather than as the immediate target of his critique.

Ironically, Hrabovs’kyi used Kernerenko as a paragon of one of the most egregious versions of what he himself considered a purely aesthetic and antisocial turn-of-the-century trend, “art for art’s sake.” Hrabovs’kyi associated this trend with Kernerenko, basing his critique on unshakable positivistic grounds. For Hrabovs’kyi, poetry was synonymous with socially defined utility. He maintained that “poetry should be one of the factors of the progress of the humanity and in the native land in particular—of the people [*zahal’nonarodnoho*], a means of the fighting universal falsehood, a brave voice for all the oppressed and slandered.”⁶⁴ If it was useless, it was not poetry. Utilitarian purpose defined and exhausted the quality of art. The verdict that he meted out on Kernerenko, irrelevant from the perspective of what his reviewer was reticent about and what Kernerenko managed to publish in the 1900s, was ultimate and merciless. As a poet, argued Hrabovs’kyi, Kernerenko lacked three major features: a humanistic education, a sober and civil worldview, and an understanding of poetic goals.

Not knowing anything about Kernerenko’s attempt to build bridges between Ukrainian and Jewish cultures, Hrabovs’kyi wrongly suggested that Kernerenko, as well as all poets who stand for “art for art’s sake,” failed to show the reader “the way to follow.” His poetic concoction had nothing to do with the

genuine goal set before the poet, which Hrabovs'kyi defined as “the struggle against universal falsehood.” Ignoring Kernerenko’s defense of the Ukrainian cause and of colonial Ukrainian culture, Hrabovs'kyi argued that his verse was not a “brave voice for all the oppressed and slandered.” Kernerenko did not correspond to a positivistic (that is, the only trustworthy) vision of poetic utility and therefore deserved nothing but admonition. Hrabovs'kyi defined Kernerenko’s alleged “art for art’s sake” as vociferous tendentiousness, the satiated landlord’s whim, and negligence toward contemporary empiric reality. The more Ukrainian poets educated themselves and turned their attention toward contemporary events, claimed Hrabovs'kyi, the less the chances for such collections as Kernerenko’s to emerge on the Ukrainian literary landscape.

Once his socially and politically sharpened poetry on Ukrainian and Jewish themes and his translations appeared in Ukrainian periodicals, and especially after the publication of what is presumably his last collection, *Menty natkhnennia* (Moments of Inspiration, 1910), the reviews of Kernerenko’s poetry became more balanced. Yet the attitude toward Kernerenko depended on whether his critics cared about his unusual Ukrainian-Jewish identity, whether they noticed his Ukrainian-Jewish motifs, and whether they were ready to ponder the patriotic Ukrainian lyrics of a Jew. For example, Mykola Ievshan, an amazingly mature and sharp literary critic and one of the harbingers of Ukrainian modernism, passed over those motifs.⁶⁵ He placed Kernerenko together with other fin de siècle poets, such as Marko Kropyvnyts'kyi (1840–1910), whose poetry is permeated with an outdated Ukrainophile romanticism, a sense of tiredness and weakness, and an absence of élan.

With his Nietzschean pamphlets firm in hand, Ievshan criticized Kernerenko (among other representatives of the “old” poetic school) for blindly imitating the old-fashioned Ukrainian romantics. The sarcastic Ievshan did not spare even the most talented contemporaries from his sharp critique. No wonder he argued that Kernerenko, one of the elders, did not even attempt to alter their dead stereotypes.⁶⁶ Serhii Iefremov, a prominent literary historian, was also quite skeptical of Kernerenko’s talents. In his review of Kernerenko’s *Moments of Inspiration* for the Kiev daily *Rada*, he argued that inspiration “is exactly what is lacking in Mr. Kernerenko’s book” and that there was no reason for publishing those epigone love verses. Amazingly, Iefremov, who was usually quite sensitive to Jewish issues, did not see in Kernerenko anything worth mentioning except his erotic verse.⁶⁷

In contrast, Khrystia Alchevs'ka, herself a Ukrainian poet, focused above all on Kernerenko’s Ukrainian-Jewish stance—therefore hers was perhaps the most positive review of his poetry. Reviewing Kernerenko for the influential *Ukrains'ka khata*, the mouthpiece of Ukrainian modernism, she called the poet

from Huliai-pole a “nice and generous person” whose verse is imbued with “dramatic observations and philosophic ponderings” and “marked by poetic talent.” She suggested that the antisemitic minded Ukrainian patriots should “look through the book by Hryts’ko Kernerenko. This book eloquently proves that in fact a contradiction between the cultural goals of both people—Ukrainian and Jewish—does not exist and that on the grounds of the ideals of an entire humankind (*idealiv vseliuds’kosti*) to which they strive, they can both meet and stretch a hand to one another. In front of the Ukrainian verse of this alien by his origin, we feel even more acute pain, and recollect our own brethren, ‘also Little Russians.’”⁶⁸ Thus Kernerenko, “this alien by origin,” could serve as an example for “our” “Little Russians,” that is to say, denationalized and entirely Russified ethnic Ukrainians. The Ukrainian-Jewish “stretching of hands” emphasized in Alchevs’ka’s review also became the focus of Mykyta Shapoval’s extensive reflection on Kernerenko’s poetry.

Shapoval, whose articles were dubbed “the pinnacle of contemporary Ukrainian journalism,” pointed to the centrality of “Ukrainian patriotic sympathies” in Kernerenko’s poetry, stressed how unusual a Jew with Ukrainian sympathies was in the early 1900s, and lamented that Kernerenko’s verse did not allow one to trace the evolution of his “Ukrainian identity.” It was particularly crucial, argued Shapoval, that Kernerenko managed to overcome the barriers of faith and entirely identify with Ukraine and the Ukrainians. Shapoval did not hesitate to underscore the major paradox of the phenomenon of Kernerenko, centered in the choice of language, by no means trivial: “To be brief: why did Kernerenko write in Ukrainian? Given Ukraine’s situation, he could have easily written in the ‘cultural language,’ that is to say, in Russian. Certainly, he could have. But his Ukrainian aesthetic and psychological element had its upper hand over the ‘culture,’ casting his humanistic ethical convictions into the Ukrainian mold.”⁶⁹ Despite his emphasis on Kernerenko’s Ukrainian-Jewish aspects, Shapoval found it crucial to distinguish between Kernerenko’s praiseworthy civil stance and his artistic qualities, which left much to be desired. His opinion, however, was not supported by Bohdan Lepkyi, the editor of the Ukrainian poetic anthology *Strings*, who emphasized that Kernerenko’s verse manifests a high level “literary culture.”⁷⁰

Thus, Kernerenko’s deliberate deviation from the empire-oriented Russian-Jewish acculturation trend and his Ukrainian cultural “schism” noticed by Alchevs’ka and Shapoval shaped one of the features of the rising Ukrainian-Jewish literary tradition. What Hrabovs’kyi did not like in Kernerenko was exactly the feature that a quarter of a century later a number of Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent, such as Leonid Pervomais’kyi, independently and perhaps without

any knowledge of the “Hrabovs’kyi—Kernerenko” case, began to develop and cherish.

Kernerenko’s Second Advent

Completely erased from Jewish popular memory, Kernerenko was resurrected again in the 1990s as one of the curious figures in the utopian discourse on Ukrainian–Jewish encounter, rather than as a solitary Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent. More precisely, Kernerenko emerged as a paramount Jewish supporter of the Ukrainian anarchist movement in David Markish’s Russian-language novel *Poliushko-pole* (1991). Markish’s novel betrays the author’s unrestricted sympathy for, and support of, the anarchist Ukrainian movement led by the warlord Makhno. Out of three Jews, the Veselovskii brothers, who in the wake of the civil war joined correspondingly the White Guards, the Red Army, and the anarchists, only Semen, the last one, manages to survive and preserve the strong ethical principles of a democratic-minded Ukrainian patriot and a good Jew.⁷¹

For Markish, Makhno was no murderer, no reckless politician, and no anti-semitic popular leader. On the contrary, assisted by such Jews as Liova Zadov, his “minister” of counterintelligence, Makhno emerges as a key figure of Ukrainian–Jewish rapprochement. Born in the midst of the Ukrainian peasantry, Makhno imagines his utopian community of workers and peasants as a Ukrainian version of the Degania kibbutz in Palestine. Chased from Ukraine, Makhno addresses his adept Semen Veselovskii with a Zionist final blessing. The leader of Ukrainian anarchism argues that despite the failure in Ukraine, Semen should go and try to find Degania, a Jewish settlement that throughout the novel serves for Makhno as an essential Ukrainian socialist utopia.⁷²

Thus, Markish places Kernerenko in the benign context of Ukrainian–Jewish interaction. Semen Veselovskii, eager to join the Ukrainian anarchists, arrives in Huliai-pole, Makhno’s headquarters. While approaching the village, he talks to his companion, the anarchist Terentii, learns about the village’s rich men who “readily” share with people, and casts doubt on Terentii’s answer.

—Readily? Seems improbable!—

—Why not!—exclaimed Terentii, as if he was offended for his rich fellow countrymen.—What about Kernerenko Hryts’ko?—He looked at Semen: does he know who this Hryts’ko is?

—Who is he?—Semen did not know.

—Our poet, he writes songs!—explained Terentii.—There has been nobody in Huliai-pole richer than the Kernerenos: they own a factory, and steam mill, and a store, and some five hundred acres of land. It was Semeniuta himself,

about ten years ago, who hinted: so, Hryts'ko—1,000 rubles on the table for the world revolution! And Hryts'ko gave him 500, he did not have more at that time.

—And what about that poet?—asked Semen.—About Hryts'ko?

—He lives here,—informed Terentii.—And in general, he is no Kernerenko.

—How come?

—So.—Ternetii glanced somewhat suspiciously at Semen.—He is Kerner Grigorii Borisovich. His dad sits in our synagogue, in the first row.

“Hersch Borukhovich,”—Semen noted to himself and immediately felt shame for his untimely joy. What difference does it make who gave money first for the anarchist movement, a Jew or not a Jew? But a pleasing feeling remained despite his attempt to suppress it.

—Are they friendly?—Semen asked somewhat hesitantly.—Nestor Ivanovich [Makhno—*YPS*] and the poet?

—What's the friendship between a horse and a rider?—Terentii smiled.—The rider rides, the horse carries and composes songs: “Black banner, red fire.”

“Poemhorse,”—Semen thought with sympathy for the writer.—“Poor Jewish Hershversemaker [*Gersheplet*].”⁷³

Some details, such as the brief inventory of Kerner's ownership, the expropriated 1,000 rubles of which only 500 were given back, and the Ukrainophile stance of the poet, as well as the name of the anarchist Semeniuta, suggest that David Markish was quite familiar with Anatol Hak's memoir on Kernerenko, discussed earlier.

Perhaps the late Shimon Markish (1932–2004), a renowned Geneva-based professor of Russian literature, another son of Perets Markish and David's brother, introduced David Markish to Hak's important memoir. If this assumption holds, then it is clear that the novelist closely follows the memoirist but alters the way the town dwellers perceived Kernerenko. For them, Kernerenko is a populist poet; he “writes songs,” a preeminent genre of Ukrainian folklore; he is referred to as “our” poet; he praises the revolution; and he “readily” helps the peasant rebellion. In a word, Markish creates for Kernerenko a welcoming atmosphere of respect and admiration about which the poet could only dream—a mutually beneficial Ukrainian-Jewish literary, economic, and political interaction. It also seems that Markish attempted to recast Kernerenko in the mold of a Ukrainian-Jewish Alexander Blok, who had morphed from symbolist lyrics to the revolutionary epic *The Twelve*.

Recently Ukrainian literary critics have made an overt attempt to revive Kernerenko and overcome Jewish-Ukrainian animosity. First, the Zaporizhzhia-based Ukrainian poet Petro Rebro published an enthusiastic essay on Kernerenko, in which he attempted to solve what he considered a puzzle: can a

Jew be a Ukrainian poet? If yes, is it possible to consider as genuine his feelings toward Ukraine? Rebro analyzed some of Kernerenko's poetic writings and emphasized that his "open-minded yet sometimes naïve" poetry was imbued with a profound empathy toward Ukraine. Considering the relation of Kernerenko to Ukraine and paraphrasing Kernerenko's famous lines, Rebro stated that Kernerenko was "Ukraine's son, not a stepson" and called for reprinting his best works, commemorating him as the Huliai-pole poet and researching his later fate.⁷⁴

Following Rebro, Kushnirenko and Zhylyns'kyi, two Ukrainian "local historians," picked up Rebro's question and answered it in a short essay on Kernerenko included in their representative anthology *Literatura Huliaipil'shchyny* (The Huliai-pole Region Literature). Curiously enough, the editors spent most of their essay defending Kernerenko against Hrabovs'ky's invectives. The authors emphasized that Hrabovs'kyi was wrong: he did not see a single line written by Kernerenko and he used Kernerenko to convey his own literary mottoes. They dubbed Hrabovs'kyi a "hurray" critic and summed up by saying, "we feel bitter and embarrassed for Hrabovs'kyi." This was a bold step by the editors, given Hrabovs'kyi's reputation as a staunch democrat and a martyr of the tsardom. Significantly, the editors selected eight poems from the legacy of the Huliai-pole poet (one of them, Frug's "The Sand and the Stars," is erroneously attributed to Kernerenko), pointing to the predominance of Ukrainian and Jewish themes in his writings.⁷⁵

The Ukrainian Ascension

Perhaps Kernerenko was among the first, if not the first, to discover that the Ukrainian language is capable of conveying Jewish political, social, and cultural concerns. This was not the same as making such a claim in Prague about the Czech language or in Paris about French. Even in Russian, Austrian, or Prussian Poland, the Polish language was not as despised as Little Ukrainian in the Russian Empire. Kernerenko's discovery suggests that the Ukrainian-Jewish poet treated Ukrainian as any other European language and perhaps on a par with Hebrew and Yiddish. Trying to recreate the voices of his Ukrainian "colonials," Kernerenko incorporated into Ukrainian the elements of a non-Ukrainian discourse—Russian-Jewish, German-Jewish, or Yiddish. Although it was also shaped by colonial imagery, it offered a wider array of literary devices that existed at that time in Ukrainian culture only in the form of the victimized Russian-Ukrainian dual identity. Ukrainian-Jewish was unheard of. Simultaneously, Kernerenko reinforced his Ukrainian poetry with a romanticized Jewish im-

agery drawn from the Hebrew Bible, which, as for example, Psalm 137 (“By the Rivers of Babylon”), was permeated with colonial motifs. He also uplifted East European Jewish discourse by infusing it with an anticolonialist revolutionary vocabulary borrowed from the no-less-despised Ukrainian poetry.

One, however, should not draw far-fetched conclusions from this discovery: *Moments of Inspiration* was apparently Kernerenko’s last collection. Whether he continued his search for a better synthesis of Ukrainian lyrics and Jewish themes is unknown. Yet there is hardly any doubt that he was the first to move toward a Ukrainian-Jewish literary identity. By doing this, Kernerenko underscored similarities between the national agendas of the Jews and Ukrainians. He made the Ukrainian language into a medium suitable for the expression of national concerns of non-Ukrainians. He was the first Jew to discover and look for ways to adapt Shevchenko’s legacy making it suitable for Jewish concerns. Going against the mainstream, Kernerenko seemed to suggest that Ukrainian was not only the language of some Jews and some Ukrainians but also a universalistic language with a humanistic capacity able to accommodate many, Jews included.

Kernerenko made a discovery quite unusual for a person of his upbringing, milieu, and class: if the despised, oppressed, forcefully Russified, grammatically and phonetically mutilated Ukrainian language conveyed Jewish sensibilities, it could then fit any national concern and ideology. Kernerenko seemed to suggest that Ukrainian was not only a language of freedom, it was a free language. Yes the Ukrainian language—despite an enormous imperial oppression—had become by that time a mature vehicle, as the twenty-first century reader can admit. But for the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century observer this was far from obvious. Since Ukrainian and Jewish national agendas required similar if not identical metaphors, the Ukrainians and the Jews had a lot to share and learn from one another. Kernerenko’s old banner of Zion and Lesia Ukrainka’s pre-dawn lights both pointed to the new way of bolstering national interests. Kernerenko tended to surpass in his literary endeavors the obstacles for cultural encounter yet the quality of his verse fell short of his groundbreaking intentions. It took another generation before Jews in Ukraine distinguished themselves as high-quality Ukrainian poets.

Kernerenko was not only among the first to start constructing Ukrainian-Jewish identity as a literary narrative and a lifestyle, but also among the first obliquely to underscore its profoundly imaginary nature. Kernerenko witnessed the 1881–83 pogroms, which destroyed thousands of Jewish households in Ukraine and were carried out by the local déclassé population. Kernerenko was well familiar with the far right accusations against Jews, alleged destroyers of Russian Orthodox peasantry, which loomed large in the imperial political dis-

course of the 1880s and 1890s, and in particular, in the Kievan press. Kernerenko could not have ignored the fact that the Russo-Japanese War and the first Russian Revolution triggered a wave of the most horrible pogroms in Russian imperial history, and in which the rural Ukrainian population and the Russian army (80 percent of which was composed of the peasantry) played a significant role. For sure he knew that the deteriorating economic situation of the East European Jews pushed hundred of thousands of them outside the Russian Empire. And yet he called Ukraine “the land of joy and freedom”!

Kernerenko points to a paradoxical character of the Ukrainian-Jewish discourse. An avid reader of Ukrainian books, Kernerenko probably learned that Ukrainian writers were not necessarily as philosemitic as Lesia Ukrainka or Ivan Franko and that an antisemitic bias shaped to a great degree the images of Jews in nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature. One may assume Kernerenko realized that most Ukrainian literary critics held a low opinion of his poetic talents and even questioned his sincere pro-Ukrainian empathy. Kernerenko’s available epistolary heritage testifies to the weak and random contacts between him and Ukrainian intellectuals. In addition, apparently Kernerenko left neither disciples nor admirers. He was marginalized among Russian Jews as a Kernerenko and among conscientious Ukrainians as a Kerner.

And yet Kernerenko seemed to have deliberately ignored social reality, which consistently enticed Ukrainians and Jews to act against one another. Kernerenko continued polishing his Ukrainian language, construing his Ukrainian imagery, attempting a Ukrainian-Jewish concoction, bringing his Ukrainian books to press, establishing contacts with Ukrainian literary figures, and hoping against all odds that his literary creativity and social stance would merit either acceptance or sympathy. In historical perspective Kernerenko’s case seems to indicate that a Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement could exist only in the realm of fragile personal relations. Apparently there was no chance to institutionalize them socially or canonize them literally. Hence, unaware of his major discovery, Kernerenko pinpointed the illusory character of the nascent Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue. His case seems to prove that Jews and Ukrainians could sing their lyrics together while the doors of their utopian realm were tightly shut and blood-thirsty epical history stayed outdoors.

The following hundred years of the Ukrainian-Jewish poetic tradition, predominantly lyrical, as well as the cultural solitude of the Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent, has emphasized only too well the quintessential character of Kernerenko’s case. And yet Kernerenko should be seen as the very beginning of a discourse that the students of East European Jewish history a hundred years

later are advised to call “Ukrainian-Jewish.” A Ukrainian thinker in writing about Moisei Fishbein, a Kyiv-based Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent who is in the focus of the last chapter of this volume, has noted that “for the first time in history in Fishbein’s poetry, Judaism speaks Ukrainian.”⁷⁶ Hryts’ko Kerrenko seems to have been the first who merited this compliment, exactly a century before his distant and illustrious successor.

Between Two Fires

The National-Communist Utopia of Ivan Kulyk

A devoted communist and a Jew in love with Ukraine, Ivan Kulyk epitomizes a dilemma that might be best illuminated with a parable. In 1919, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, a writer, playwright, and one of the leaders of the Ukrainian People's Republic, wrote a play, *Mizh dvokh syl* (Between Two Powers), a story of Sofia, a young woman from a provincial town torn between socialism and nationalism and embodying the Ukrainian political dilemma of the early twentieth century. Although Sofia-Ukraine cleaves to her family's Ukrainian values, she sympathizes with the Bolsheviks and the lower classes' fight against social injustice. Among the local Bolsheviks is a certain Grinberg. In love with Sofia and the revolution, Grinberg speaks Ukrainian to Sofia and Russian to his fellow Bolsheviks, does not share the Bolshevik chauvinistic scorn for Ukrainian culture, and helps rescue a member of Sofia's family. No wonder that socialist convictions and personal empathy push Sofia toward Grinberg and the Bolsheviks. When Ukrainian nationalists run the Bolsheviks out of town, Sofia refuses a proposed family reconciliation that would require betraying her communist colleagues and seems willing to escape with Grinberg—the only person prepared to save her, whatever the cost—but at the last moment she commits suicide.¹

Ivan Kulyk, a Jew and a Ukrainian Bolshevik, was Grinberg's double. Like Grinberg, Kulyk was in love with Ukraine and, coincidentally, with the Sofia Park (Ukr.: Sofiiivka) of his native Uman. Kulyk encountered the same dilemma as Grinberg: how can a Jew become a Ukrainian and a Marxist without betraying either? Kulyk asked questions that challenged many in his revolutionary milieu: his Ukrainian colleagues also made every effort to bring together their revolutionary Marxist and national Ukrainian selves. Like his literary analogue, Kulyk

felt attached to Ukrainian language and literature. But unlike his obscure predecessor Hryts'ko Kernerenko, Kulyk was fairly visible in various spheres of Ukrainian culture—as a poet, writer, folklorist, art critic, journalist, translator, and editor. In addition, he was a political, diplomatic, and public figure. As a thirteen-year-old, he had researched Ukrainian folklore; when he turned twenty-six, he began teaching Ukrainian literature and art to Ukrainians in the Canadian Diaspora. Back in Soviet Ukraine, his critics praised him for widening the horizons of Ukrainian poetic discourse. At thirty-five, he headed the first umbrella organization of Ukrainian Soviet writers.

Yet Kulyk's Ukrainian predilections explain him only to a certain extent. A harbinger of Ukrainian revivalism, Kulyk was also a steadfast Bolshevik. He hated the social injustice that had prevented him from becoming a professional painter; he understood what solidarity was when he met with imprisoned Uman socialists as an eight-year-old; he familiarized himself with the class struggle while working in Pennsylvania coal mines and helping to publish *Novyi mir*, the Marxist Russian-language newspaper, in New York. A founding member of the first Bolshevik organization in post-1917 Ukraine, he fought at the front in the civil war. His encounter with Marxism was the logical result of his upbringing, family circumstances, and spiritual itinerary. Like Vynnychenko's Grinberg, he thought there was no contradiction between his Ukrainian and his Marxist commitments and could not envision the catastrophic consequences of a national-Bolshevik synthesis, first for his poetry career and second for his personal survival. As an interlocutor of Vynnychenko in the 1920s, Kulyk could not have known that in the 1930s the Bolsheviks would erase all traces of Ukrainian national revivalism and, as it were, murder Sofia's family, eliminate her redeemer Grinberg, and ultimately humiliate her, scoffing at her socialist sympathies, stripping her of the last vestiges of her national dignity, and turning her into a docile and voiceless concubine.

Kulyk's fate is a multiple riddle. What made an Uman Jew become fascinated with things Ukrainian? If Kulyk was a Marxist, why did he support Ukrainian national strivings? If he was a true supporter of national revivalism and in the 1920s praised such champions of national-communism as Mykola Skrypnyk and Mykola Khvylovyi, how could he have survived the brutal suppression of the national revival and the suicides of many of its key figures in 1932? And if he was a true Bolshevik, fiercely and sincerely fighting Ukrainian nationalism, why did he not survive the purges of 1937? Kulyk's integration into Ukrainian literature and his contribution to it also require elucidation. What did it signify for Kulyk to be a Ukrainian poet of Jewish origins? And if he rarely addressed Jewish issues in his writings and identified with Ukrainians, not with Jews, why did two Ukrainian Jews take it upon themselves to publish his collected writings in the

late 1970s? Kulyk's life is a story about the encounter of an East European Jew with Marxism—an ideology that informed, reinforced, and eventually obliterated Kulyk's anticolonialism.

The Adventures of Yisroel Kulyk

Ivan Iulianovych Kulyk was born Yisroel ben Yehuda Kulyk (Ukr.: Izrail Iudovych; Rus.: Izrail Iudelevich) in the town of Shpola on the southern edge of Kiev Province, on January 13, 1897, to an observant Jewish family. In the late 1890s, the Kulyks were poverty-stricken: fewer and fewer Shpola Jews were sending their children to the melamed, Yudl, who was Yisroel's father. The Kulyks expected that it would be easier to make ends meet elsewhere, and in 1900 they resettled in nearby Uman.² The town was of mixed population. Polish Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Jews lived next to one another, often renting rooms under the same roof and sometimes in the same apartment. The district where Kulyk's family lived featured a man who delivered water by cart; a poor mailman who had to be paid to deliver letters; a rag-and-bone man always surrounded by potential customers; an itinerant ice-cream vendor whose dirt cheap product was beyond the means of most families; and an intimidating yet easily appeased local policeman with a sword hanging on his side, who went from hut to hut to get free drink and collect small bribes.

Zakhar Voloshenko, the Kulyks' neighbor, wrote in 1959 the following description of Krutyi Lane 2, where the Kulyks lived:

“Number two” is owned by Mrs. Krokhmaliuk, “madam Krokhmaliuk” or, in private colloquial conversation, “Krokhmaliuchka.” Three houses: two with tin roofs, one with a straw roof. There are lessees in the houses. Each house has two apartments. Some of the residents sublease a “corner with food” to a single individual. The houses are packed. The residents lived with Krokhmaliuchka for a long time, for ten years and more. Among these old residents were the Kulyks and the Berensons. The Kulyks, the “old Kulyk” whose name was Yudl, was a calm and respectable man. He was a teacher in a Jewish Talmud-Torah school. In the early morning he would leave and late at night return. He was hardly ever seen or heard. Sometimes you could hear him as he yelled at children through the open window to stop acting crazy. The “old Kulyk wife” ran the house. She was always around with a knitting needle and a sock, making new shoes out of old soles. Every Friday on the eve of Shabbat she baked rolls, prepared oil-roasted cookies sprinkled with sugar, and made a traditional stuffed pike with pepper.³

This portrayal of the Kulyks as a religious Jewish family is supported by Nadiia Surovtsova (1896–1985), a prominent Ukrainian feminist activist in the 1910s and later a prisoner in the Gulag, who remembered Uman of the turn of the century. Here is Surovtsova:

I had to reject this publicly, and surprisingly even the hostile part of the audience trusted me when I reassured them that I knew Kulyk as a young lad in Uman, from where he came and where we met at the beginning of 1917 while engaged in the first revolutionary social work. I did not tell them any more than that—that he, Ivan Kulyk, was Izrail Iudovych Kulyk, the son of a teacher-melamed of the Uman Jewish School, the Talmud-Torah on Pushkin Street, where in the green garden of a two-story brick building I had often seen Jewish children sitting and shaking and memorizing unintelligible Jewish texts. He rented a room from the widow Krakhmaliuk on Krutoi Lane, which in 1959 was named after him.⁴

Thus Kulyk's Jewish childhood is inseparable from Uman, a town looming large in Jewish and Ukrainian popular imagination.

A trade center that still preserved some traces of its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century grandeur, by the early twentieth century Uman had turned into a godforsaken shtetl with some 31,016 inhabitants, of whom 17,945 were Jews. Like the Kulyks, most Uman Jews lived from hand to mouth. When the Kulyks moved there, the local Jews traded in the Old Market, surrounded by Jewish inns and shabby synagogues. Invited along with Armenians and Greeks to settle in the town first by the Eastern Orthodox magnate Valentyn Kalynovs'kyi and later by the Catholic town owner Stanisław Potocki, Jews began coming to Uman early in the seventeenth century, attracted by the town's free trade laws, its burgeoning annual fairs (twelve!), its formidable defense system (renovated in the 1760s), and the benevolence of its Polish magnates. The early modern Uman hosted one of the sizable Jewish communities in Eastern Poland, although it would be decimated during Khmel'nyts'kyi's Cossack revolution and then during the Haidamak revolts in 1749 and 1768.

Kulyk liked the Ukrainian Uman more than the Jewish one. The Ukrainian Uman was the town where the leaders of the popular rebellions against Polish magnates, such as Maksym Zalizniak and Ivan Honta, had victoriously defeated Uman's Polish garrison and captured the town. The Jewish Uman, however, remembered the massacres of Jews—the brutality of which exceeded the literary capacities of the contemporary chroniclers. While the peasant popular revolts were canonized in the annals of the Ukrainian struggle for national independence, the East European Jewish communities commemorated the Uman massacre in a special liturgical dirge, a parchment copy of which in the late 1890s was still kept in the town's Big Synagogue and cherished as a relic.⁵

The young Yisroel Kulyk did not like those traditional Jews with earlocks and worn-out caftans who frequented the synagogues around the Old Market. Neither was he interested in the pious Hasidim, hundreds of whom arrived in Uman from throughout the Pale of Jewish Settlement on pilgrimage to the mir-

acle-working grave of Rabbi Nachman from Bratslav (1772–1810). Indeed, Kulyk could hardly have known that Uman was the birthplace of Hirsh Gurvich, a founder of one of the first enlightened Jewish schools in Russia who, after the closure of his institution (which irritated local obscurants), ended up teaching Oriental languages at Cambridge University. Jewish Uman offered little to the young and romantic Yisroel Kulyk. On the contrary, he admired a different Uman, the glorious town of Cossacks who had fought the Polish magnates and of Ukrainian serfs who were drafted into the Uman-centered military settlements. Of all the Jewish stories about Uman, perhaps the one about armed Jews bravely defending the eighteenth-century town citadel challenged his imagination most.

Kulyk associated his childhood and youth with a local site, called “the miracle of Uman”: the Sofia Park, known as the *Sofiivka*, a huge English-style park designed by the Polish military engineer Ludwig Metzelski, with a summer palace; centuries-old oaks, lakes, and artificial cataracts; cozy park bridges; islands with Greek rotundas, grottos, and fountains; and Italian-made Greek statues dotting its most distant corners. The park was a late eighteenth-century whim of the Polish magnate and town owner Count Potocki, who commissioned it to please his lover and second wife, Sofia, and spent some two million silver rubles on its construction. Finished by 1802, the park was confiscated in the mid-1830s following the 1830 Polish uprising and transferred to the patrimony of the Russian tsarina, who established the Central School of Gardening on the grounds. Visited and admired by Nicholas I and Alexander II, *Sofiivka* galvanized Kulyk and his fellows.⁶ In the park, they studied Greek mythology, stole apples from the tsarina’s garden, bathed in the fountains, and play-acted Cossacks in the woods.

The *Sofiivka* embodied a miracle and a mystery. In a long autobiographical poem dedicated to the park, Kulyk writes:

We also looked for the Haidamaks’
 Treasures, buried in the *Sofiivka*,
 And each of us was petrified,
 When a branch cracked suddenly.⁷

Indeed, here in *Sofiivka*, Kulyk staged his first encounter with his alter ego, Vasylyk, a Ukrainian peasant boy who had to work for a Jewish master to provide for his family. Perhaps it was *Sofiivka* that made the young Kulyk think about the other side of its irresistible attractiveness. Years later, resorting to Marxist parlance, he portrays it thus:

The Sofia Park! My dear and unknown!
 You drove me crazy when I was a child:
 Cursed, you grew up from the quirk of a lord.
 Beloved, you grew up on the callouses of serfs.

In Sofiivka, Kulyk befriended local Ukrainian boys and learned colloquial Ukrainian. There was no other place where he could have learned Ukrainian: modernization in the Russian vein had taken a heavy toll on Uman Jews. Classes at the local elementary school that Kulyk attended were taught exclusively in the imperial Russian, and the local private Talmud-Torah Jewish schools and traditional *hadarim* (Jewish elementary schools) were obligated to use Russian as the state language instead of the deprecated “jargon” known as Yiddish. For the Jews, and not only for the Jews, Russian was the language of the state bureaucracy and high imperial culture, Ukrainian was colonial and backward. Whereas some Uman Jews spoke enough Ukrainian to negotiate at the market or communicate with peasants, acculturating into the Ukrainian milieu was for them tantamount to becoming rustic illiterate peasants. Even Uman’s Ukrainian intelligentsia spoke Russian at home. Indeed, the Sofiivka-based “immersion” language course was a key lesson for Kulyk, yet he did not mention this in his Ukrainian-language poetic memoirs. It was more important to emphasize his encounter with peasant children, the grandchildren of Ukrainian serfs. Class for him stood high above language. Yet it is evident that Ukrainian was his only medium: the Ukrainian village did not speak Russian.

Yisroel grew up a precocious and talented child. At four, he taught himself to read, draw, and compose verse. He impressed his friends when he managed to acquire books about Sherlock Holmes, Nat Pinkerton, and Nick Carter even though he had no pocket money. Later he got his hands on Gogol, Gorky, Korolenko, Kuprin, and Sienkiewicz. Yisroel was reported to have read books aloud. His childhood friends remember first hearing about Fennimore Cooper, Mayne Reid, and Jules Verne from Kulyk—whose thirst for adventure was well manifested in this reading list. Kulyk sought and found adventure. He made kites out of rags and wove threads out of nothing. An amateur in pyrotechnics, he stole some Bertholet salt and exploded it in town at night. He was the leader of a group of neighborhood children who together put on amateur performances—with Kulyk acting as a producer, set designer, and director.⁸

The eight-year-old Kulyk immersed himself in another breathtaking game called the Russian Revolution. When Kulyk’s older brother Yosef was arrested for revolutionary activity and taken to a local prison, Yisroel studied the inmates’ secret language, brought clandestine notes to the prisoners, and was even allowed into the cell.⁹ This episode entered Kulyk’s Russian short story “Zhen’kapochtalion” (Gene, the Mailman) and his Ukrainian poem “Sofiivka.” Kulyk wrote:

I worked passionately and briskly,
In romanticism I found sense.

I knew: a note with a stone is a “flier,”
 And a “pumpkin” is a letter glued in bread.¹⁰

To be sure, Kulyk found much sense in revolutionary romanticism. After finishing elementary school, his interest in art and poetry turned serious. At the age of thirteen or fourteen, he began composing verse in Russian. The ethnographic fervor that in the 1900s ignited the imagination of many fin de siècle intellectuals, including the famous Russian-Jewish and Yiddish writer Shloyme Ansky (1863–1920), captured the mind of the thirteen-year-old Kulyk, too. Yet there was a difference. Whereas the Petersburg Russian-Jewish intelligentsia’s interests stretched as far as the vanishing old Jewish shtetl, Kulyk turned to the Ukrainian village.

Given Kulyk’s Russian-language upbringing—and Voloshenko recalls that the Kulyks spoke Russian “without any accent”—it is striking that his intellectual curiosity acquired such a graphic Ukrainian character at such an early stage. But this is precisely what happened. A Yiddish- and Russian-speaking Jew, Kulyk went from one Ukrainian village to another copying ornaments on clay stoves and on painted Easter eggs (*pysanky*), sketching window woodcuts, and recording tales and folksongs, above all Ukrainian *kolomyiky*, *shchedrivky*, and *koliadky*—ritual Eastern Orthodox and pagan folk songs performed on various festive occasions.¹¹ From the very outset, Ukrainian preferences pushed everything else aside in Kulyk’s identity, something that did not go unnoticed in the Ukrainian press. The Kiev newspaper *Rada* published a brief notice informing its readers that “the artist and ethnographer Kulyk made a presentation at a meeting of the Uman branch of the Kyiv Society for the Preservation of Monuments, reading from his collection of *koliadky* and custom songs and presenting examples of ornaments from Ukrainian huts.”¹² Indeed, the newspaper’s editors, who had published among other things the poetry of Hryts’ko Kernerenko, did not know about the Jewish origins of this young Ukrainian ethnographer. Since this was the first record of Kulyk’s engagement with Ukrainian culture, particularly with Ukrainian folklore—which would grow into a lifelong commitment—I should at least briefly reflect on the origins of this interest.

Consider for a moment Kulyk’s well-known Ukrainian-sounding pen name, “Rolenko,” which he was using as an alias as early as the 1910s. As family legend has it, his little sister Esther (Esfir Kulyk) could not pronounce Yisroel or Srul (the diminutive in Yiddish for Israel) and dubbed him Rólia or Rólik.¹³ Sometimes Kulyk added the Ukrainian suffix “-enko” to the root “rol” and signed his writings with the Ukrainian-sounding “Rolenko.” On other occasions he turned it into an exotic Italian-sounding pen name “Rolinato,” as for instance among his Uman theater colleagues and American friends. Indeed, the “rol” from *Rólik* or

Yisroel, pronounced in Yiddish “*Isro’l*,” explains *Rolenko* and even *Rolinato*, but obscures “*Vasyl’*.” Why did Kulyk use the Ukrainian penname *Vasyl’* and not, say, *Stepan* or *Ivan*—or, even better, *Taras*? “*Taras Rolenko*” sounds genuinely Ukrainian! Yet *Vasyl’ Rolenko* was the pen name that Kulyk loved and used most. He wrote in *Sofivka*: “I would not say: ‘*Vasyl’* is me, *Vasyl’* is we’: maybe *Vasyl’* is only one of us.”¹⁴

Kulyk did not invent his pen name; he borrowed it. Among the hundreds of Ukrainian literati active between the 1880s and 1920s, there was another “one of us,” perhaps the only real *Vasyl’ Rolenko*. In 1893, four years before *Yisroel Kulyk* was born, a certain *Vasyl’ Rolenko* translated the historical novel *Het’man Mazepa* by Franciszek Ravita (*Rawita-Gawroński*, 1846–1930) from Polish into Ukrainian and published both versions as a literary supplement to the L’viv newspaper *Dilo* and in a separate book edition. Polish and Russian literature and historiography were conspicuously negative toward *Mazepa*, who was viewed as a traitor and rebel against Peter the Great, but *Rawita-Gawroński’s* novel portrayed him as a Ukrainian national hero and deplored his belated political awakening. Among other characters the novel featured a certain *Srul*, whose repugnant image fit well with Polish antisemitic stereotypes. A cunning and hypocritical merchant, *Srul* was instructed by the Poles (*Liakhy*) to lure one of *Mazepa’s* supporters into a trap. The Cossacks revealed *Srul’s* treacherous intentions, detained him, and hanged him for treason.¹⁵

It is more than likely that the entrepreneurial reader Kulyk found, among other things, *Rawita-Gawroński’s Het’man Mazepa* in *Vasyl’ Rolenko’s* translation. He probably realized, first, that fighting for Ukrainian independence was a noble and dangerous option; second, that in the Ukrainian and perhaps Polish imagination *Srul*—*Yisrael*, Kulyk’s namesake—was a quintessential Jew who disapproved of Ukrainian national strivings and supported Poland; and third, that if he wanted to rewrite the Jewish image in Ukrainian cultural memory, it would be a good idea to associate himself with a novel that was sympathetic toward the Ukrainian fight for independence. To assume the pen name “*Ivan Mazepa*”—viewed as a traitor to the pan-Slavic cause—would have been too risky and pretentious; to call himself *Vasyl’ Rolenko* was not.¹⁶ In this way Kulyk associated himself with an outdated yet strongly anticolonialist Ukrainophile Polish novel. Perhaps he also identified with the anticolonialist function of a cultural mediator—the Ukrainian translator—particularly important if one takes into account Kulyk’s non-Ukrainian origin.

Be that as it may, Kulyk’s excitement about folk art and his own artistic talents brought him in the early 1910s to the Odessa Art Institute, where he stayed only for a year and a half: a dearth of financial resources disrupted his studies

and forced him to return home. Back in Uman, to make some money and help the family, Kulyk worked as an assistant scenery painter for the itinerant Sukhodol'skyi theater. Here Kulyk adopted one of his Italian-sounding pen names, Rolinato, to emphasize not only his Ukrainian but also his international identity, as Italians were associated with theater and art. The local Uman newspaper, *Provintsial'nyi golos* (The Provincial Voice) wrote that “the new scenery for the performances was made by the artist Rolinato,” who was seventeen at that time.¹⁷ Significantly, the plays for which Kulyk designed the scenery were about the glorious Cossack past and featured picturesque military battles of the seventeenth-century Het'man Petro Doroshenko.

Penniless and with no prospects, and perhaps following the regular migration pattern that characterized East European Jews on the eve of World War I, in 1914 Kulyk emigrated to America—among the 1,250,000 other Jews crossing the Atlantic from the 1880s to the 1920s. The *goldene medine* (golden land), as it was dubbed by Yiddish-speaking immigrants, was hardly welcoming. What Kulyk saw was a far cry from the America of Fennimore Cooper or Mayne Reid. As he recalled in his autobiographical novel *Pryhody Vasylia Rolenka* (The Adventures of Vasyl' Rolenko, 1929), America was not a country of bellicose Indians, cozy wigwams, and vast prairies. On the contrary, after landing at Ellis Island and engaging in conversation with a cynical fellow traveler, who had already learned what America was all about, Kulyk was surprised: “What a strange country is this America: near the Statue of Liberty there is a prison; people do not live in houses; there are no Indians around (why do they lie about them in books?); instead there are those ‘fakers,’ and ‘scabs’ (there is nothing about them in Mayne Reid), and one can work here and still die of hunger.”¹⁸ Kulyk's encounter with the grassroots reality was even less romantic. His distant relatives took advantage of his greenhorn gullibility. To become independent and earn his living, Kulyk worked in Pennsylvania, at the center of the coal-mining industry that U.S. workers knew as the realm of the Lehigh Valley and Company, headquartered in Wilkes-Barre. Physically feeble, he was employed as a “door-boy,” the one who sat on the last truck and closed the doors behind the mules dragging the cars to and from the mines.

Kulyk's personal experience with genuine American miners cast a red shadow on his political worldview. In America, Kulyk reemerged as an atheist, a cosmopolitan, and a Marxist. He met organizers of trade unions, became friends with American socialists, started to write for *Novyi mir* (New World), and in 1914 became a member of the American branch of the Russian American Socialists. His colleagues in *Novyi mir* editorial board introduced him to Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938), whose leftist socialist views and an obsession with the

international proletarian revolution galvanized Kulyk and informed his nascent Marxist Weltanschauung. His Russian-language publications demonstrate that Kulyk was trying to integrate his Jewish and Ukrainian interests with a new Marxist class consciousness.

Almost fifteen years later, Kulyk turned his Jewish émigré experience into the story of a Ukrainian's encounter with rapacious capitalism in America, and he depicted his Ukrainian experience along class-struggle lines. Kulyk revisited his American years by fusing his impressions of Kafka's *Amerika*—which had come out two years before the publication of his *Adventures*—and his own insights into *Das Kapital*. His *Adventures of Vasyly' Rolenko* presents the main character as another Karl Rossman who comes to talk about American society not in terms of the metaphysics of exile/redemption but in terms of surplus value and class struggle.¹⁹ Kulyk rewrote both Kafka and himself. Like *Amerika* and unlike such renowned émigré novels as Mary Antin's *Promised Land*, Kulyk starts his story aboard a ship approaching the U.S. coast. Like Karl Rossman, Vasyly' Rolenko is a privileged émigré coming to stay with a relative, in his case, with an established Ukrainian-speaking American middling capitalist. Also like Karl Rossman, Vasyly' Rolenko undergoes a thorough acculturation under the guidance of his caring uncle, who makes Vasyly' change his Ukrainian skirt for American clothes and who no longer presents himself as "Uncle Mykhailo" but as "Mr. Michael-Rol." The adventures of both characters, Vasyly' Rolenko and Karl Rossman, are construed according to the exile pattern: once they find a niche for themselves, both are mercilessly banished. Finally, Vasyly' Rolenko's intellectual curiosity matches Karl Rossman's: both are trying to comprehend the environment in which they find themselves.

But here the affinities end. Unlike Karl Rossman's, Vasyly' Kulyk's naïveté evaporates once he better familiarizes himself with America. What appears to be a mystery for Kafka's urban-raised character is transparent for Kulyk's village-raised Vasyly'. In his uncle's sweatshop he discovers not only economic advantages but also the inhuman meaning of the division of labor. He learns how the bosses teach their workers to chew gum in order to suppress "unnecessary thoughts" about social injustice. He visits a local Russian Orthodox church, encounters the commercialization and theatrics of modernized religion, and turns into an atheist. Put in prison for having run away from his boss (the uncle), he cunningly escapes a police trap devised to trigger repressions against socialist-minded workers. While sweating in the Pennsylvania mines, he observes the corruption of trade unions that claimed to defend the workers but in fact selfishly negotiated for their own interests as the "workers' aristocracy."

Unlike the denationalized Karl Rossman, Kulyk's Vasyly' manifests genuine

attachment to things Ukrainian. He regrets the loss of his Ukrainian self once his folk skirt is thrown away; he is saddened by the shallow Americanization and assimilation of his uncle, who had forgotten his brother's (Vasyl's father) name; he notes the absence of a socialist workers' press in the Ukrainian language; he enjoys the opportunity to compose proclamations for the workers and miners in Ukrainian; and he mocks American ignorance about Ukraine and Ukrainians by making the police address him as "Vasyl' Rolenko, a Ruthenian."²⁰ Ultimately, the Final Judgment of the apocalyptic Great Oklahoma Theater at the very end of Kafka's *Amerika* is paralleled by the quotidian police trial against socialist strikers at the very end of Kulyk's *Adventures*. Indeed, Vasyl' Rolenko knows where his great theater is: he moves to Canada, a more Ukrainian-looking country, to be among party comrades fighting for the emancipation of the international proletariat.

Indeed, the awakening of the "real" Vasyl' Rolenko, alias Ivan Kulyk, occurred once he started to write for the American socialist press, first in Russian then in Russian and Ukrainian. Among dozens of Russian journalistic submissions Kulyk penned between 1915 and 1917, three poetic ones deserve special attention. All three appeared in March 1915. The first, "Pamiati Tarasa Shevchenko" (To the Memory of Taras Shevchenko), is a combination of rattling revolutionary clichés and dull romantic rhymes. The second, "Po zavetu Khrista" (According to the Testament of Jesus) is an imitation of a folk ballad and tells the story of a Russian Orthodox worker who dared arrange his marriage during the fast before Easter. And the third, "Novoe svetilo Izrailia" (A New Luminary in Israel) mocks the author of a Russian émigré newspaper who had called for solidarity with the suffering of Jews. These three themes are telling: Kulyk seems to have crafted a blueprint for his forthcoming journalism, social concerns, and political predilections. He certainly makes a point in one of his earliest publications: despite his Russian medium, he linked his revolutionary pathos, his anti-colonialist protest, and his vision of his native land to Shevchenko, not to Pushkin or Sholem Aleichem.

For Kulyk, Shevchenko's poetry is permeated with the freedom of the blue steppes, the roaring of the wide Dnieper, the independence of the Zaporizhzhia Cossacks, and the rebellious claim "High time [to rebel]!" Kulyk's poem is a reply to Shevchenko's "Zapovit" (Testament): he does not claim Shevchenko's legacy but certainly claims Shevchenko's revolutionary ethics. The second poem points out Kulyk's decisive rupture with institutionalized religion and religious beliefs. If the imaginary Vasyl' Kulyk arrives in America with a reliquary on his bosom, here Kulyk tears it off and throws it in the dust: he wishes to have nothing in common with the corrupt church, which had entirely lost its sense of so-

cial justice. Finally, he crafts his identity as a belligerent Marxist by thoroughly removing the traces of his Jewishness. He satirizes the Russian newspaper *Emigrant* because it expressed indignation with all those who, like Kulyk's *Novyi mir*, saw no difference between the oppressed people of various backgrounds and who seemed to have forgotten about the sufferings of East European Jews. Kulyk refutes this fake nationally bound humanism and claims to adhere to those for whom there is "neither Russian nor Jew." To "remember" the sufferings of East European Jews at the expense of the sufferings of American miners is for him utterly immoral. Kulyk even began neutralizing his Jewish autobiography by purging from his newly written stories anything related to the Jewish environment in which he grew up.²¹

Building up a Marxist identity required that Kulyk revise his sense of national belonging. In one of his essays for the Ukrainian worker's press in America, Kulyk inserted the phrase "we, the internationalists."²² Apparently his newly invented Marxist intellectual framework had enough room for his Ukrainian and Jewish, as well as Indian, African-American, and Russian sympathies. Perhaps his internationalism was the product of Bukharin's vision of revolution: since the whole world was destined to become socialist, Kulyk could afford to refer to specific national sympathies only in terms of the class struggle. He had to reimagine himself as a Marxist Ukrainian and a Marxist Jew: the concept of the oppressed class fighting for emancipation against the colonizer was productive and helped him achieve a synthesis of various elements of his cultural background. In his research essay on Ukrainian émigré folklore, Kulyk cited songs on the pitiful fate of Ukrainians who had to leave their own country, where they had been oppressed by "Jews, Poles, landlords, and attorneys." Scandalized by his discovery of what seemed a deep-rooted Ukrainian antisemitism, Kulyk resorts to a Marxist exegesis: the bias he encountered proves "that a backward Galician peasant has not learned how to differentiate Jewish and Polish bourgeoisie from the proletarians, and therefore blames the people as a whole."²³ To save the reputation of the Ukrainians, Kulyk traces the apparently antisemitic motifs in folklore back to the immature class consciousness of its tellers. He views Marxism as a solution to xenophobia, as much for Jews as for Ukrainians.

The making of class consciousness is the focus of his Russian-language short story "Staryi Leizer" (Old Leyzer). Its main character, the old shtetl Jew Leyzer (Yiddish diminutive of Eliezer or Lazar), grapples with the fact that his son Yosele is a socialist. For him, revolution and socialism are reprehensible non-Jewish occupations, "the cause of the goyim." A God-fearing Jew should stay aloof. By accident, Leyzer learns about a police trap against the strikers and attempts to warn them. He recognizes a spy and a provocateur in the crowd, de-

nounces him out loud (“Comrades, there is a spy down here!”), and is shot on the spot by the police.²⁴ His discovery of “comradeship,” a supranational truth transcending “us” and “them,” “Jews” and “goyim,” is the narrative dénouement. Kulyk addresses Ukrainian antisemitism in his Ukrainian essay on émigré folklore and Jewish xenophobia in his Russian short story by pointing out the only ways to transcend the inherited national bias: internationalism, class struggle, revolutionary consciousness, and Marxism. Yet within his newly emerged proletarian internationalism he still professes his national sympathies, Ukrainian and Jewish among them. It is also evident that Kulyk had not yet chosen “his” language, particularly since in his Russian writings Kulyk sometimes allowed himself to make scornful remarks about the Ukrainian accents of his interlocutors.²⁵

A devoted Marxist eager to partake in the emancipation of the world proletariat, Kulyk could no longer stay aloof from the upheavals overseas. Dragged into the whirl of February 1917 and anticipating the October Revolution, Kulyk returned to Russia via Japan, together with his new friend Nikolai Bukharin. He did not spend time in the capitals but went directly to Uman. Kulyk began to engage in grassroots welfare work, eventually igniting the Uman proletariat with revolutionary ideals and establishing the town soviet of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies. Soon he realized that the town of his childhood was too small to match his ambitions, so he moved to Kyiv and became the editor of the *Proletars’ka dumka* (Proletarian Thought) newspaper, an active Bolshevik, and a public speaker addressing soldiers in Ukrainian. As early as December 1917, he was elected a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Soviets and befriended the future leaders of Ukrainian communism: Mykola Skrypnyk (1872–1933), Volodymyr Zatons’kyi (1888–1938), and Iurii Kotsiubyns’kyi (1896–1937).²⁶

In the midst of the revolutionary turmoil, Kulyk organized a military detachment. Young Jewish communist men from families ruined or murdered during the war—Sioma Mal’chikov, Sioma Sirkis, Motia Sheinin, M. Arons’kyi—approached Kulyk and asked him to accept them into his newly established detachment.²⁷ Kulyk’s dazzling public presentations were such a success that a year later the vacillating Cossacks unanimously elected him commander of the first Red Cossack regiment, which eventually became instrumental in capturing a number of strategic localities in southern Ukraine, including Kremenchuh.²⁸ The archives contain testimonies to Kulyk’s focal role in military events. For example, on the wave of the campaign, Kulyk sent a cable to Lenin (and a copy to Stalin and Chicherin): “The situation at the front. Borky [Railway] Station has been cleansed of the enemy. Bezpalovka Station has been occupied without resistance. The town of Slaviansk and Popel’naia Station to the east

of Bakhmut have been taken in combat. Bakhmut is semi-encircled, Krolevets is encircled. We are moving to Bakhmut and Konotop, where we expect serious battles. [Head of the military department] Kulyk.”²⁹

Kulyk was not only an excellent military organizer: his fellow soldiers adored him, because in the most dramatic moments of the campaign he would tell funny stories and sing songs to them—in Ukrainian. Wounded twice, Kulyk had to withdraw from active service but continued his party career as the head of the Ukrainian People’s Commissariat of National Minorities (*Narkomnats*). As such, he was delegated by the Russian Federation to the Ukrainian government, was arrested in Kyiv by Hetman Skoropads’ki’s regime, and was condemned to death. He spent several months in prison where an old Russian army general taught him and other Bolsheviks the art of warfare. In 1919, as Vasyl’ Rolenko, he conducted underground revolutionary work in western Ukraine, then part of Poland. He was soon arrested again and spent almost a year in various Polish prisons in Lwów, Kraków, and Warsaw together with other Ukrainian socialists, but in 1920 he was ransomed by the Soviets.³⁰ Kulyk emerged from Polish prison not only as a revolutionary with the aura of a martyr but also as a Ukrainian poet, the author of the *Moi kolomyiky* (My Kolomyiky) collection that would be noticed by critics and recited from memory by readers, especially in western Ukraine.

The 1920s for Kulyk were the years of a vertiginous party career and intensive literary work. In 1921, he was appointed the first chairman of the Galicia revolutionary committee in then-Soviet Ternopil, where his down-to-earth management style won the sympathy of Ukrainian, Jewish, and Polish proletarian youth. In 1921–22 he headed the local party committee in Kam’ianets’-Podil’s’kyi, where he also edited the *Chervona Pravda* (The Red Truth) newspaper.³¹ The national-minded Hryhorii Kostiuk recalled Kulyk in Kam’ianets’-Podil’s’kyi of the 1920s as “a modest, thin man of a medium height with red or dark blond beard. His baritone resounded with conviction and sincerity. He spoke good Ukrainian betraying the knowledge of customs, beliefs, and many proverbs of the Ukrainian people (which I really liked a lot).”³² In 1924, he was dispatched to Montreal as the Ukrainian deputy consul on trade and emerged as a major voice of Soviet Ukraine in Canada and as the author of an essay-novel, *Zapysky konsula* (Notes of a Consul). In the mid-1920s, he helped create the Hart (Tempering) in Kharkiv, a nationwide literary group with a proletarian agenda, and established a branch of Hart among North American Ukrainian-language writers.³³ Back in the USSR, he settled in Kharkiv and in 1927 acted as deputy chairman of the People’s Commissariat on Foreign Affairs and was instrumental in establishing the VUSPP (Vseukrains’ka spilka proletar’s’kykh pys’mennykiv, All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers). In the mid-1920s

he warned against the monopolization of literature by a single proletarian trend and argued that proletarian writers should treat each and every literary trend with respect.³⁴

By the late 1920s, Kulyk was a prominent literary figure, the author of some ten volumes of poetry, poetry translations, and prose. He even penned a book of Marxist verse for children entitled *Bruk i molotok* (A Pavement and a Hammer), imbued with futuristic imagery and avant-garde rhymes. Yet by that time he realized that “although the KP(b)U tried not to grant VUSPP complete monopolistic authority over literature, it did make clear this was a special organization.”³⁵ Kulyk began enthusiastically embodying the party’s directives in cultural life. Together with Ivan Mykytenko, Kulyk performed a key role in reorganizing Ukraine’s literary organizations along party lines, imposing a stricter control over what was considered Ukrainian cultural revival and helping dismantle futurists and other literary groups. His desire to be in the forefront—to do more and go far beyond the party directives—turned against him. Instead of supporting his friends and colleagues in what they saw as the defense of Ukrainian culture from shallow literary ideologists, he chose to reinforce the ideological front. As he was gaining power as a Bolshevik he was losing his attraction as a harbinger of the Ukrainian revival and as a leftist Marxist.

Once the Union of Ukrainian Soviet Writers was established, Kulyk was elected its first chairman. In the 1930s he headed the Partvydav, the Communist Party’s main publishing house, which by 1935 controlled almost everything that was edited and published in Soviet Ukraine. He seems to have enjoyed influence, power, and fame, and the most influential Ukrainian public figures turned to him for help and sought his advice. At the top of his career Kulyk was a big boss in cultural life: not infrequently the presentation of a new play, the issuing of a new journal, or the publication of a new book depended solely on his decision.³⁶

Kulyk’s National-Communist Utopia

With the demise of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR) in the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks had wiped out all traces of the previous Ukrainian regimes—which they conveniently associated with horrible atrocities against civilians, above all Jews, and for which Simon Petliura was held personally responsible. But the Bolsheviks soon realized that Ukraine remained a hesitant, untamed, and ideologically dubious member in the new “family of peoples” dubbed the USSR. For the sake of abandoning her petty-bourgeois peasant hopes and freedom-loving ideals and to wholeheartedly embrace Soviet communism, Ukraine

needed encouragement. The only way to ignite her interest in constructing communism was to give in to her national strivings, but only as a palliative.

The Kremlin leadership realized that to win over Ukrainians psychologically, they had to endorse a controlled Ukrainian national revival but, indeed, under socialist banners. Lazar Moiseevich Kaganovich (1893–1991)—whom many Ukrainian historians often saw as personally responsible for the genocide of Ukrainians during the famine of 1932–33 and who in the mid-1920s was the head of the Ukrainian Soviet government—launched the so-called *ukrainizatsiia* campaign, known as indigenization. The campaign's lofty goal was to teach Ukrainian to those inhabiting and ruling Ukraine, but its real agenda was to bolster Ukrainian socialism.³⁷

The indigenous population of the country was to take a leading role in the state-building process. For the Ukrainian intelligentsia, indigenization also implied de-Russification. The 1925 meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine approved a resolution on Ukrainization, according to which all party meetings, court hearings, cadre education, and publication activities were to be conducted in Ukrainian. The proportion of Ukrainian periodicals grew from 70 percent in 1928 to 94 percent in 1929. Ukrainization of the party cadres skyrocketed. Ukrainians made up 33 percent of Communist Party membership in 1924, 38 percent in 1925, and 49 percent in 1926, whereas among the high echelons of the Communist Party, they were correspondingly 33, 37, and 52 percent.³⁸

Ukrainian was made obligatory for all state institutions in Ukraine. Quality control of language use was delegated to the newly established Kharkiv Central Ukrainian Courses (*Tsentrāl'ni kursy ukrainoznavstva*). The Ukrainization of the army officer corps followed suit. The success of the language campaign is difficult to overestimate. The number of Ukrainian elementary schools grew from 6,105 in 1922 to 10,774 in 1925. By the end of 1927, 77 percent of all students in Ukraine attended Ukrainian-language schools. By 1929, 65.8 percent of the professional schools were Ukrainian-language, while 16 percent were bilingual, and 5.3 percent Russian-language. Given that there were no Ukrainian-language institutions of higher education before 1917, it is particularly remarkable that by the late 1920s, there were fourteen Ukrainian-language, two Russian-language, and twenty-three bilingual institutions of higher education. By 1932, 87.5 percent of all periodicals were issued in Ukrainian. By 1930, *Komunist* had reached a circulation of 122,000, *Proletar* of 79,000, *Visty* of 90,000, *Radians'ke selo* of 600,000. Book production in Ukrainian, among all works published in Ukraine, increased from 46 percent in 1925–26 to 54 percent in 1927–28 and 77 percent

in 1931. The All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences issued scholarly publications in Ukrainian, some of which continue to be important for scholars of East Europe. Leaflets encouraging party bureaucrats to learn Ukrainian—and rebuking those who procrastinated—were promptly dispatched to the most distant regions of the republic. Ukraine was rapidly emerging on the European map as a postcolonial Soviet republic with a unique cultural and political profile.

The cultural revival was even more astounding. The Ukrainian literary and artistic accomplishments of the 1920s were orchestrated by Lenin's good friend Mykola Skrypnyk, who endorsed Ukrainian revivalism and tirelessly emphasized the necessity to cast it in the mold of proletarian internationalism.³⁹ For him and his colleagues it was far from evident that Bolshevism and Ukrainian revivalism were incompatible. Dubbed by one of the keen scholars of this period “a national utopian thinker” and a commissar of “national communism,” Skrypnyk created the Department on National Problems at the Institute of Marxism, headed it himself, and elaborated a new vision of the Ukrainian-Russian dichotomy that emphasized the aggressive and destructive impact of metropolitan all-Russian culture in Ukraine. As the people's commissar of education between 1927 and 1933, he supported such harbingers of the Ukrainian cultural orientation to Europe as Mykola Khvylyovyi (1893–1933; whose radicalism Kulyk, not yet a party big shot, admired in the early 1920s) and endorsed the spread of a variety of literary groups, clubs, journals, and trends. Kharkiv, the new proletarian Ukrainian capital in eastern Ukraine, boasted a dozen burgeoning literary groups. Ukrainian writers residing in the Diaspora were invited to resettle in Ukraine and partake in the cultural revival. The authorities pursued the same policies toward Yiddish writers.⁴⁰

Kulyk was a genuine and sincere believer in the harmonious fusion of communism and Ukrainian revivalism. For Kulyk, “Ukrainian” implied “universal,” “revolutionary” stood for “Ukrainian,” and both signified “anti-imperial.” To accord international meaning to events or images, Kulyk made them Ukrainian. His Bolshevik Revolution was an international phenomenon as long as it spoke Ukrainian. He viewed Ukrainian as the language of anticolonialist struggle and Marxism. His Ukrainian helped him identify his life experience as the manifestation of class struggle. He united Chinese peasants, American Indians, Pennsylvania miners, Canadian farmers, and even dispossessed Caribbean pirates in a single utopian brotherhood of those awaiting revolutionary redemption from social and colonial oppression that would imminently stem from Ukraine. Here is Kulyk:

Hey, my fertile Alberta,
Makhno will come for you!

Whatever you do
But you will rise renewed!

Hey, my British Columbia,
Your forests and marshes
Will soon learn the jokes
Of the Volhynia guerilla!

Hey, my pedantic Halifax,
(The port of the future. Glory and progress).
You think it is simple?
Wouldn't you like it as it was in Odessa?

Hey, my Ontarian lakes,
Your rage will be justified
And the red smog of the battleships
Will reign over you!

And even you, my Yukon,
Will never hide under the snows,
For in the nearest days,
You will redden as a New Donbass.

And you, Ottawa the capital,
With your proud House of Commons,
Will be ardently ruled
By the All-Canadian Soviet Commissariat!⁴¹

Kulyk perceived the Ukrainian revolutionary events as those that would spark world revolution. Ukraine comes to redeem the world, sending forth its emissaries, such as the anarchist Makhno or the red partisans of Volhynia.

Sometimes it is almost impossible to separate Kulyk's Ukrainian from his international revolutionary references. In Canada he approaches Indians and tries to talk them into a rebellion against ethnic discrimination, presenting himself as their "white-skinned secret accomplice."⁴² The North American prairies and the Black Sea steppes come together in his poetry to serve as a backdrop for Indians riding their sweating mustangs across the Kawanaga valley, shouting out their bellicose war cries and led by the mounted red-spirited Indian Ivan Kulyk. Kulyk's revolutionary anthems were imbued with Ukrainian historical references and were articulated in Ukrainian. Given Kulyk's multiple writings in Russian, this linguistic aspect of his career should not be taken for granted.

Like many Jews in Ukraine before and after him, Kulyk encountered a linguistic dilemma. The fourteen-year-old Kulyk was reported to have published his first Russian poem between 1909 and 1911 in the Uman local newspaper *Provincialnyi golos* (The Provincial Voice), or in *Umans'kyi lystok* (Uman Paper), or in

an unknown Odessa periodical. While in America between 1914 and 1917, he penned hundreds of Russian poems, journalistic essays, and reports. He addressed not only a Russian-speaking but also a Ukrainian audience, publishing essays in such periodicals as the Cleveland *Robitnyk* (The Worker), the Winnipeg *Robochyi narod* (The Working People), and the New York *Haidamaky* (Haidamaks). But once back in Ukraine, Kulyk switched to Ukrainian poetry, prose, journalism, and historiography. His written and spoken Ukrainian impressed his Ukrainian party colleagues. One of them was particularly fascinated to hear an Uman-born red-bearded Jew correcting his report dedicated to Shevchenko and quoting dozens of Shevchenko's lines from memory in the process.⁴³ In 1924–26, when Kulyk worked in the Soviet Trade Mission in Montreal, he taught Ukrainian language, an introduction into Ukrainian studies course, and performance arts to local Ukrainian émigrés and helped them stage classical and folklore plays from the Ukrainian repertoire. He also helped Mykola Tarnov's'kyi (1895–1984), a key American-Ukrainian socialist poet, to polish his verse.⁴⁴

Because of his philo-Ukrainian stance, among Ukrainians overseas Kulyk became a legendary figure. A major Canadian workers' newspaper opened up its premises for him, interviewed him on every possible occasion, sought his opinion on a variety of contemporary political issues, commissioned him to write articles on the changes in Ukrainian society, agreed to publish him as Ivan Kulyk, Vasyli' Rolenko, I. Viktor (the unnamed yet authoritative expert on things Ukrainian), and even as Luciana Piontek (his wife), so that by the end of 1925 Kulyk found himself transformed into the leading Ukrainian and Bolshevik whose reputation and renown in Canada were unchallenged and whose expertise on an ample array of issues was unquestioned. Immersed in the milieu of Ukrainian blue-collar émigrés in Canada, Kulyk forged a Ukraine-centric concept of Bolshevism, Soviet culture, and himself. Among other activities, in 1929 he conceived and penned the program for the Ukrains'kyi Komitet Okhorony Pam'iatok (Ukrainian Society of the Preservation of Historical Monuments), which laid the basis for the further development of this institution. In fact, he went beyond the Ukrainian national revivalism officially proclaimed in 1924. To be sure, Kulyk's Ukraine-centrism was something that he grappled with—as a Marxist with an international orientation—throughout his career. For example, he viewed Eduard Bagritsky's *Duma pro Opanasa*, a Russian-Jewish epic poem, as an offspring of the Ukrainian literary tradition, above all of Shevchenko's images and style.⁴⁵

Kulyk's overwhelming support of Ukrainization was part and parcel of his identity. One of the prominent nationalist Ukrainian poets recalled a conversation during which Kulyk argued against the viewpoint of a chauvinistic-minded

Trotskyite, claiming that a communist who lives and works in Ukraine ought to know Ukrainian.⁴⁶ Kulyk dedicated the lion's share of his first extensive interview in Canada's *Ukrains'ki robitnychi visti* to Ukraine and emphatically praised the success of the postcolonial nation-building effort:

Ukrainization is moving very fast. Most institutions have been conducting their activities in Ukrainian. The volume of Ukrainian publications is enormous. The number of Ukrainian schools has been increased. There is an apparent shift in the attitudes of Ukrainian intellectuals, who have gladly joined the work of Soviet institutions. Suffice it to mention almost all former members of the Central Committee of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party work for Ukrainian cooperative organizations. Many Ukrainian political figures from abroad who treated us as enemies have now offered us their assistance. Professor Hrushevs'kyi arrived in Ukraine and began giving lectures in institutions of higher education in Kyiv. Recently M. Lutskevych, the former [Ukrainian] ambassador to the Polish Sejm, was granted Ukrainian Soviet citizenship and came back from Czechoslovakia. I guess everybody has heard about the warlord [*otaman*] Iu. Tiutiunnyk, Palii, and other less prominent Petliura-followers, who have changed sides and joined the Soviets.⁴⁷

Kulyk was among the earliest advocates of the Ukrainization campaign. Ukrainization had not yet been officially adopted by party officials in Moscow when Kulyk wrote for a socialist Ukrainian newspaper in Canada a passionate and well-argued article "A Mighty Cultural Weapon," providing an all-encompassing vision of the anti-Russification trend based on the Ukrainian government's attitude to Ukrainian school-book production, new policies toward bolstering Ukrainian periodicals, a boom of translations of the classics of Marxism in Ukrainian, and the increasing circulation of Ukrainian literature published by Chervonyi shliakh (Red Path) Press.⁴⁸

However much Kulyk may have been engaged in commercial, diplomatic, and economic activities, he is most closely identified with shifts in Ukrainian cultural life. Given the long-standing ban on Ukrainian culture in Ukraine, it comes as no surprise that Kulyk spoke of the Ukrainian economic boom only after he had recounted in detail the activities of the Derzhvydav (Ukrainian State Press). Kulyk seems to have been profoundly moved by the dry data he listed while explaining that in 1923 the major state-sponsored press had issued in the Ukrainian language some 2.2 million books and 1.5 million school primers, as well as a series of popular theatrical books, literary almanacs such as *Pluh* and *Hart*, a new edition of Kotsiubyns'kyi's writings, a translation into Ukrainian of Korolenko's works, two dictionaries, and even a wall calendar for peasants.⁴⁹

Kulyk articulated his own cultural priorities in the programmatic article "Modern Ukrainian Culture," published in three consecutive issues of the

Ukrains'ki robitnychi visti under the name Vasyly' Rolenko, and in his more moderate "The Holiday of Ukrainian Culture," published under the name Ivan Kulyk. He argued that Ukraine had been a country of peasants, with 21 million living in rural areas and only 4 million in cities, and only the peasants representing Ukraine. The tsarist Russian administration had treated the Ukrainian language badly and took pains to artificially Russify semi-urbanized towns. Hence the aversion of urbanites toward things Ukrainian. National oppression, argued Kulyk, and the nonurban origins of the national agenda shaped the late nineteenth-century political message of Ukrainian culture. It was by and large rural-centered, conservative, and provincial. It was not interested in European spiritual endeavors and on its own was of no interest to Europe. Even a giant like Shevchenko was reconsidered as a poet who merely romanticized the great Ukrainian past and celebrated Ukrainian peasant imagery. Focused on national food, national dance, and folklore songs, the Ukrainians in the tsarist Russia misread Shevchenko, presenting him as a conservative romantic and neglecting his revolutionary strivings.

New literary figures emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century, maintained Kulyk, were more urban, intellectually open, and modernist. However petty-bourgeois their appeal, they targeted a larger audience. The best writers among them dramatically changed the perception of what Ukrainian culture could and should be. This was particularly true of Ivan Franko and his focus on the rise of the industrial proletariat in Galicia, Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi and his portrayal of the class stratification of the Ukrainian village, and Lesia Ukrainka and her revolutionary symbolism. After 1917 nobody argued that the *fin de siècle* petty-bourgeois intellectuals—with the exception of progressive-minded ones who prefigured the new era—belonged to the day before yesterday. Yet the bourgeois intellectuals did not want to yield any literary terrain to the advancing culture of the proletariat and peasant masses.⁵⁰

The next period, argued Kulyk, featured a class struggle between the old culture and the new one forged by the proletarians and peasants. The latter dreamed not about dancing the *hopak*, but about hut-libraries, communist reading circles, the Young Communist League, cooperation, new machinery, and the branches of the Pluh (Plough) literary groups that sought new ways to articulate the experiences of the Ukrainian peasantry.⁵¹ In other words, Ukrainian peasants turned to urbanized forms of labor and leisure, if not to urban proletarian culture. Simultaneously there was another shift taking place: under the impact of the successful Ukrainization campaign, the previously Russified urban proletarians began recognizing the value of and appropriating Ukrainian culture. In Kulyk's understanding of national communism, nothing was more important

than the postcolonial encounter between the workers in Ukraine and Ukrainian culture. It would be naïve to criticize Kulyk for his inability to predict the failure of this encounter: his utopia was his credo, and he could hardly have treated his beliefs critically. Kulyk outlined the magnitude of the Communist Party's campaign quite accurately, but he somewhat overestimated its immediate results. He wrote, "when the Soviet authorities launched the so-called Ukrainization (that is to say, the creation of conditions that favor the development of Ukrainian proletarian culture), not by refurbishing street posters but by creating a gigantic infrastructure of Ukrainian high schools, workers' university departments, cultural institutions—at that point the proletarians threw away their mistrust of Ukrainian culture and together with the destitute peasantry began working on its development."⁵²

According to Kulyk, the Soviet period ushered in a brand new era of Ukrainian culture. For the first time in history, Ukrainians managed to overcome their provincialism and open a window onto Europe. For the first time in history, the Ukrainian masses became full-fledged consumers of their own literature eager to make sense of with their colonial past and anticolonialist present. The Pluh literary group united peasant-writers who addressed the villagers, while the Hart group was comprised of proletarian literati whose audience worked in industry. The theater buttressed new cultural shifts and abandoned once and forever its melodramatic, pseudo-romantic repertoire. Ukrainian scholarship, epitomized by the state-sponsored All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, incorporated some thirty-two newly established local and national museums, libraries, observatories, botanical labs, and so forth. And the development of high culture did not obstruct progress below: the number of children exposed to elementary education doubled (from 43 to 78 percent), as did the number of newly created centers for the liquidation of illiteracy (from 9,000 to 16,000). The Ukrainian language grew to become the language of education, art, and science. Kulyk gladly agreed with the sympathetic French literary figures from the Clarté group who had visited Ukraine and who considered recent Ukrainian cultural achievements to be more profound than those in Russia and Belorussia.⁵³

Yet for Kulyk Ukrainization was a means, not an end. He saw new Ukrainians as paradigmatic internationalists. He argued that neither proletarians nor peasants should seclude themselves in their own huts. Ukrainians must become as all-embracing as Walt Whitman, one of Kulyk's favorites. Ukrainian culture, he argued, could not afford national self-isolation. On the contrary: "The modern culture of Soviet Ukraine is internationalist in content and ideology, it does not isolate itself in national boundaries, it absorbs the best of the Western, alien peoples' cultures, and exerts influence on them, too."⁵⁴ What Kulyk was articu-

lating was the idiosyncratic leftist utopianism that was also manifested in Kulyk's historiography, for example in the *Essays on the History of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine* (1923) that he wrote with the historian M. Iavorskii. Reviewing their book, one Ukrainian historian observed that Kulyk established 1917 as the starting point, the ab ovo of the Ukrainian left. The reviewer's irony, by no means misleading, disclosed Kulyk's utopian vision of Ukrainian history.⁵⁵ Before that time, maintained Kulyk, Ukraine was just another borderland in the Russian Empire, a colonial entity bereft of its own history and, consequently, of its own historical narrative.

That Kulyk ignored pre-1917 developments in Ukrainian sociopolitical thought attests not only to his aversion to the colonial historiography that stifled the voice of Ukraine but also to his ahistorical utopianism. Kulyk's understanding of "new" Ukrainian history sheds light on his own cultural origins: he emphasized how 1917 was the genesis of a new Ukraine and also indicated that his personal story as an artist and politician began exactly when he came back from the United States to Ukraine and made his final choices: Ukraine as a reimagined motherland, Ukrainian literature as the medium, and Bolshevism as the sociopolitical program.

Vasyl' Rolenko, the Anticolonialist Jew

Whatever the names he acquired or roles he performed in the 1920s—*Rolinato* or *Rolenko*—Izrail Iudovych Kulyk never abandoned his Jewish roots or his Jewish "role." Nor did his Ukrainian name or his Polish patronymic protect him from the antisemitic accusations, to which he replied with an amazing sense of personal dignity and unshakable integrity.⁵⁶ When the street on which he lived as a child was renamed after Ivan Iulianovych Kulyk in 1959, a childhood friend remarked: "I was surprised and could not understand why 'Ivan Iulianovych,' and not 'Izrail Iudovych'? I remember him very well as a personality and assure you that he shunned neither his nation nor origins." This and similar remarks in essays about Kulyk were thoroughly expunged from the collection of memoirs dedicated to him, in order to make his work fit in with nationally cognizant Ukrainian authors. Thus Surovtsova's memoir on Kulyk was eliminated altogether and Voloshenko's was censored. Among some of his passages the censors dropped was the following paragraph that justified an account of a Shabbat in the Kulyks' house: "Perhaps the reader will say, 'Why should we go into all that detail? Why savour all those cookies, rolls, pike? Why recollect how the old one went to the synagogue and on his return drank unsweetened tea with a lump of

sugar in his mouth? Generally, there are too many unnecessary details, whereas I. Iu. Kulyk's individuality, his character, tastes, and personality, are not sufficiently elucidated.⁵⁷ Excuse me, my dear, but to the best of my abilities I tried to depict the environment and the milieu in which Kulyk spent his childhood and youth. Without those details, I suppose, the whole picture would be incomplete. I remember the cookies, rolls, and pike since Rol'ka often fed me with them, and they were gorgeous!"⁵⁷ This curious piece of evidence notwithstanding, for Kulyk his Jewish themes apparently remained somewhere in his childhood, in the Pale of Jewish Settlement, and among Uman's dusty synagogues and its senile ghettoized Jews. One of his Ukrainian colleagues recollected that Kulyk loved to sing a popular antireligious song containing the lines: "Down with monks, rabbis, and priests, / We will climb to the skies and disperse all gods."

Judaism was too gloomy, pessimistic, and outdated for Kulyk's poetic universe, imbued as it was with the rattling of urban modernity and illuminated with the torches of the international socialist revolution. In depicting his childhood, Kulyk could not avoid mentioning the bitter Judaic liturgy:

Only in July the synagogue lament
Cut our eardrums like a knife.
But we did not care then
Jumping around barefoot.⁵⁸

The context of these lines seems to be *Tisha be-Av* (Ninth of Av), the darkest day in the Jewish calendar, often falling in July, when Jews hold a twenty-five-hour dry fast to bemoan the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E., sing dirges, and read Jeremiah's Lamentations, and, especially in Uman, recite the acrostic on the Uman massacre. For the little Rolik the dirges were disturbing and irritating, but for Kulyk Judaism was just a distant synagogue lament. Kulyk spells out his childhood feelings in the aside: "we did not care then." But did Kulyk care later?

Apparently he did. While fighting for the Bolsheviks in Uman district, he was attacked by the Ataman Grigor'iev gangs—who fought against "our and Western Yids"—and had to organize a retreat. He realized the immediate threat posed to the local Jews and "cautiously warned" them.⁵⁹ Whenever it was needed, he would resort to Yiddish to send a Marxist message to the Jewish proletarians.⁶⁰ Already a prominent party leader, in the late 1920s Kulyk introduced Ukrainian readers to such American Jewish writers as Mike Gold (1894–1967), a proletarian poet and the author of the autobiographic novel *Di Yidn On Gelt* (Penniless Jews).⁶¹ In the early 1930s, Kulyk successfully encouraged Der Nister (1884–1950) to translate into Yiddish and publish his novel *The Adventures of*

Vasyl' Rolenko. Kulyk himself penned the Ukrainian versions of Leyb Kvitko's Yiddish children's poems, including such classics of Soviet Yiddish poetry as "Hazerlekh" (Little Pigs).⁶² He promoted young Ukrainian writers of Jewish descent, such as Leonid Pervomais'kyi, Sava Holovanivs'kyi, Iukhym Martych and others, into the mainstream. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that there were contacts between Kulyk and the Ukrainian-Jewish poetess Raisa Troianker, particularly since both were apostates who had abandoned their traditional Jewish households in their native Uman and were regular participants in the discussions at the Blakytnyi Literary House (to be discussed in the next chapter). Moreover, in his journalism Kulyk repeatedly addressed the Jewish question. He strongly endorsed Jewish agricultural colonization, debunked myths about the Jewish republic in Ukraine, and convincingly justified Soviet policy toward Jews.⁶³ As head of the newly created Union of Ukrainian Soviet Writers and at the first writer's congress in Moscow in 1934, Kulyk represented not only Ukrainian but also Yiddish writers from Ukraine and openly discussed Ukrainian Yiddish literature's ups and downs. Curiously enough, in Moscow he emphasized that Yiddish writers developed new proletarian themes, motifs, and images more expediently and efficiently than their Ukrainian colleagues.⁶⁴

In one famous verse Kulyk addresses Ukraine and ultimately resorts to a biblical metaphor (unthinkable for a Ukrainian Soviet poet, albeit the norm for Yiddish proletarian poetry):

Nobody has composed your song
 Nor will I, so frail, compose it.
 My passionately desired Ukraine,
 My worker's Ukraine!

Your song has not yet been created,
 Your proud Song of Songs,
 My unconquered Ukraine,
 My sparkling-steel beacon!⁶⁵

Given the presence of some Jewish motifs in Kulyk's activities and the predominance of his Ukrainian themes, what made him devote his heart, nerve, and sinew to the Ukrainian cause? Why did he, a Jew and a Bolshevik, live and die with a strong Ukrainian national and Bolshevik faith? I believe the answer to this question is in Kulyk's stance on the issue of colonialism, which he understood in the terms of the 1920s, not those of modern scholarship.

Kulyk interpreted Ukrainian culture before 1917 as colonial. The imperial-minded Russian intelligentsia applied its high standards of humanism and cultural sensitivity elsewhere, and it perceived Ukrainian national strivings as eth-

nic treason, religious blasphemy, and geopolitical threat. Kulyk was painfully aware that such liberal-minded Russian writers as Maxim Gorky considered Ukrainian a peasant dialect of Russian, not a separate language.⁶⁶ Unlike condescending Russian liberals, Kulyk was attached to the Ukrainian language and culture. In his literary endeavors he seemed to imitate Walt Whitman. To counteract the imposed cultural parochialism, he was now embracing an entire humanity on behalf of the pantheistic Ukrainian self. Kulyk was well versed in Russian, as one can see from his Russian poetry, prose, and journalism; he could have easily become a Russian writer and joined the officially endorsed majority culture. Kulyk hardly had any doubts that the “Russian” path would have brought a wider readership and a better career, given the rich tradition of Jewish integration into Russian belles lettres. Russian was about the imperial aegis, power, and protection. In choosing between mainstream metropolitan Russian and oppressed and underdeveloped Ukrainian, however, Kulyk dismissed the former and preferred the latter.⁶⁷

As a Jew who knew how uncomfortable it was to belong to a suppressed minority seeking emancipation, Kulyk joined those who were trying to erase the traces of their colonialism. Among many historical figures whom Kulyk cherished, if not imitated, one played a key role. His name was Louis “David” Riel (1844–85), a Catholic seminary student in Montreal who joined the struggle of the Canadian Métis for economic equality, civil rights, and ethnic dignity. Twice he headed an anticolonialist revolt by the autochthonous North American population. To spell out his credo, Riel resorted to a Jewish metaphor: “Do you know these people of mine like the children of Israel, a persecuted race deprived of their heritage. But I will wrest justice for them from the tyrant. I will be unto them a second David.”⁶⁸ Viewed as a King David of the Métis and the Indians, Riel was arrested, accused of high treason, and hanged. Kulyk was not as ambitious vis-à-vis Ukrainians as Riel was vis-à-vis Métis, but his desire to decolonize Ukrainians fits well with Riel’s ethical program and perhaps even Riel’s messianic zeal.

Kulyk not only knew of Riel, he glorified him. He devoted dozens of pages to him, calling him “Riel, Riel, you are one single contradiction, a Catholic—a heretic—a Frenchman—a Métis.” Kulyk depicted Riel in an essay published in the journal *Hart* that emphasized “Reil’s heroism and absolute integrity, his true commitment to the cause of the liberation of the serfs from English oppression, and his complete selflessness and self-abnegation in regard to the revolt.” He presented his vision of Riel in the first chapter (“Chotyrynadtsiata liul’ka”; The Fourteenth Pipe) of his novel *Zapysky Konsula*. He also featured Louis David

Riel in the poem “Prairies.” Kulyk seems to be identifying with Riel when he tells the story:

How the Indians and brother-Métis
Followed the white leader Riel,
How Riel was caught and hanged
Where the rocks stopped the prairies.

How the Almighty Voice, the chief
Fought the British once and again,
And how willfully the Red race
Fought and fell.

The same way my nation
(Which one of them was mine?)
Looked for its right to exist
In its own memories.⁶⁹

Note the parenthetical insertion. When Kulyk identifies with Riel he draws parallels between Métis and his nation, underscoring his double, perhaps Ukrainian and Jewish, origins. My nation, he says, also looked back to the glorious days of the past for self-justification. Which nation does he imply, Ukrainians or Jews? Or both?

Kulyk is not misleading his reader, claiming that he entirely belongs to the Ukrainian people. Nor is he abandoning his Jewish self-identification altogether. The question of which was “my nation” emphasizes the magnanimous inclusiveness of any possible answer. Kulyk underscored this inclusiveness not only in his poetry but also in his journalism.⁷⁰ Whatever the answer to this question, the point is crucial. It is not clear whether Kulyk was familiar with the American ethno-genetic myth that considered the Red Indians as descendants of the biblical Red Jews, the representatives of the Ten Lost Tribes.⁷¹ But it seems obvious that he entertained the hidden idea of seeing himself as a messianic figure, a redeemer, who fights against the colonization of an alien nation with which he eventually comes to identify. Red Jews of the apocalypse or Red Indians or Bolshevik/Red Ukrainians have two common features: their colonial past and their messianic present. Riel could have easily become a respected priest or a schoolteacher, yet he preferred to join the Métis and defend their national struggle. Likewise, Kulyk could have become a Russian political leader or a Russian-Jewish writer. Perhaps he thought that a genuine Marxist identifies with the oppressed culture, not only with the oppressed class.

The more Kulyk tried to identify with the belligerent Riel and the oppressed Indians, the more he made palpable his hidden agenda. Kulyk started his *Notes of a Consul* with a monologue by Imasiz, a blind old Indian who gave Kulyk a pipe

“smoked by many tribal leaders, famous tribal leaders, among them the most famous Louis David Riel.”⁷² Imasiz recalls his tribal upbringing, his initiation and marriage, and his joining the struggle against British colonizers. The last among the unyielding aborigines, Imasiz headed the Indian revolt against the whites in the 1880s, in the course of which he was deceived, caught, and sentenced to death. When Imasiz was brought to the scaffold, his executioners decided to mock him by making him see Riel’s hanging. Yet Imasiz managed to outwit them: he asked for a final smoke, heated his pipe in a fire, and blinded himself with the red-hot mouthpiece. The executors were so shocked that they allowed him to escape alive. Significantly, Imasiz interrupted his tragic narrative about the Indians’ failed struggle against colonizers only when he made up his mind to pay homage to the people of “the Winter country on the other side of the Big Water” guided by “the great tribal leader” called “comrade Illich.”⁷³ Imasiz emphasizes similarities between the Indians in Canada and the people in the “Winter country,” depicting, for example, how the Indians, the Métis, and the whites sat together in their revolutionary council (Kulyk uses the word *rada*, the Ukrainian equivalent of “soviet”). Therefore he dubs Kulyk a messenger “of the greatest leader of all tribes and colors on earth.” Indeed, due to Kulyk’s masterful imitation of the language of his interlocutor, Indians are turned into revolutionaries, socialists, and internationalists. But even more important, Kulyk’s Indians are also Jewish.

The similarity between the Jews and the Indians shapes Kulyk’s imagery in a variety of ways. Kulyk entitled his chapter dedicated to Imasiz “The Fourteenth Pipe,” thus making it clear that he was following up on Il’ia Ehrenburg’s collection of short stories called *Thirteen Pipes*. But though he admitted imitating Ehrenburg, Kulyk was silent about drawing heavily from Isaac Babel. First, like the *Odessa Stories*, the Imasiz monologue was built around aphoristic statements, rhetorical devices, and succinct yet picturesque descriptions that resemble the *skaz* of Babel’s narrator. Second, like Babel and unlike Ehrenburg, Kulyk has his protagonist tell the story while he reserved for himself the role of the passive listener. Imasiz is as talkative as Froim Grach and Kulyk is as silent as Babel. Third, and more noteworthy, Kulyk makes his Indian into a narrator, a Native American Froim Grach, who constantly confuses the pathetic and the ironic. “If you wanna know, follow me,” says Babel’s Froim Grach. Kulyk’s Imasiz is even more demanding: “If you strive to know, listen.” In “Karl-Yankel,” Babel looks at a newly circumcised Jewish child and says: “You should be happier than me. It’s impossible that you will not be happy.” Imasiz addressing Kulyk continues the same thought: “You are young and you must be happy.” Kulyk’s replaces Babel’s Russian-Yiddish-Ukrainian argot with an invented Ukrainian-Indian argot, an

analog to Babel's unique fusion language.⁷⁴ Finally, there are curiosities: for example, Babel narrates the saga of Benia *Krik* (literally: shriek); Kulyk tells the story of Imasiz, the *kruk* (literally: raven).⁷⁵

Kulyk's attempt to depict his Indian as a Jewish narrator comes as no surprise in view of an even more striking and explicit comparison between Jews and Indians: "I do not want to repeat myself since I have already depicted this trip in my long poem 'Prairies.' I will add only one detail. The reservation with its mob of women in rags and dirty children, eaten out by diseases and boils, reminded of a Jewish ghetto—the ghetto that retained its horrible motionlessness only in the godforsaken Polish townlets. Here even the speckled and small mustangs looked like downcast nags of the *balagolas*."⁷⁶ Thus Kulyk evoked his Indian setting by resorting to Jewish references and by tracing parallels between the reservation and the ghetto, congruent colonial realms. As a Jew who had found his way out of the ghetto and who came back to demolish its colonial walls, Kulyk could well identify with Imasiz, whose attempt to eradicate the walls of the reservations failed. Red Jews and Red Indians had much in common, much more than the seventeenth-century messianic legend of the Ten Lost Tribes identifying Native Americans with biblical Hebrews.

Kulyk's postcolonial penchant also informed his enthusiasm for American literature. While in Canada, he corresponded intensively with literary critics, journalists, and poets, who helped him to amass a substantial collection of modern American poetry. Kulyk selected thirty-three of them to be translated into Ukrainian, and thus the first anthology of American poetry in the Ukrainian language emerged. Among those selected were such celebrities as Carl Sandburg, who by the 1920s had authored several books of poetry, and such lesser known as Mike Gold, whose poetry was scattered among left-wing literary journals. In several cases Kulyk discovered poets whose talents had not yet fully blossomed, a fact that attests to his keen eye and exquisite literary taste. The anthology constituted of four parts, corresponding to Kulyk's vision of the stages in the development of American poetry: "The Precursors of Modern American Poetry," "The Democratic Renaissance," "The Younger Generation," and "The Pioneers of Proletarian Poetry." Kulyk started with Walt Whitman and Edwin Markham and ended with Ralph Chaplin, J. S. Wallace, and Herschell Bek. Despite the fact that Kulyk's personal preferences rather than any objective criterion dictated the selection of poems, for contemporary Ukrainian culture the publication of Kulyk's fundamental *Antolohiia amerykans'koi poezii* (Anthology of the American Poetry, 1928) was by all standards a groundbreaking event. In addition to brief essays on each author, Kulyk prefaced the book with a lengthy

essay defining the main periods through which American literature was emancipated from the British literary canon.⁷⁷

Kulyk entirely excluded from his anthology those poets who, to his mind, imitated English poetic styles and shared British literary values. Cultural imperialists were out. This explains why Kulyk did not favor Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–82), or Ralph Waldo Emerson (1787–1863)—and leads the Ukrainian poet and thinker Mykola Zerov to wonder why. But those who sought to undo British influence and break new literary paths deserved his praise and a place in the anthology. Kulyk did not avoid pointing out—or at least hinting at—the Jewish origins of some of those who appeared in his anthology. But he also emphasized an unmistakable trajectory that brought them to a rupture with their petty-bourgeois milieu, as for example Robert L. Wolf, the Marxist economist and the author of the collection *After Disillusion* (1923). For Kulyk, the acclaimed African-American poet Claude McKay (1890–1948) once and for all dismissed the common view of a Harlem-based, scornfully colonial, and underdeveloped youngster from godforsaken Jamaica who purportedly could never become culturally, morally, and so more so literary superior to white Americans. Kulyk included the seventy-five-year-old Charles Erskine Scott Wood (1852–1944), among the pioneers of proletarian poetry because of Wood’s unmistakable anticolonialist and revolutionary orientation: Wood had fought against Indians in the army, was promoted to the colonel, saw that the war was unjust, left the army, became an attorney and later an anarchist and revolutionary poet—a biography that strongly resembled some episodes of Louis David Riel’s life.⁷⁸

Elsewhere Kulyk explained why he sympathized with American poetry—and what ignited his lexical innovations: introducing his translations of Carl Sandburg, Kulyk observed that “word-invention in Ukrainian and American poetry was the result of pushing off from the colonialist linguistic milieu.”⁷⁹

The Red Word of Ivan Kulyk

Kulyk discovered the Ukrainians and Ukrainian folklore just as Ukrainians were rediscovering, or better to say, reconceiving the Jews. Although Ukrainian drama, poetry, and prose on Jews and Jewish themes appearing in the 1920s to early 1930s will require a separate study, several observations will help place Kulyk in context. From Marko Vovchok to Ivan Franko, Ukrainian literature had grappled with the social identification of the Jews. Over time, Jews were seen as a suffering ethnic body doomed to exile and bondage; as grotesque or pitiful

petty bourgeoisie; and most often as cruel bloodsuckers and exploiters, servile subjects of Polish magnates and Russian landlords, rampant Western capitalists, and parasites on the body of the Ukrainian peasantry—by no means trustworthy neighbors of the Ukrainian people.⁸⁰

The late 1910s and 1920s saw a radical revision of this approach. Marxist and socialist patterns pushed away the populist ones that had dominated literary discourse at the turn of the century. A new take on Jews emerged: no less exploited, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated than Ukrainians, subjected to the same enforced Russification, and as voiceless and colonized as the Ukrainian peasant. The class-based vision of a Jew as a proletarian *sui generis*—stuttering or voiceless, hard working and yet hardly making ends meet—permeates post-1917 Ukrainian prose. The novelty, however, lies in the fact that Ukrainian writers found their Jewish proletarians in the shtetl among poor Jewish artisans, not in the industrial city. Perhaps under the impact of Kuprin's "Gambrinus," as early as 1918 M. Levyts'kyi realized that such an indispensable shtetl dweller as the wedding violinist was not necessarily a "bourgeois" Jewish bohemian. Rather, like his own Peisakh Leiderman, he was a hard-toiling proletarian, penniless, decrepit, and burdened with sick relatives for whom he had to provide in his old age.⁸¹

Stepan Vasył'chenko also placed the moving Avrum Marchyk, a "timid toiler-tailor with an always cheery expression on his pale and anemic face," in a Ukrainian shtetl.⁸² Like other Ukrainian laborers portrayed by Shevchenko or Franko, "because of the back-breaking drudgery" Marchyk could not see "how the sun shines, how orchards blossom, and how dawns break through." Inspired by the sense of brotherhood and solidarity he experiences at a socialist meeting, Avrum dreams of having a son: "People will elect him as a deputy, and he will bring to people a red-hot word about what freedom is."⁸³ Avrum's son is born in the midst of a horrible pogrom that decimates the town's Jewish population, including Avrum's family. To underscore his sympathy for the poor tailor, Vasył'chenko uses the stylistic patterns of a Ukrainian folktale. Marchyk deserves Ukrainian sympathies just for the fact that his and his family's language is the Judaized talk of a clumsy yet honest Ukrainian folk character.

Like Vasył'chenko, Volodymyr Hzhys'ts'kyi in his short novel *Mutsa* sympathetically portrayed Haim, a hard-working shtetl Jew from Ianiv (Janów) in western Ukraine, whose revolutionary-minded son Natan opens his eyes to class struggle and proletarian internationalism, in this case, Ukrainian-Jewish. To his father, still attached to "klal Yisroel," the people of Israel, Nathan retors: "We can and must love those with whom we share interests—with the poor, for we are poor, and with the rest we should fight, and fight until a complete victory."⁸⁴

This new class identity altered what was considered a major anthropological quality of traditional Jews: their cowardice. In his short story “Ziama” (1924), Arkadii Liubchenko traced the itinerary of a timid shtetl musician who as a distributor of political leaflets, killed a policeman and spent years in prison, and who after the revolution immersed into its “red whirl” and was killed on the front.⁸⁵ Kost Kotko sharply circumscribed the framework for a reimagined Jew, making one of his Jewish Bolsheviks address his main character Shlioma: “You are no Jew, you are a worker. You, Shlioma, are a proletarian. Do you understand this word? A Jewish worker. Comrades, Shlioma is a proletarian, a tailor, he has earned his bread from the age of fourteen.”⁸⁶

Developing a class-based approach to the Jews, Iurii Smolych wrote *Kinets mista za bazarom* (The Edge of the Town Behind the Market, 1924), a humorous narrative about a certain Yosel Natanzon, a Jewish shoemaker who is exploited during the NEP (New Economic Policy) years by a local criminal. Permeated by the Marxist smoke of a nearby plant—the headquarters of the local Kom-somol—Yosel learns the language of emancipation, liberates himself, and acquires a new sense of dignity.⁸⁷ In *Dytynstvo* (Childhood, 1937), the same Smolych revisited his father’s house in the midst of the 1905 Revolution, when local outcasts from the Black Hundreds enticed by a Russian Orthodox priest and police burned to ashes the town’s Jewish district. Smolych’s father improvised a patriotic concert for the armed, drunk, and angry perpetrators in his dining room, while some thirty Jews were hiding in the contiguous children’s room.⁸⁸

The quest for the “reconceptualized alien” manifested itself not only in the Ukrainian discovery of the “no-longer-alien” Jew but also in the mutual—Ukrainian and Jewish—efforts to appropriate the classical literary values on both sides. The Ukrainian poetry dedicated to Sholem Aleichem and Jewish poetry canonizing Shevchenko are the best examples of these efforts.⁸⁹ To be sure, Smolych’s Jews were victims—ruined, scared, and helpless paupers crying out for protection. Paradoxically, while Ukrainian “proletarians and intelligentsia” (as Smolych depicts them) took it upon themselves to defend the proletarian Jew, Kulyk took it upon himself to defend the Ukrainians and whomever he associated with the oppressed Ukrainians worldwide. And both sides eagerly declared that the Russian Revolution had changed once and for all the status of both peoples. Kulyk would pay for that mistake as dearly as his Ukrainian colleagues.

Over the course of his career, Kulyk’s Ukrainian–Jewish identity, his belief in the international socialist revolution, and his attachment to the Ukrainian cause evolved considerably. This can be seen in the way Kulyk uses “green” and “red”

images in his poetry. His first volume of Ukrainian poetry, *Moi kolomyiky* (1921), a thin gray-paper pamphlet, combined his ten-year-long interest in Ukrainian folklore, his admiration for Shevchenko's revolutionary romanticism, and his new concept of class struggle. Most of its themes and motifs stemmed from the time Kulyk spent in Polish prisons. The book imitated Ukrainian folklore *kolomyiky*, rhymed folkloric poems mostly of western Ukrainian origin, and offered some two dozen poems in various folksong genres: peasants' dirges, songs of ploughman and sower, cavalry ballads, peasant-rebels' victorious halleluiahs, Cossack military marches, and soldiers' farewell songs. Kulyk's framing of the book conveys its double entendre. He portrays the free-loving character of Halychyna Ukrainian peasants fighting against economic oppression and simultaneously recollects the Polish prison in which these peasants are incarcerated together with their heartbreaking dirges. *Kolomyika* thus turns into an image on its own; it becomes a freedom-loving Ukrainian captive behind Polish (read: capitalist) bars. Kulyk dissolves his voice in the collective narrator—or performer—of the dirges, thus becoming an anonymous compiler of popular voices.

Whatever Kulyk's Marxist inclinations, in his first book he emerged as a romantic populist—akin to a socialist revolutionary obsessed with the fate of the Ukrainian peasant—rather than a Bolshevik. The first half of the book, "Pid iarmom" (Under the Yoke), views Galicia realities through the lens of Shevchenkian peasant imagery. Kulyk identifies with the Galician peasant lamenting the wartime famine, the cattle confiscated by Romanian lords and Polish legionnaires, the crops left unharvested in the fields, the weeds in the rye. He decries the pitiful fate of his *kolomyiky*, these sad peasant songs walking like orphans over the ashes of postwar fires. He celebrates the victorious peasant revolt in the second part, "Chervona Halychyna" (Red Galicia). Yesterday's oppressed peasants return to their homes as the "free lords of life." The poor border village and the devastated town of yesterday are now "red" and "resuscitated." The peasants throw away the bourgeois yellow-blue banners of right-wing Ukrainian nationalism, lofted red banners instead, and expelled the Romanian and Polish exploiters.

In keeping with his folkloric models, Kulyk avoids references to local Ukrainian lords. He introduces the negative image of the exploiting "attorneys-lords"—picked up from émigré folklore he researched in the United States—while leaving out the third element in the chain of exploitation, the Yids, and attempts to offer a new class-based folklore genre, free of xenophobia. Faithful to historical circumstances, Kulyk portrays not only the glorious westward advance of the Red Army in 1921 but also its ignoble retreat. As a result, most of Galicia, genuinely Ukrainian from Kulyk's viewpoint, fell to the Poles. But even though

the book is imbued with the sufferings of people throughout, Kulyk's "red folklore" does not culminate in pessimism and despair. The collection abruptly ends with a *contra spem spero* romantic promise: "Whoever encountered freedom for a moment / Will never remain a slave!"⁹⁰ Kulyk did strike a nerve: Ukrainian memoirists repeatedly noted that some of Kulyk's poems, in fact, acquired popularity in the Ukrainian borderlands.

Kulyk's own voice emerged in *Zelene serce* (The Green Heart, 1923), a well-designed volume ornamented with light green vignettes built on proletarian urban motifs. The book reflected his new experiences as a very young party leader, Komsomol organizer, agitator with international outreach, and a feeble human being anticipating a worldwide socialist revolution. Kulyk's "green"—human, all too human—heart encounters the rising Red Soviet society. The "green" aspects make Kulyk the lyrical hero of his own poetry: like an overexcited child, he admires the self-sacrificial deeds of the members of Young Communist League (Komsomol); he falls in love with a young worker named Shura (diminutive of Aleksandra); he is deeply saddened by the famine in Russia and left-bank Ukraine and calls for help to overcome its dreadful consequences; he cries for Ukraine and Kyiv from a Polish cell, and he is irritated by the boredom of the peaceful Ukrainian town he supervises. Kulyk's feelings are "green," and he is far from being a stalwart "red" fighter for the new socialist future. He emerges from the book as an untutored Marxist given to romanticism.⁹¹ He perceives the world more with his "green" heart than with his red-hot brain. Even when he dreams of the world revolution, he portrays his revolutionary premonitions as "painfully sweet."⁹² Perhaps it was not unreasonable for Kulyk to call himself an "impressionist," thus associating his poetry with condensed metaphors, an emotion-centered *Weltanschauung*, and sensuous imagery.

This lyricism, uncommon in hammer-banging and optimistic proletarian verse, also imbued his third poetry collection, *V otochenni* (Besieged, 1927). In this volume, Kulyk refers ironically to his own career and reveals the soft inconsistent voice of a revolutionary romantic who does not measure up to the demands of the era:

I am not remembered. I am not for posterity.
I am not admired even by my contemporaries.
My songs were not that intense.
And not that dense.⁹³

Although he repeats the incantation "vanish, moment of weakness" throughout *Besieged*, it is precisely his weakness that makes his voice unusual. Kulyk is still "green"-hearted—he fails to grapple with the superhuman tasks set before him, and his attempt to turn into dogmatic ideologue causes a psychological crisis.

Exhausted, the Kulyk of *Beseiged* is sent for treatment to the Nadezhdino sanatorium near Moscow where psychologically challenged Russian revolutionaries undergo medical treatment. Kulyk is no satirist, perhaps he does not even grasp the ludicrous nature of the environment he is depicting, a hospital for neurotic communists! On the contrary, Kulyk portrays the sanatorium for damaged party comrades sympathetically. Forbidden to read newspapers or discuss politics, they take pains to muse over political rumors and dream of joining again the ranks of the Red fighters. They complain that the nonstop class struggle has drained them of energy. Thirsty for mass meetings and parades, they enjoy the company of the nearby villagers, whose inspirational speeches help heal their decimated nerves. With the precision of a professional psychiatrist, Kulyk depicts his own obsession—the madness of a devoted Marxist who realizes that he has failed to understand Marx:

Overworked. Tired. Drained.
 A broken thought. Stress.
 Somewhere on the pages
 Of Marx's *Capital*.
 Confused in formulas. What is "S"?
 Surplus value?
 Well, "C" is a constant capital.
 And "V" is variable.
 But what is "S"?
 This is not madness, says the doctor.
 Just a crisis.
 Just overexhausted.⁹⁴

Indeed, Kulyk concludes his collection by returning his lyrical hero back to the coal mines, to the robust workers, and into the energetic proletarian milieu. Yet in most of *Beseiged*, Kulyk the artist still has the upper hand over Kulyk the Marxist. And his prediction of the impending world revolution still conveys his perception of the internationally oriented Marxism rather than what Stalin would consider Soviet Marxism in the mid-1930s.

Kulyk's fascination with events of epic magnitude, his proletarian internationalism, and his anticolonialism underpins his writings on American slavery. In *Chorna epopeia* (The Black Epic, 1929), Kulyk glorified the 1816 rebellion of some three hundred African-American slaves and twenty American Indians inhabiting Big Lick Garrison Fort in Apalachicola Bay, Florida. Known as the Fort Blount Revolt, this episode provides the historical backdrop for Kulyk's portrayal of his Errant Black, the murdered yet constantly resuscitating African-American slave Sambo. Kulyk traces Sambo's itinerary and tells the story of how he cursed his fate of picking cotton on southern plantations, how he deceived

and ran away from his master, and how he finally found safe haven in a commune of runaway slaves in Fort Blount. During the murderous bombardment of the commune by U.S. battleships, Kulyk saves Sambo from the massacre, makes him a free African American, and turns him into a colonized urban proletarian. Sambo works at a factory, dances in a pub, dreams of vengeance, commits a crime, and dies on the gallows—only to be resuscitated again for a new yet unwritten “red epic.”⁹⁵

Kulyk’s *The Black Epic* translates his folklorist predilections from Ukrainian into “American” and back. To tell what Sambo was living through, Kulyk has his character sing Ukrainian songs to the rhythm of the step, the foxtrot, and the Charleston; recite a Ukrainian-Scottish ballad about the Fort Blount commune; listen to a bravado Ukrainian military march and the quasi-pirate songs of the U.S. troops sent to suppress the rebellion; share his wit and fatalistic optimism in a Ukrainian limerick; pour his broken heart into a Ukrainian blues; and sing his final farewell to his murdered relatives in a melancholic Ukrainian spiritual. Kulyk’s imitation of the whole gamut of English and American folklore genres in the Ukrainian language made many critics consider *The Black Epic* the pinnacle of his work.⁹⁶ Critics also praised the proletarian internationalism shaping the imagery of the poem.

Ideologically, however, Kulyk’s poem was far from pristine: he imbued his Sambo with the spirit of Huliai-pole anarchism, of Ukrainian Cossack fatalism, and of French socialist utopianism. “Black” was not only about African Americans; it was also about the unruly and freedom-loving Makhno, whose black-bannered troops had a luminary presence on the Ukrainian political and military map of the civil war. Kulyk deliberately crafts ambiguities in his epic so that it can be read as a narrative of Ukrainian emancipation. For example, by inserting an episode about John Brown (with its indispensable “glory, glory, halleluiah”), he reminds his reader of another “glory, glory” (“slava, slava,” in this particular duplicated form), the call of Petliura and the Haidamak Ukrainian People’s Republic troops.⁹⁷ Ukrainian language and folklore come to serve as a medium for the redemption of a black from slavery. Only inspired by the folklore of the Ukrainian rebels can he find freedom. In a sense, Kulyk’s *The Black Epic* is not only about the emancipation of black American slaves but also about the emancipation of Kulyk from his “green” solipsism through Ukrainian and American folklore. Kulyk’s class-based perception of folklore, however, did not survive the rightward shifts in the Kremlin’s strategy in the 1930s.

By the mid-1930s, Kulyk had slowly but steadily eliminated the “green” from his poetry and came to associate himself only with “red.” Before the security organ Narodnyi kommissariat vnutrennikh del (NKVD) came for him, he

managed almost entirely to expurgate his “green” weakness and became “red” through and through; the fact that his autobiographical *Sofia Park* remained unfinished was a result of his own attempts to neutralize the “green” aspects of his poetry. Kulyk allowed his Marxist self to crush his artist self. There was nothing unusual in this: once he set out on a certain path in 1921, he could not but get to where he found himself in 1935. It was in his *My Kolomyiky* that he erected “red banners” over the roofs of the houses in East Galician towns. In *The Green Heart*, Kulyk celebrated the “red” hand of help stretched during the famine by the right-bank Ukrainians to their brethren on the left bank. He called on all oppressed human beings to look with hope toward the “red dawns.” He predicted that a “red-thunder song” would cause an earthquake to awaken the human beings from their lethargy. The new generation of young communists, argued Kulyk, should “not to be afraid of dirt and blood.”

When Kulyk became tired of the boredom of his life as a provincial party leader, he condemned the monotonous urban calm, which he wished to inundate with a “wild mob,” immerse in “street fights,” and adorn with “blood and banners.” Painting the world in red was his utmost dream:

So painfully sweet to feel
That this task is ours:
To unfold red streamers
Over the Eiffel Tower.⁹⁸

The love of “red” and the dreams of the world revolution conveyed a vision of class struggle that had no place for “green” feelings. In *The Green Heart*, Kulyk admires the stamina and decisiveness of the girl he loves—not only because she was a comrade-in-arms at war and a workers’ activist at a knitted goods factory, but above all because she expurgated “green” feelings from her “red” heart:

A trial. Your brother, a traitor.
Rough voice: put him to death.
And you, so calmly: why waver?
And signed your name first.⁹⁹

In *The Green Heart*, the behavior of his girlfriend fascinates him. But in the 1930s, Kulyk learned the lesson only too well. He finally equates his internationalism with socialist utopianism by juxtaposing two self-descriptive metaphors, his “word for all” and his “red word.” At the best moments of his apophysis, he abjures humaneness and presents himself as the “scald of the victorious class, / The class of sickle and hammer.”¹⁰⁰ His postcolonial triumph rejects his anti-colonialist strivings.

After the brutal suppression of Ukrainian revivalism in the early 1930s, Ku-

lyk experienced a radical transformation on many levels. He compares Canadian forests to the woods of Volhynia, brings together the St. Lawrence River and the frozen Dnieper, and discusses the resemblance between North American farmers and Ukrainian peasants, but he accepts all these parallels only in a red revolutionary framework. Do not be saddened, advises Kulyk, we will decorate the Canadian spring with red stars and the revolution will shortly be victorious in this North American country, just as it was in Ukraine: “You should not worry there, in Kharkiv / It’s already close, the ocean will not be an obstacle.”¹⁰¹ Kulyk spends page upon page celebrating the extraordinary might and natural beauty of Niagara Falls but at the end paints it red. A timeless and useless luxury, Niagara Falls enters Kulyk’s utopian future only as a new electric power station, as a huge plant, or as an enormous mine through which ore flows like water. Canada, concludes Kulyk, “will be a wonderful country / when it has red banners!”¹⁰² When Kulyk claims that the best of all poems is “the poem of four letters called the USSR” and modestly acknowledges that it has “a drop of his color,” there is no doubt he implies red and not green.

By the mid-1930s, red had suppressed all the other colors in Kulyk’s palette. This was Kulyk’s response to the murderous repressions of the Ukrainian revival by the Kremlin in the early 1930s, when Kulyk’s onetime colleagues and friends either committed suicide (Skrypnyk, Khvyl’ovyi) or were arrested and sent to the Solovki Islands.¹⁰³ Ivan Kulyk turned away from not only Yisroel Iudovych but also Vasyly’ Rolenko. Admiration of things all-Russian replaced love of things Ukrainian. In 1921, Kulyk had cried out to the Ukrainians to help their left-bank brethren and save them from famine; in 1932, like most of his colleagues (but not like Osip Mandelstam, Leonid Pervomais’kyi, and later, Vassili Grossman), he had passed through the tragedy of the famine in silence, and like some, praised the construction of the White Sea Canal, built by the inmates of the rising Gulag. At the beginning of his career he had cared for Ukrainian peasants and workers and celebrated the Ukrainian Electropolis (most likely Kharkiv); now he sang praises to the newly established Moscow subway and portrayed himself as a flourishing poet of Moscow, not of Ukraine.¹⁰⁴ He had dreamed of Ukraine celebrating the New Year in 1920 while sitting in Warsaw’s Central Prison—but in Moscow on the eve of 1933, he did not even mention Ukraine as he turned calendar page. He did not become Russian; he simply preferred to bow down to the imperial.¹⁰⁵

In the early and mid-1920s, without making a big fuss of it, Kulyk had saved people whenever he could and helped Ukrainians—even strangers—who had found themselves in desperate situations. In the mid-1930s, however, with his hands on the mechanisms of Soviet power, he failed to help friends and col-

leagues. Surovtsova bitterly commented: “Tender and sensitive person, he knew how to be stone-firm. I would not pause on his ‘principle-based’ approach to life events when he believed in the justice of what he saw. I cannot forget though a brief episode from my last extramural meeting with Kulyk: when after my arrest in 1932, my mom, in despair, turned to him for help—Kulyk, Ivan Kulyk, my boss in the commissariat of foreign affairs, my colleague in literary endeavors, my friend from the first days of the revolution, in the museum work of the pre-revolutionary times, our ‘Rol’ka’ from Uman, looking simple-mindedly and openly in the old woman’s eyes replied that he ‘does not know me well enough to get involved with my case.’ He was honest with himself.”¹⁰⁶ Even Kulyk’s beloved Canada reappeared for just a moment as “the alien and long forgotten land.”¹⁰⁷ His poetry of the 1920s was permeated with various genres of Ukrainian and American folklore, but in his *Zmuzhnila molodist’* (Mature Youth, 1935) there were three domineering genres: the march (for triumphant socialist construction), the ode (for Stalin’s guidance), and the newspaper eulogy (for the assassinated Sergei Kirov).¹⁰⁸

Now the “green” question marks that brought his previous poetry alive were replaced with the exclamation marks of patriotic pamphleteering and slogan-making. Iurii Luts’kyi, not at all sympathetic to Kulyk, was not really exaggerating when he argued that Kulyk’s public appearances of the mid-1930s were servile, if not sycophantic, toward Moscow.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, his “red” territory also shrank. In the 1920s his wholehearted revolutionary utopianism made him paint the world red; establish imaginary soviets in Paris, Bombay, and London; and bring together the Carpathians and the Cordilleras and emancipate their peasants. Following those Ukrainian poets who sang hosannas to the regime, he glorified “with the most glorious of all glories/the Party and the Ch.K.,” that is to say, the Extraordinary Committee (Cheka), the most vicious institution in the country. In the 1920s, Kulyk was ready to sacrifice his life for the emancipation of oppressed ethnicities worldwide. In his Marxist lyrics of the mid-1930s, there was only one value worthy of his self-sacrifice: the Communist Party led by Stalin. Ultimately, he demonstrated that he had learned the lesson of his cold-blooded girlfriend Shura, who calmly approved of the execution of her own brother. In a poem denouncing the hypocrisy of Ukrainian nationalists, Kulyk appeals to his readers with a call to redouble vigilance, divulge internal enemies, and “raze them pitilessly!”¹¹⁰

In the 1920s, critics generally treated Kulyk as the exemplary Ukrainian poet. They singled Kulyk out among contemporary literary figures. The only literary figure who appeared in Kulyk’s context and to whom Kulyk was compared was Vasyl’ Ellan-Blakytynyi (1894–1925), a former socialist revolutionary ac-

tivist, later a Borot'bist, and finally a Bolshevik, whose prose both bemoaned and celebrated the tragic spontaneity and grassroots enthusiasm of the revolution. This was a high praise, for Ellan was seen as "a central figure in Ukrainian cultural life after the collapse of the UPR" and "a symbol of Ukrainian communism."¹¹¹ Significantly, the authoritative Oleksandr Bilets'kyi clustered Ellan and Kulyk together and depicted Kulyk (in Ellan's terms) as a person for whom revolutionary fervor and personal feelings were one.¹¹²

Yet some critics argued that Kulyk was too good a Marxist to be an artist. A champion of the classic form in art and poetry, Mykola Zerov criticized Kulyk (along with Khvyi'ovyi) for not speaking "directly to the heart" of the reader, who remained "indifferent and cold" to their lyrics. On Kulyk's attempts to combine traditional Ukrainian folklore and new revolutionary imagery in his *Red Galicia*, Zerov observed: "This is good for a banner, for an agitation pamphlet, for Red Army newspaper satire. But it is difficult to say what this has in common with so-called poetic achievements."¹¹³ Iurii Poletika, the Russian reviewer of Kulyk's *The Green Heart* and overtly condescending to Ukrainian authors, was even less enthusiastic. In his short review he called Kulyk "an aristocrat among the proletarian bohemians," who seemed to have abused his position as a high-ranked functionary to lard his book with ideological rattle and ensure that it was perfectly designed and printed.¹¹⁴ Other pundits celebrated Kulyk's fusion of poetry and ideology and praised the pure proletarian convictions conveyed by his poetry. For them, Kulyk was the first to make proletarian internationalism speak Ukrainian.

Indeed, Kulyk's anthems to the rising industrial Ukraine were unparalleled in the village-oriented Ukrainian literary context. The Ukrainian critic A. Khutorian, reviewing Kulyk's *Besieged*, called it "a very, very significant event" that embodied the "pathos of a great epoch," unlike the "minor-key colors and sad pictures" of modern Ukrainian decadent poetry. Even if some of his motifs gestured toward decadence ("Recovery," for example, or "The Moment of Weakness"), Kulyk celebrated life, work, and an optimism shaped by proletarian internationalism. Khutorian was particularly enthusiastic about Kulyk's vision of Canada and Ukraine, soon to be united in one and the same realm of world socialism. To be sure, Khutorian approved of Kulyk's vision of the Niagara Falls as the future site of an electric power plant.¹¹⁵

Kulyk's leading position in the party did not prevent his critics from evaluating his literary production according to its quality rather than its ideology. Many grappled with the question of whether Kulyk was a party ideologue who rhymed socialist mottoes or a genuine poet. Mykhailo Dolengo, for example, underscored Kulyk's treatment of the ordinary revolutionary and worker's life, "so

very rare in modern Ukrainian poetry.”¹¹⁶ Reviewing *Besieged*, the same Dolengo praised Kulyk’s lyricism. His poetry, he argued, was not a combination of rhymed slogans but rather a manifestation of the collective feelings of the revolutionary people. Kulyk dissolved his poetic voice in the collective “we” of the revolutionary masses, thus giving birth to a new type of narrator, both epic and lyric. Dolengo did not call it utopianism but emphasized that Kulyk’s new poetic style matched “the buildings and towers of the socialist Electropolis.” Dolengo praised Kulyk for the way he balanced his quest for personal style with his elaboration of materialist aesthetics. To translate Dolengo’s critical slang into modern language: Kulyk was an artist despite being a Marxist.¹¹⁷

In a similar fashion, Volodymyr Koriak, a respectable and prolific Ukrainian literary scholar, placed Kulyk among the “first rank of the writers of October.”¹¹⁸ In his *Ukrainian Literature: A Conspectus* (1928), he deemed Kulyk one of the best examples of a truly socialist artist who masterfully synthesized artistic experiment and Marxist orientation. According to Koriak:

[Kulyk] is the most consistent and orthodox among Ukrainian proletarian poets. At present he enriches the themes of proletarian poetry with new motifs imported from overseas, where he worked for three years as an advisor to the USSR consulate in Canada. His revolutionary *kolomyiky* that celebrate the Red Army’s fight for Galicia are widely known and popular. As to his poetic language, various trends influenced him: impressionism and futurism are interwoven in his writings with the artistic objectivity of a genuine realism. Kulyk loves experimenting in versification yet he never sacrifices depth of content for it. Critics have unanimously admitted the artistic and ideological values of his last collection *V otochenni* (*Besieged*).¹¹⁹

Some of Kulyk’s poems were among the most popular of the 1920s. “The Worker Shura,” a “Soviet socialist romance,” became a hit song that the critics dubbed “the first portrait of the Beatrice of the New World.”¹²⁰ It was the first of three of Kulyk’s poems that the eminent student of Ukrainian literature Mykola Plevako included in his *Anthology of the New Ukrainian Literature: From 1880 to the Present* (1926).¹²¹

Although he was not as popular as Volodymyr Sosiura or Mykola Khvyly’ovyi, Kulyk was still a celebrity whose literary endeavors triggered the interest of Ukrainian satirists. When cartoonists at the literary journals mocked proletarian literature as a whole, they portrayed Kulyk as a feeble, big-headed, and bearded East European intellectual holding the quintessential proletarian’s huge hammer. It is Kulyk effort to combine proletarian themes and genuine sincere lyricism that seems laughable. One of the satirists penned a double-edged parody of Koriak’s portrayal of Kulyk: “He grows right before you. You are standing and

watching him, and he is growing right there. He has grown from a leaflet. He grew up and in a certain way started to go. He is a lyric: he gives, finds, selects, forges, creates, sings, yells, summons, and preaches. What he gives is no commonplace. What he finds are concrete live patterns. What he selects are live images. What he creates is a new language stemming from the proletarian routine life, work, and struggle.”¹²²

Kulyk’s critics found it remarkable that he had discovered America for Ukrainians. Hitherto likely to know only a few names—Edgar Allan Poe or Ralph Waldo Emerson—Ukrainian readers found in Kulyk’s *Antoliohiiia amerykans’koi poezii* (An Anthology of American Poetry, 1928) an entire universe of names, themes, and genres. Most of the works that Kulyk introduced into Ukrainian had not previously been published in either Ukrainian or Russian. Ukrainians read Western poetry in Ukrainian translations or, in most cases, in Russian. Kulyk, however, translated from the original English. Oswald Burghardt (Iurii Klen), a prominent member of the generation of the “executed renaissance,” called Kulyk’s *Anthology* “a first-rank event in our literary life.” He noticed, however, the inexplicable absence in Kulyk’s *Anthology* of such poets as John Fletcher, T. S. Eliot, and Sara Tisdale (this absence is revealing in the context of Kulyk’s anticolonialism), yet he held Kulyk’s versions of Walt Whitman, Markham, Edgar Lee Masters, and Mike Gold in high regard. Some of these translations, argued Burghardt, were poetic masterpieces that deserved an appropriate place in standard Ukrainian schoolbooks.¹²³

Not only American writers but also American themes testified to Kulyk’s unique attempts to bring America to Ukraine. In his enthusiastic review of *Besieged*, I. Raid wittily observed that Kulyk was perhaps among the very few Ukrainian literati, if not the only one, who managed to overcome the gravitation of Ukrainian territory and create innovative Ukrainian images of countries other than Ukraine. Praising the rhythmic, visual, and metaphoric novelties of Kulyk’s long poem “Niagara,” Raid argued that it was one of the best poems of post-October Ukrainian literature and that it featured the genuinely industrial motifs that Ukrainian poetry so lacked. Though Kulyk modestly affirms that he is not a “master” in his poetic guild but only an “apprentice,” Raid argues that Kulyk’s poetry, especially “Niagara,” confirms that he is a real master.¹²⁴ Kulyk was also bringing Ukraine to America: the literary scholar Hryhorii Maifet compared Kulyk’s *The Black Epic* to African-American poetic folklore (from Kulyk’s American poetic anthology and from elsewhere) and praised Kulyk for his use of African-American myths, social themes, assonant rhymes, nuanced poetic reconstruction of African-American conversational language, and ideologically mature imagery. Maifet’s essay, perhaps the first scholarly discussion of Kulyk,

left no doubt that Kulyk had raised African-American folklore to a level of formal and ideological dexterity absent in the original.¹²⁵ To wit: Kulyk was an eminent Ukrainian representative of the African trend in modern American literature.

Ivan Kulyk versus the NKVD

In the summer of 1937, Kulyk was arrested and accused of participating in an anti-Soviet organization and spying for a foreign intelligence service. Before he was put on trial, he appeared at a banquet marking Pushkin's death at the Central House of Writers in Moscow. He behaved weirdly. When Paolo Iashvili from Georgia pronounced a toast saying that his republic could be proud of her sons, such as Stalin, Kulyk replied "And we do not envy you"—and fainted.¹²⁶ This was the last time he was seen in public. A few months later, on October 7, 1937, he was found guilty and sentenced to death. Apparently the sentence was not delayed, and Kulyk was executed immediately. Most Soviet encyclopedias and bibliographic guides, however, wrongly indicate 1941 as the year of his death. Twenty years after his execution, on December 12, 1956, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR accepted the protest of the USSR prosecutor general against the 1937 NKVD decision and revisited the case. After conducting additional research, the Supreme Court established that "Kulyk was arrested and shot on false grounds." The court cancelled the NKVD decision of October 7, 1937, and rescinded the case against Kulyk, who was then found not guilty. The military board's secret decision no. 173 was signed by Colonel Kopchev, Lieutenant Colonel Iarovenko, and Lieutenant Colonel Kapustin.¹²⁷

The nature of the NKVD interrogation proceedings makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to use them as a trustworthy evidence. They are self-incriminating texts containing information on names, dates, and conversations on recruiting and espionage activities. In most cases, it is evident that the defendants were not guilty and all the accusations were built on sand. As a rule, defendants received a prefabricated text that they were required to sign, and the interrogators spared no measure to force their victims to sign the false statement. The most important parts of the interrogations—pauses filled with tortures and humiliation—were covered by silence. Kulyk's case was no exception. Yet, astonishingly, a close reading reveals at least two layers in the text of Kulyk's interrogation. The first, superficial layer depicts Kulyk as an agent of British and German intelligence who manipulated Ukrainian émigré circles to form an espionage network in Soviet Ukraine. The Ukrainian nationalist movement in the Diaspora emerges from the pages of Kulyk's interrogation as nothing but a

by-product of the subversive plans of Western imperialist circles to separate Ukraine from the Soviet Union. This part of the NKVD file reflects the agenda of Kulyk's accusers and scarcely deserves attention.¹²⁸

The first layer articulated the NKVD's accusations, and the second is the story that Kulyk intended to convey to his accusers. Leaving aside the obtrusive references to an alleged Kulyk-led anti-Soviet conspiracy scattered throughout the document, it is clear that Kulyk was trying to convince the prosecutors that he had never deviated one iota from official policy. As a representative of Soviet Ukraine, Kulyk had met with Ukrainian nationalists, and even ultranationalists, but his intentions were first to reassure them that Soviet Ukraine was genuinely interested in fostering a national agenda; that the Ukrainian idea, bereft of its bourgeois underpinnings, was interwoven into Ukrainian politics; and that Ukraine was ready to welcome back repentant exiles.¹²⁹ Kulyk's *Notes of a Consul* hinted that this was one of his primary tasks while on diplomatic service in Canada. Yet Kulyk's multiple encounters with Ukrainian émigrés were used against him, and Kulyk now had to pay for his attempts to redeem and unite the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Those who followed his advice, such as Nadia Surovtsova, his good and trustworthy friend, were arrested. Those who no longer bolstered the state's ideology, such as Skrypnyk, were made Kulyk's accomplices. And those with whom Kulyk secretly sympathized became the USSR's archenemies.

One of them was Volodymyr Vynnychenko who, as a former head of the Directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the first independent Ukrainian government, fled to France. Kulyk's relation of his encounter with Vynnychenko shows that many issues that came up in the interrogation were not inventions of the NKVD. Here is Kulyk:

A couple of days later, at Polots'kyi's [in Paris], I met with V. Vynnychenko whom I knew due to a nodding acquaintance in 1917 and 1920. When I asked him about the prospects for his return to Ukraine and active politics, Vynnychenko replied that in principle he had answered this question in his brochure *A Return to Ukraine*, in which he called upon the young and nationalist-minded Ukrainian emigrants to return to the Ukrainian SSR in order to be closer to the "forthcoming events." Yet as far as Vynnychenko's own return was concerned, it had to be postponed until "locally acting nationalist [*sic*] forces" prepared sufficiently stable grounds. I listened to his reflections on that matter, and as a result we agreed that he, Vynnychenko, would promote our "common cause" in France. For that I, in turn, promised to provide him regularly with honorariums for his publications in Ukraine.¹³⁰

There are reasons to believe that this meeting took place and that Kulyk was planning to help publish Vynnychenko in Ukraine. Kulyk was well aware that

among liberal and Russian-oriented circles in France, hardly anybody sympathized with Vynnychenko's Ukrainian patriotism or was interested in his writings. Ivan Kulyk, whose appearance on the Ukrainian horizon Vynnychenko had predicted in *Between Two Powers*, now came to the author of *Between Two Powers* to enlist his support and help him return to the new Ukraine.

The innocuous character of Kulyk's meeting with Vynnychenko is only too evident. It was an encounter of opponents, not enemies, and the "common cause" mentioned in the conversation implied nothing but their work toward the political stability of Ukraine and its cultural revival. But the NKVD added a line referring to three important Ukrainian public figures and making the whole conversation sound particularly ominous: "Polots'kyi had to act as a liaison, while in Kharkiv the liaisons were Pylypenko and Berezyns'kyi (already sentenced), directors of publishing houses and members of the counterrevolutionary nationalist organization." This line implicated Kulyk with the alleged enemies of the people. Oleksandr Polots'kyi, the vice people's commissar of education and one of the closest to Skrypnyk, was among the first to report to Moscow the catastrophic situation in Ukrainian villages on the eve of the 1932 famine. The second person mentioned, Serhii Pylypenko (1891–1933) was a writer, journalist, critic, editor, historian of Ukrainian culture, and the founder of the Pluh literary group. Accused of anti-Soviet plotting, he was shot in Kharkiv by the NKVD. Finally, Antin Berezyns'kyi (b. Bilen'kyi-Berezyns'kyi), a western Ukrainian writer, moved to Kharkiv in 1928 and in 1933 was arrested and sentenced along with other national-minded Ukrainian literati. Having given his consent to become an NKVD informer and provocateur, he was released and in the 1930s performed the ignominious role of assisting the NKVD in arresting and sentencing Ukrainian literary and public figures.

Thus the NKVD-added line turns Kulyk and Vynnychenko's "common cause" into a conspiracy, and Kulyk's conversation with Vynnychenko into a secret rendezvous. But the contradiction between the NKVD's agenda and Kulyk's self-justification show that Kulyk truly believed in the need to combine Ukraine's national revivalism with proletarian internationalism, whereas his accusers considered any attempt to do so counterrevolutionary.

Posthumous Fate

Following his rehabilitation, Kulyk's name made its way into anti-Stalin publications in the Russian and Ukrainian press. A new edition of his *Notes of a Consul*, a small book of selected poems, and a heavily censored yet informative volume of memoirs about him, *The Poet of Revolution*, were published. To get the Russian

edition published, the Ukrainian critic Ihor Postupal'skyi personally petitioned the patriarch of Soviet ideology, Mikhail Suslov, to "push Goslitizdat to publish Kulyk's 1936 Russian book."¹³¹ The numerous Ukrainian publications on his career and poetry stressed his patriotism but mostly avoided dwelling on Kulyk's dedication to Ukrainian revivalism, and they were uniformly silent on his real name and nationality.¹³² But at least as a genuine rhapsodist of proletarian internationalism, Kulyk was allowed a posthumous return. It is significant that Kulyk was rehabilitated both as a revolutionary and an artist. Revisiting his own reflections on Kulyk from the 1920s, Oleksandr Bilets'kyi analyzed Kulyk's formal perfection and suggested that there was a clear distinction between Kulyk and other ideologically engaged poet-propagandists: Kulyk's intonation "demonstrates a profound difference between political agitation in poetry and poetry that agitates by what it is."¹³³

Yet Kulyk's story did not end there. As in many other cases, Kulyk's public rehabilitation inspired those who wanted to see him return not only to the distant relatives who survived Stalin's purges but also to the ordinary readers. Two people had launched the campaign to commemorate Kulyk. One was Haim Beider, a Ukrainian journalist from Kam'ianets'-Podil's'kyi who in the 1980s became one of the editors of the Moscow Yiddish monthly *Sovyetish Heymland* and in the 1990s acted as a correspondent for the New York *Forverts*. The other was Leonid Pervomais'kyi, by then a living Ukrainian classic of Jewish descent, who will be discussed in chapter 4. It is no accident that two Ukrainian Jews started this project. After the short-lived thaw had shaped new cultural policies in Ukraine, Beider painstakingly reconstructed the details of Kulyk's activities in Kam'ianets'-Podil's'kyi and promoted the placing of a memorial plaque in Kulyk's honor in the town.¹³⁴ Beider also gathered Kulyk's publications from dozens of American socialist and Ukrainian periodicals, found copies of Kulyk's poetry that had survived purges of libraries and private collections, commissioned those who knew Kulyk in the 1920s and 1930s to write memoirs, and put together a two-volume collection of selected poetry, translations, and prose; a separate volume of memoirs; and his own book on Kulyk's life and works.¹³⁵ Of these, only the book of memoirs saw the light of the day, albeit mutilated by Soviet censorship. References to Kulyk's efforts on behalf of Jews and his Ukrainian political sympathies were eliminated, and his nationally conscious Ukrainian memoirs were thoroughly purged.

Yet Beider and Pervomais'kyi were unable to publish posthumous collection of Kulyk's work. In 1966, Beider wrote Pervomais'kyi (who considered it a matter of honor to foster Kulyk's return to Ukrainian belles lettres).¹³⁶ In a letter of September 13, 1967, Pervomais'kyi praised Beider's "heroic research efforts"

and encouraged him to pitch the book to Dnipro Publishers, one of the major Ukrainian publishing houses, for their series on Ukrainian writers. Pervomais'kyi helped Beider publish Kulyk's letters to Maxim Gorky in *Literaturna Ukraina* and perhaps also in *Radians'ke literaturoznavstvo*; formed a commission on Kulyk's legacy in the Union of Ukrainian Writers; and campaigned to commemorate Kulyk through films, publications, and memorial plaques, as well as by naming a street, a library, and a steamship after him. In summer 1968, critically ill, Pervomais'kyi shared his fascination with the results of Beider's archival discoveries and guided Beider's search for Kulyk's autobiography, located somewhere in the huge military and party archives. In early fall, Beider submitted a prospectus for a multivolume collection of Kulyk's writings that Pervomais'kyi's high standards reduced to three volumes.

Knowing that manuscripts were often confiscated and burned, Pervomais'kyi simultaneously convinced the management of the Literature and Art Archive, Museum of Ukraine, to establish a separate collection for Ivan Kulyk and asked Beider to submit the materials he had amassed. Beider worked productively: by 1969, the first two volumes of Kulyk's collected works were sent to Dnipro, and Pervomais'kyi pushed Beider to expedite the third volume. Pervomais'kyi did his best to get his former mentor's edition through the red tape of the Kyiv literary bureaucracy. His cautious comment that "the publishing situation has become very complicated" and "we should not give the publishers any grounds to accuse us of procrastination" is a transparent hint at the fact that some unnamed forces were making trouble and looking for a good pretext to block publication.

Pervomais'kyi was right to push Beider: the days of Petro Shelest were numbered, and changes in the Communist Party apparatus badly damaged Ukrainian literature. Beider had submitted two volumes of Kulyk's works, with commentary, but as Pervomais'kyi wrote to him in a letter of September 24, 1970, work on the edition was moving very slowly. The principal editor noted in a conversation that Dnipro Publishers had not even begun the editorial process. In October, however, a dim light began to shine at the end of the tunnel: the chief editor ordered work to begin on the Kulyk edition, promising to send it to an outside reviewer as soon as possible and suggesting that the review of the some two thousand pages of manuscript would be completed by January 1971. Simultaneously, Beider worked on the volume of selected memoirs, a project that was supported in many different ways by Pervomais'kyi. In January 1971, the review, most likely positive, supporting the publication of the edition was ready (if the review had been negative, Pervomais'kyi would have said so). Then Oles Honchar (1918–95), one of the top authorities in Ukrainian Soviet literature, com-

missioned the Committee on Cinema to make a film on Kulyk. Pervomais'kyi himself reedited the volume of memoirs and in passing mentioned in his letter to Beider that Kulyk's collected works had been sent to another reviewer. In Soviet bureaucratic language, such a move implied serious ideological obstacles to publication. To protect themselves, the publishers commissioned another review, expecting it to be positive.

By late 1971 the publishers had demanded the elimination of the “ideologically dubious” third volume (containing Kulyk's journalism supporting Ukrainian revivalism) and promised to include the two-volume edition in their publication plans for 1973; they repeated this promise the following year. But eventually Kulyk's collection was dropped. In the early 1970s, a penniless Beider moved from Kam'ianets'-Podil's'kyi to Leningrad, where he could not find any employment, and then to Birobidzhan, where he switched from Ukrainian journalism to Yiddish. When Pervomais'kyi passed away, the committee on Kulyk's legacy became a phantom, and all plans to publish the edition of Kulyk's work were dropped. Most likely Iurii Smolych, then head of the Union of Writers, prevented the publication of Kulyk's selected writings—apparently taking ex post facto revenge, as Kulyk in the 1920s had prevented the publication of several of Smolych's novels and his *Uzh* journal and had interceded with the authorities in Moscow to cancel the premiere of Smolych's play “On the Other Side of the Heart.”¹³⁷

Still, to some extent Kulyk was lucky. His reentry into Ukrainian literary scene occurred decades before that of his colleagues, for example, Khvylovyi. Some of his texts managed to reach the readers in the 1960s. By 1972, the decade-long Ukrainian cultural revival had been suppressed. The last attempt to reconcile communism and the Ukrainian idea resulted in mass arrests of the leading nationally minded public and literary figures, court hearings behind closed doors, ugly scenes of public recantation by some of the major harbingers of Ukrainian revivalism, and long prison sentences for those who resisted. After 1991, Ukrainian intellectuals abandoned their attempts to bring together revolutionary universalism, proletarian internationalism, and the Ukrainian national idea. And Ivan, alias Izrail Iudovych Kulyk, became altogether redundant.

Conclusion

Kulyk's anti-imperial stance informed his quest for a Ukrainian identity, his literary endeavors, his wide array of the images of the colonized and oppressed, and his discovery of Marxism. He crafted a fascinating synthesis of far-left proletarian internationalism and moderate class-based Ukrainian revivalism. In a

sense, he sided with the rising Ukrainian national communism before it emerged as a state policy. His attempts to Ukrainianize ethnic, social, and cultural conflicts in Canada (Métis and Native American Indians) and the United States (African Americans), was unprecedented, as were his attempts to Ukrainianize himself. Whatever Kulyk said in the mid-1930s about the suicidal Mykola Khvyľovyĭ (a proponent of a European cultural orientation for Ukrainians) should not overshadow the fact that Kulyk was his double, although much more class oriented and conformist. Whatever his stalwart Marxist convictions and prominence in the Bolshevik establishment, Kulyk's emphasis on Ukrainian identity had no place in the newly chauvinistic Soviet Marxism. And his omnipresent revolutionary utopianism became suspect once the Communist Party replaced its internationalist slogans with glorification of the construction of socialism in one country.

As long as Kulyk's Ukrainian-speaking Marxism coincided with the party line, he remained a central figure and was safe. But after the suppression of the Ukrainian national revival, Kulyk found himself conspicuously on the wrong—actually right—political fringe. At the same time, and particularly after the failure of the regime to foster a communist victory in Spain, Kulyk's internationalism remained dangerously to the left of what had become the mainstream. Kulyk made a heroic effort to rectify his position. He stressed the preponderance of his Marxist over his artistic, Ukrainian national, and Jewish inclinations. He presented himself as a pure Marxist fighter for anticolonialist groups. Yet Stalinism had entirely altered the international anticolonial discourse—which now had to be Russocentric and Moscow-based. Kulyk's Ukrainian anticolonialism had no chance, despite the almost complete suppression of its Jewish connotations and ideologically pristine class-based imagery. Kulyk's case proves that a Ukrainian-Jewish identity based on Marxist principles was a political phantom. Yet a puzzle remains: among the Bolsheviks starring in Vynnychenko's *Between Two Powers*, why was the only supporter of Ukraine—as well Sofia's lover and unsuccessful redeemer—a Jew?

Writing the Body

The Passion and Freedom of Raisa Troianker

Raia was a virtuoso of libertinage. Her eroticism was phenomenal: her physical desire seemed to be oozing out of her small being. In her presence one could experience a physically perceptible emanation. The air around her was saturated with the fluorescence of her body. Once you came closer to her, crossing this boundary, it seemed as if you found yourself amidst the currencies that made your head go round, your heart beat fiercely, and your breath gasp with a sole desire—a desire for the body of that small, miniature libertine.” This passage from Iurii Smolych’s *Intymna spovid’* (An Intimate Confession, 1948) is one of the rare live testimonies about the mysterious poetess Raisa Troianker, the author of two collections of Ukrainian poetry, one Russian collection, and a number of verse and prose compositions that have been irretrievably lost.¹

Raia, diminutive of Raisa, arrived in Kharkiv in the mid-1920s; she moved to Leningrad five years later, leaving behind many good friends—most of whom, unlike Smolych, did not survive the 1930s, penned no memoirs, had their private archives destroyed by the NKVD, and left zero testimony about her. To further complicate the matter, her books of poetry were never reprinted and ended up in rare book or archival collections. Troianker seems to have been doomed to oblivion. According to the meager available sources, however, she was not unpopular in the Ukrainian literary milieu. Apparently she was the first Jewish poet to craft Ukrainian literary images of the shtetl and its traditional inhabitants, but it was her erotic poetry celebrating the emancipated female body that made her the talk of the town. When the communist censorship was finally lifted, a prominent Soviet literary critic proudly called Troianker “a Ukrainian Sappho,” hinting at the centrality of eroticism and feminine ego in her poetry and neglecting that the

“Ukrainian Sappho” had been born in a shtetl, was of Jewish origin, and engaged in love affairs with male, not female, literati. Recently a few postmodernist and feminist articles on Troianker have appeared in Ukrainian periodicals. Yet by and large Raia Troianker remains a terra incognita. Only the recent discovery of part of Troianker’s family archive, which moved from Kharkiv to Leningrad to Murmansk to Moscow to Berlin, sheds light on the life circumstances of perhaps the first Ukrainian female poet of Jewish descent.

Troianker’s life is best imagined as a narrative of a middle-level indigenous female who began to write and speak her body, striving to achieve self-emancipation.² Her fate and literary career exemplified a fascination with Ukrainian culture and an abrupt attempt to construe a new postrevolutionary Ukrainian Jew. Troianker’s shifts from Jewish to Ukrainian-Jewish to Ukrainian to the imperial Russian testify to her identity quest, shaped to a great extent by her personal and external circumstances. In the 1930s, when the Kremlin wiped out Ukrainian national revival, Troianker had to adapt her Ukrainian-Jewish self-identification to what both political and cultural historians would call a neocolonial environment. For a very brief period between 1925 and 1930, Troianker attempted to synthesize Ukrainian and Jewish themes while also pondering her shtetl, erotic, and urban experiences. Paradoxically, she started her career as a Ukrainian poet, imitating Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966), who inspired, decolonized, and influenced her feminine poetic expression. And she ended up as a follower of Nikolai Gumilev (1886–1921), the Russian double of Rudyard Kipling, known for his imperialist anthems. This very transition, replicated by her shift from Ukrainian to Russian poetry writing, manifested the short-lived Ukrainian revival of the 1920s, in which Troianker performed a secondary yet remarkably peculiar role.

From the Shtetl to the Circus

Raisa L’vivna Troianker was born on October 30, 1908, in Uman, into a poor and traditional Jewish family of eight.³ Her father Leyb (Leiba, Lev), a beadle in the local synagogue in charge of books, candles, and keys, like Yudl Kulyk, the Uman-based father of Ivan Kulyk, was no well-to-do Jew. Yet as family legend has it, Uman Jews held him in high esteem for his profound expertise on the *torah she be-al-peh*, the “oral Torah,” that is, such rabbinic sources as the Talmud, homiletic literature, and legal codices. Indeed, Leyb’s religiosity of the God-fearing Jew informed his communal concerns, his rigid behavior, and his black-and-white ethical worldview, a source of imminent family conflict. In her Ukrainian poetry Leyb’s daughter Raia Troianker repeatedly etched her father as a learned Talmudic Jew. In “V hostiakh u tata” (Visiting Dad), the atheist

Troianker depicted her father's religious attributes, the peculiar color symbolism of which (yellow blue) will be discussed in due course.

Troianker's use of Jewish terms leave little doubt that she conversed with her tradition-minded parents in Yiddish, something that is well recognizable in her authentic Ashkenazic spelling such as *tales* and *shames*, Yiddish for the prayer shawl and synagogue beadle:

Swifter than a fast mouse
 A rumor will run through the lanes:
 "Our *shames's* daughter has come from Kharkiv."
 Tiers and grief will fill the eyes of the *shames*.
 An unexpected surprise for the old one.

Here he is, with his old glasses, fixed with threads,
 Barefoot, in a yellow *tales* and blue *yarmulke*,
 Anxious. Spasms heard in his voice.
 Dad is old and weak, as an exhausted autumn.⁴

Like her father, Raia's mother was pious and kindhearted. She managed a low-profile and barely profitable home-catering service, and her concerns never extended beyond her kosher cuisine and her children's daily bread. Sometime in the early 1910s, she tried to manage a kerosene store, but it brought no profit. Troianker portrayed her mother as a *yidische mame*, the Jewish mother—caring, exhausted, and extraordinarily poor:

My beloved old mom,
 Whose hands are covered with fish scales,
 For she has to cook
 And earn her morsel of bread.⁵

Mind Troianker's focus on bodily details: her mother's dirty hands reeking with fish scales, her barefoot father with his spasmodic voice and his broken glasses. The poetess observes with regret and sorrow how her father turns into "a tired autumn," an abstract metaphor, losing his somatic features. This empathy to a decrepit body tells worlds about the relationship between Troianker and her parents.

If these excerpts from two different poems reflect with some accuracy Troianker's attitude toward her parents, one cannot fail to notice Troianker's tender voice, her affection, and her diminutive Ukrainian colloquialisms. She uses *tato* for "dad" and *matusia* for "beloved mom," instead of the neutral *bat'ko* for "father" and *maty* for "mother," which is particularly surprising given Raia's conflict with her family legacy, Judaism. This conflict notwithstanding, she remained deeply attached to her parents, both poetically and personally, even though her father had excommunicated her and her mother had rejected Raia's

new non-Jewish family. Whenever Troianker turned to a poetic reinvention of the Jewish past, it was necessarily inhabited by, and even limited to, two indispensable personages: her father and mother. At the same time, Raisa morphed her routine visits to her father's Uman house into a poetic return to her Jewish past—anxious, agonizing, decrepit, and ghostlike.⁶ Her parents' Judaism, detached in Troianker's memories from its characteristic somatic manifestations, failed to infuse her with religious inspiration, awe, or joy.

Traditional piety, however, to a great extent informed Troianker's upbringing. Apparently Troianker's home training entailed a good deal of liturgy, primarily the prayer book and the Psalms, as well as Jewish dietary laws and regulations on woman's purity. As a child, Raia had mastered Jewish prayers so nicely that fifteen years later she murmured them while observing one of her Ukrainian friends playing billiards in a Kharkiv literary club: she wanted him to win and hoped to reinforce him spiritually! Although we know next to nothing about Raia's formal education except that she apparently finished the seven-grade secondary school in Uman, one may surmise that she familiarized herself with Ukrainian in the streets of Uman and taught herself Russian literature from books.⁷ Whereas Kulyk found inspiration in adventure books and Ukrainian folklore, it was verse—above all Russian Silver Age poetry—that became Troianker's passion. In Russian poetry Raia sought sensuousness. In her early teens she fell in love with Anna Akhmatova, Nikolai Gumilev, Alexander Blok, Sergei Esenin, and Rudyard Kipling.⁸ Her reading preferences include no Ukrainian names—or perhaps her daughter from whose memoirs we most draw did not know about the Ukrainian affections of her mother. In addition, the works she read indicate that the strict laws of Judaism, which foreordained a young girl to marriage, childbirth, and housekeeping, did not check Raia's sensuality. "She was like fire, her nature was more powerful than any restrictions," recalled her daughter Elena Turgan.⁹

Uman was too narrow for a lover of Blok and her family's traditional Judaism too prohibitive for an admirer of Akhmatova. Years later Raia portrayed her escape from a sedentary life in a fetid shtetl as an act of liberation and freedom:

On a joyous evening I will drive to the railway station.
 April flowers in love fly straight in my face.
 Some fresh wind into the mould
 Of the stagnated shtetls.¹⁰

Raia's imagination went far beyond the confines of stagnating shtetls like Uman. Her native shtetl gave her no scope to express herself. She sought sensuousness flying straight in her face, like flowers. Raia looked for adventure, love, and free-

dom. Her female ego was desperately knocking against the moldy walls of her parents' house—and one day she broke through them.

The itinerary that brought Troianker to the epicenter of a burgeoning literary life in the Ukrainian capital began as a romantic adventure. Just as the circus in García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* redeemed a godforsaken Colombian pueblo, a vagabond circus freed Raisa from the provincialism of her shtetl. At fourteen or fifteen, Raisa had a romantic interlude with Leonid Jordani, a professional animal tamer traveling with his motley circus through Uman. After several meetings in the Sofia Park, Raia ran away with Leonid. The circus, if one believes the recent semiotic approach to this genre of early twentieth-century mass culture, demonstrates how a human being overcomes nature and the elements, above all, somatic sluggishness, natural laws, and gravity. It is an embodied utopia that celebrates a lamb and a lion lying together. To underscore the inexhaustible possibilities of human physicality, it places the human body in the center of its anthropocentric model of the universe.

Jordani's vagabond circus made Raia's head go round. "Rai—ia," literally, "I am paradise," is how Raia Troianker spelled her name to her partner, and Jordani promptly agreed to this fascinating onomastic mythmaking. Although the next year and a half was one of the happiest times in her life, Troianker had to pay a price for her freedom. In addition to the sudden joy of unrestricted sexual relations with Jordani, exuberantly romantic for both of them, Raia had to master the dangerous art of animal taming in order to become a member of the circus team. Jordani featured Raia in his key show: at the end of the daily performance after the clowns, trapeze artists, and wild beasts, a young, short, charming, ginger-haired girl shoved her head into a tiger's wide-open mouth. The show was such a success that Jordani commissioned a circus painter to make a poster featuring Raisa Troianker in a Turkish turban leaning her head on the bosom of the tamer.¹¹

Two years later Troianker referred to her circus career in the autobiographical poem "Zhadka" (Recollection), which for unknown reasons she did not include in her collections of poetry. She dedicated it to her circus colleagues, among them Jordani, and addressed one of her four-legged companions that she unexpectedly recognized while visiting the zoo:

Remember, the small town,
 In a distant godforsaken province,
 There is no tram ringing
 And love's pouring over the edges.
 Remember, a little circus
 And me, the tamer of wild animals.

One can never forget these moments
 Ineffably painful and generous.
 Remember—the stalls have calmed down
 (second bell after the first one)
 And you rubbed against my legs
 The stripes of your skin.¹²

The last two lines convey Troianker's propensity to the somatic and the sensuous. The image of a domesticated and nonaggressive beast stems from the immediacy of body contact: the tiger, nothing but a big cat, empathically rubs his striped skin against Troianker's legs. In fact, according to the memoirs of Troianker's daughter, the tiger was decrepit and senile, yet he once lost control and swiped her thigh. A deep scar from the tiger's claws remained on Raia's thigh for years. She epitomized her scar poetically as a sign of empathy and somatic proximity, not as that of aggression.

Your paw on my thigh
 (even now, near my belly
 there is a bluish secret cross).

But for the enraged tamer it was no joke: he punished both the tiger and Raia. This intercalation put an abrupt end to Raia's first, but not last, love adventure. A person for whom the universe was somatic-centered could not endure the violence against that which she took very seriously: her own body, young, beautiful, and sovereign. Raia left the circus and ran away for good.

In vain she tried to suppress her deep feelings for the sharp-clawed tiger—her “striped lover” (*mii smuhastyi liubovnyku*)—and her significant other, Leonid. A year later, she revisited her love affair, turning the tamer Leonid into the Russian sea wolf *Lionia* (diminutive of Leonid) and herself into a Hong Kong prostitute. In her *Kapytan i kytaianka* (The Captain and the Chinese Girl), Troianker imitated Walt Whitman's “O Captain! My Captain!” which she knew through Ivan Kulyk's translation, later published in his Ukrainian anthology of American poetry.¹³ Here is Troianker's exotic version of her romance:

Captain, my beloved captain!
 My memories are like loosen beads.
 Our nights are as drunk as whiskey,
 Our nights are as fragrant as passion.
 Five years after that meeting
 You lived in my sleepless nights
 And now, preparing the cocktails,
 I murmur that unfathomable “Lioniu!”¹⁴

Years later, around 1942, when she was a popular war journalist in the northern Russian city of Murmansk, whose publications appeared regularly in *Poliarnaia*

pravda (The Polar Truth daily), Troianker received a letter from the front. She received many letters from frontline soldiers—thanking her for her Russian verse calling for vengeance and for igniting their bellicose spirit—but this particular letter left her speechless. It was from Jordani. He informed her that he had long ago abandoned his profession as a tamer, had shot his beloved tiger (to save him from the Nazis), and had volunteered for the Red Army. A skilled marksman, he impressed his commanders, who offered him all sorts of privileges, including service in a noncombatant military artistic cast. He rejected the offer and became instead a first-rank sniper on the Leningrad front. Fifteen years after they parted, he still cherished his best memories of Raia and was thrilled to discover her publications in *Poliarnaia pravda*.

Jordani wrote her immediately, penning his letter with a chemical pencil in his minuscule indecipherable script and dispatching to the newspaper editorial board. The rest of Troianker's wartime correspondence was lost during the Nazi bombardment of Murmansk, but Jordani's first letter, perhaps unlike his later letters to Raia, did partially survive (only the first page, the second is illegible). The letter is too sexually explicit to be quoted in full yet too revealing to disregard. Given the scarcity of documented evidence, this letter presents an unusual insight, one that casts light on Raia Troianker's early years. Jordani penned it in Russian, most likely the language he and Raia spoke to each other. The italics correspond to the emphasis in the original:

Listen to the sun singing in my soul. I think about you often and long. Sometimes I see your eyes in my optic sight. I have met other women after you. But their vulgar lust could not erase my bright memories of you. I would like to walk with you in the Sofia Park. There were black swans there. To that wood of our rendezvous [I would like to go]. I will sit at your feet. I have no future and I do not think about it, but I am concerned about you: *there are too few girls like you in the world and you should take care of yourself. You are a diamond. You were then a diamond in a rough*, but I understood you and imagine you now—a diamond in a setting, and I am envious that your brightness warms someone else. Perhaps you have become as arrogant as our Aida. Where is she, the best of the horses of the world? Also I would like to tell you that my life is almost gone, I don't even know what awaits me this morning, but I would like you to remember that there is no educated and well-trained scholar able to carry you *as I am carrying you in my straggling soul*. I want to listen to how the tiger is roaring: not the mechanical German one but a genuine Ussurian tiger. I want your dearest lips and gloomy eyes and your face getting red with passion. I have a poster with your face on my bosom. When you get this letter do not share yourself with anyone and *spend some time with your Leonid. He spends too much time with you*. I believe you have not forgotten him, as it is impossible to forget the summer and the fall in Ukraine.¹⁵

The letter betrays Jordani as a person of unbridled character and arduous passion, and as a man with a broken heart. His uncombed Russian language was im-

bued with a mixture of pathetic rhetoric and point-blank sincerity and filled with bold yet artless metaphors. Since he had not seen Raia for some fifteen years, one can hardly doubt that the sixteen-year-old Raia's charms and maturity had enchanted him. These many years later, Jordani retained his emotional zeal.

Troianker, wooed by many, considered Jordani's letter one of her most precious artifacts. During the Nazi bombing, when she made her way to the *Poliarnaiia pravda* office, in addition to her own journalistic notes she took three items in her small field-case: a volume of Anna Akhmatova's *Chetki*, a collection of Nikolai Gumilev's poetry, and the letter from Leonid Jordani.

From the Circus to the Capital

Kharkiv was the next and most significant stop in Raia's itinerary. Again, not much is known about the reasons for her move, except for what can be gleaned from a brief essay by her daughter, her own autobiographic poetry, and Iurii Smolych's testimony. In the late 1920s, Smolych was perhaps the only one of Troianker's interlocutors with whom she shared her most intimate experiences. Smolych penned the following account of Troianker's early life in his *An Intimate Confession*: "Some time later she left her tamer and ran away, for she saw Volodia Sosiura at one of the literary presentations and fell in love with him. Sosiura came back after his trip to Kharkiv and Raia followed him, but Sosiura's wife banished her so that Volodia could continue his life in paradise. And Raia began writing poetry."¹⁶

Although one should treat Smolych's account with caution, it may contain evidence of Troianker's self-perception. She seemed to be telling her story to Smolych with the intention of inventing her own poetic beginnings. According to her daughter's memoir, her first poems were entitled "In the Menagerie," "The Tamer of Tigers," and "To the Unforgettable Leonid Jordani." (The original texts of the first two were lost, and the last one was published as "Recollection.") Troianker dedicated these texts to her circus experience, not to Sosiura. Yet she was right in suggesting a different point of departure for her poetic career. Whoever Jordani was, an Italian or a Jew, he spoke and wrote in Russian, whereas Raia's first poetic experiments were in Ukrainian. Jordani helped her to come to grips with her bodily ego, but her poetic ego she found elsewhere.

Even without Troianker's confessions one could have identified Volodymyr Sosiura, a revolutionary romantic poet, as one of the spiritual mentors from whom she learned to express herself poetically. Sosiura's influence is recognizable in Troianker's earliest poetic undertakings. In "Captain and the Chinese Girl," for example, Troianker emerges as a disciple, obediently imitating not only Whitman's rhythm but also Sosiura's erotic imagery, exotic *couleur locale*,

neoromantic plots, and even rhymes (such as *mene/combine*).¹⁷ This very link between the Ukrainian, the poetic, and the masculine shaped Troianker's metaphors and led her toward the discovery of a Ukrainian eros. In addition, Troianker's beginnings informed the autobiographical character of her poetry, in which her plot, images, and form refer to real protagonists, quite often different ones. Thus after a brief affair with a tamer, a tiger, and circus artists, most likely all Russophone, Troianker discovered new men to love and worship. Her "circus" romance provided themes and images for her early poetic undertakings, but Troianker seems to have found her poetic form through an encounter with a Ukrainian poet.

After an abrupt romance with Volodymyr Sosiura, who may have been the father of Troianker's only child, in the mid-1920s, the seventeen-year-old Troianker fell in love with and soon married Onoprii Turhan (Rus.: Onufrii Turgan), an Uman literary critic of proletarian orientation, an active member of the Pluh (Plough) literary group uniting writers of "village" themes, and an author of short stories, poems, and feuilletons in the Ukrainian press.¹⁸ Soon she gave birth to a daughter, which scandalized her parents. The old Troiankers could not forgive the fact that their daughter cut herself off from family tradition. For them, as well as for many other observant Jewish families who preserved in their memories heartbreaking stories of Cossacks victimizing Jews, marrying out in general and marrying into a Ukrainian family was metaphysical treason and a personal catastrophe.

For the Troiankers, if we follow Raia's own account, the timid and shy Onoprii Turhan was no better than the antisemitic Cossacks who slaughtered the Uman Jewish population in the wake of the Khmel'nyts'kyi uprising and once again a hundred years later during the Haidamak rebellion led by Honta and Zaluzniak. The *gezerot takh ve-tat*, "the catastrophe of 1648 and 1649" that triggered the death of some 14,000 to 17,000 Jews, loomed large in the East European Jewish historical imagination on both social and personal levels. While a Jew was an alien "yid" for Ukrainians, a Ukrainian was an alien "goy" for the Jews. The Troiankers were no exception: Raia captured her family's reaction in Leyb Troianker's bitter remark "There were not enough Jews for her!" Apparently for some time the apostate daughter could not visit her parents. In one of her autobiographical poems Troianker depicted her parents' reaction to her exogamic marriage and "problematic" child:

My father has banished and cursed me
 For my child has been born from a *goy*,
 He has told, may the earth fall through
 Under both of us, my Olenka.

My dad, he is as old
 As the yellowed folios of the Talmud,
 He cries, "Oy, for my daughter's sin
 People will mock me!"

"Oh my cursed, my cursed girl,
 There were not enough Jews for her!"
 Tears are in his eyes,
 And in his beard, silver as hoarfrost.¹⁹

Troianker was by far not the first to undergo this conflict, familiar to hundreds—if not thousands—of East European Jewish families in the early twentieth century. Statistically, Jewish mixed marriages were skyrocketing in the 1920s and became a common phenomenon.²⁰ Raia's was one among many. Yet she was the first to portray the impact of an exogamic marriage between a Jew and a Ukrainian with the precision of a reporter, the ingeniousness of a playwright, and the sincerity of a Ukrainian poet.

Indeed, as Marcus Moseley argues, autobiographical narrative can hardly serve as an accurate source for an author's life, because it reflects the appropriation of other autobiographical patterns that the author read elsewhere.²¹ Most likely Troianker knew Sholem Aleykhem's *Tevye* (The Milkman), which portrayed a similar family tragedy. If so, Troianker as a reader significantly reworks Sholem Aleichem's pattern: instead of the perspective of pater familias, she offers a female take on it. In this sense her Ukrainian verse might be discussed as an attempt to introduce Sholem Aleichem's dramatic patterns into Ukrainian lyrics. Troianker introduced alien voices into her lyrical confession to convey an unbridgeable rift between her and the rest of her family. She unequivocally captured the Yiddish intonation, the syntax of rhetorical questions, and the liturgically shaped lamentations of her parents bemoaning their daughter's treason. Her father's exclamation borders on a prophetic curse, and her mother's annoyance—we will return to it later—morphs into a plea or a prayer. Her compassion toward those with whom she had parted and her desire to incorporate into her lyrics alien voices permeated with animosity signaled precociousness unusual for a seventeen-year-old atheist and Young Communist League member. A Jewish girl with the ambition of becoming a Ukrainian poet, Troianker, probably on Turhan's advice became a member of the local branch of the Pluh and soon moved with her husband from Uman to Kharkiv.

In 1924, the Soviets decided to move the Ukrainian capital from Kyiv, which constantly reminded them of the nationalist-minded and conspicuously bourgeois Central Rada and the Directory, to the proletarian and ideologically pristine Kharkiv, the town where the Ukrainian Bolshevics, Ivan Kulyk among

them, had established their headquarters in the very first year of the revolution. In the mid-1920s, the transfer of the capital transformed Kharkiv into a culturally and artistically blossoming town. Here Les' Kurbas fought for his innovative aesthetics on the stage of his Berezil Theater, transferred in 1925 from Kyiv, creating his dazzling versions of plays by Mykola Kulish.²² Here the new proletarian spectators in workers' clubs laughed at the hilarious Jolly Proletarian Theater's (*Veselyi Proletar*) satirical performances, and Kharkiv children applauded the shows at the Children's Theater, slowly getting accustomed to the new Ukrainian-language repertoire. Lovers of old-fashioned fin de siècle kitsch enjoyed the Musical Comedy Theater's performances, predominantly in Russian, which irritated the guardians of the puritanical proletarian ethics and the harbingers of Ukrainization. *Ukrfil*, the Ukrainian Philharmonic Society, featured the best performers of classical music from Moscow and Vienna. Visiting celebrities, such as Gorky, admired the brand new architectural monuments of Kharkiv socialist constructivism, above all the formidable Derzhprom (State Industry) building of glass and concrete, which the town dwellers called a Soviet Babylonian Tower.²³

In the realm of belles lettres, the Blakytyni Literary House and the newly erected writers' Slovo House dominated the scene. Part of the Soviet-style centralized apparatus and an anticipation of the future Union of Writers, the Slovo House placed literary figures in one big apartment building. It hosted writers of various origins, most prominently Jews and Ukrainians, such as Mykola Bazhan, Pavlo Tychyna, Itsik Fefer, Ezra Fininberg, Mykola Khvyly'ovyi, Dovid Gofshhteyn, Ivan Kulyk, Leyb Kvitko, Les' Kurbas, Leonid Pervomais'kyi, Valer'ian Polishchuk, Iurii Smolych, and Volodymyr Sosiura, and the literary critics Abram Leites, Mykhailo Dolengo, and Volodymyr Koriak.²⁴ This "proximity" of Ukrainian and Jewish writers, critics, and poets generated a transethnic cooperation among them: Holovaniv's'kyi, Pervomais'kyi, Sosiura, and Kvitko discussed freshly written poetry together; Fininberg read out loud the poetry of Pavlo Tychyna; Kvitko discussed with his Ukrainian colleagues the contents of his Yiddish collection of Ukrainian tales; Kvitko and Feldman worked on their first Yiddish anthology of Ukrainian prose; Teren' Masenko and Kulyk translated Kvitko into Ukrainian; and Kulyk negotiated with the visiting Der Nister the translation into Yiddish of Kulyk's anonymously published *Pryhody Vasylia Rolenka* (*The Adventures of Vasyli' Rolenko*, 1929).²⁵

At the writers disposal was the Blakytyni Literary House, a beautiful building in the Ukrainian baroque style, the very epicenter of Ukrainian cultural life associated with the "golden age" of the Ukrainian renaissance: it was here that almost all of the more or less important literary debates about the fate of Ukrai-

nian culture took place.²⁶ Here, as Teren' Masenko recalled, Ukrainian writers met with Henri Barbusse, Johannes Becher, Maxim Gorky, Anatolii Lunacharsky, and Vladimir Maiakovsky.²⁷ Kharkiv brought together literary figures from a variety of trends, for example, Avanhard (Avant-Garde), Nova heneratsiia (New Generation), Pluh (Plough), Hart (Tempering), the VAPLITE (Vil'na Akademiia Proletars'koi Literatury; Free Academy of Proletarian Literature), and others. Generally, for most Ukrainian memoirists, Kharkiv embodied the thriving and diverse culture of an emancipated Ukraine.

Troianker adored Kharkiv, an embodiment of her urban utopian dreams. She witnessed its transformation from a provincial imperial town into a new socialist urban utopia. Astonished by Kharkiv's metamorphosis, the seventeen-year-old Leonid Pervomais'kyi exclaimed:

Oh, evening Kharkiv!
 Oh, the tide of the workers' streets!
 Oh, lights and cinema!
 The wine of the fenced boulevards!
 You are buzzing
 Like a sweet
 And fruitful bee-house!
 You are burning,
 Never to be extinguished.²⁸

Dovid Feldman, a Yiddish writer and coauthor of the acclaimed Yiddish anthology of the Ukrainian literature, dubbed Kharkiv "a mixture of Paris and Polonoë."²⁹ For Yiddish-speaking visitors from the United States and Europe, the city represented the cutting edge of Soviet construction. "Whoever knew Khar'kov before," wrote the mystical-minded Yiddish writer Der Nister in his travelogue, "now does not recognize it." Der Nister resorted to a Kabbalistic metaphor of the Creation, *yesh mi-ayn*, "everything from nothing," portraying Kharkiv's remarkable transformation into a key city in the new culture: "And who wants to see a miracle—how from nothing everything is born—should come here."³⁰

Perhaps the first Jewish image of the new postrevolutionary Kharkiv emerged in Ben-Yaakov (pseud.; real name—Kalman Zingman) utopian novel. In the wake of the Russian Revolution, Zingman established his Yiddish publishing house in Kharkiv, celebrating the 1917 lifting of the tsarist ban on Yiddish publications. In 1918, he published here his short Yiddish novel *In der zukunft-shtot Edenya* (In Eden, the Town of Future), depicting a brief visit of a Jewish statistician from Palestine to Kharkiv, the imaginary city of a utopian communist economy and a cosmopolitan Yiddish future.³¹ *Edenya* was intended

to replace Theodore Herzl's Zionist visionary *Altneuland* (1903) with a Yiddish- and Diaspora-based utopia. The tour through the new Kharkiv featured skyscraper-hotels with Yiddish signs, top-notch bio laboratories with Jewish directors, a Jewish opera house, and two streets named after the most prominent Yiddish classic writers, Mendele Moykher Sforim (1835–1917) and Isaac Leybush Peretz (1851–1915). Kharkiv's emancipated Yiddish coexisted peacefully with the postcolonial Ukrainian. There were no traces of the imperial Russian presence. In Zingman's book, the blossoming of Ukrainian paralleled that of Yiddish. A monument to Taras Shevchenko featured the golden inscription "The Prophet of Ukraine." Self-governing Ukrainian and Yiddish communal institutions (*kehile*) ran and ruled the town as a joint venture. Apparently this Kharkiv-based utopia, mediated by the Ukrainian poet Valer'ian Polishchuk, shaped the futuristic and utopian urban metaphors so prominent in Troianker's first poetry collection.

Back from his Uman voyage and most likely annoyed by the passionate Troianker, Sosiura introduced her to his friend, neighbor, and coauthor, Valer'ian Polishchuk (1897–1937), who was the founder of the Hrono group in Kyiv and the literary journal *Shliakhy mystetstva* in Kharkiv (together with Khvyl'ovyi and Koriak), and who had become one of the most active harbingers of the Europeanization of the Ukrainian literature.³² Although the details of their encounter are not known, one may surmise that Troianker cleaved to Polishchuk for a number of reasons. The son of a destitute Ukrainian peasant family, Polishchuk, after years of intensive self-training, became an independent thinker, a superb interpreter of European poetry, a connoisseur of French literature, and a remarkably prolific Ukrainian poet and writer (he planned to publish a ten-volume edition of his selected writings by 1930). Polishchuk participated in the activities of the Pluh and established the Avanhard literary group, which Troianker joined, or possibly cofounded, in the mid-1920.

Growing into a poet under the impact of Whitman, Verhaeren, and the French poets of the Abbey group, Polishchuk gained fame as one of the leading avant-gardist Ukrainian writers close to Marinetti and Maiakovsky. A Westernized polemicist, Polishchuk strongly believed that the rapidly approaching utopian future would put an end to Ukrainian colonial situation. He had been consistently integrating Ukrainian into European, long before Khvyl'ovyi traced a Europeanizing vector for Ukrainian culture. A dazzling communist utopianism deeply impressed but did not deceive Polishchuk. In the wake of the first five-year plan he became indignant with one of the early anti-intelligentsia public trials, stigmatizing them as "social sadism." Nor was the anti-imperial minded Polishchuk misled by the faceless mass enthusiasm. His aversion to so-

cial demagogy was based on his deep sympathy toward the individual, the specific, and the personal, something that Troianker could appreciate. Polishchuk's uniqueness was not unnoticed by his contemporaries. "A lonely heretic who opposes any clichés," is what the influential Marxist critic of Jewish origin Volodymyr Koriak called him. "His vast erudition excited me," wrote Sosiura.³³

Sosiura was well aware of what he was doing when he introduced Troianker to Polishchuk: among his other talents, Polishchuk was one of the most handsome young men in Kharkiv. His bright blue eyes, his shock of golden hair, his fine features, and his expressive mouth were firmly embedded in the memories of Ukrainian literati, especially among the women.³⁴ In addition to Polishchuk's endorsement of social utopianism, Troianker found Polishchuk an attractive companion for two further reasons: his consistent philosemitism and his bizarre sexuality.³⁵ Sometimes Polishchuk was incapable of differentiating between the two. In 1921–22 Polishchuk settled down in Kharkiv, where he met two Jewish girls, the sisters Olena-Rachel (Iolon'ka) and Lida (Lichka) Konukhes, and fell in love with both. The sisters were students at the Kharkiv Institute of People's Education (Instytut narodnoi osvity), where Troianker also enrolled a couple of years later. Polishchuk's passion toward Rachel and Lida was reciprocated. Polishchuk celebrated his ménage à trois publicly and privately.³⁶

Among other things, the Konukhes sisters opened up the world of Judaic tradition to Valer'ian, who was always ready for a vertiginous intellectual endeavor. One can find some remarkable rumination on Talmudic quotations in his private correspondence with one or both sisters. Ironically, when signing the letters, he dubbed himself Mishe-Namu, a Jewish name perhaps derivative of Moshe-Nahum. It is not impossible that the Konukhes sisters, who most likely spoke Yiddish, also familiarized Polishchuk, susceptible to local urban myths, with Ben-Yaakov's *Edenya*, the technocratic pathos of which is reflected and rejected in Polishchuk's erotic utopia. Probably under the intellectual impact of the sisters Konukhes Polishchuk began rewriting biblical stories, emphasizing the sexual impetus of the personages as the driving force of the action. Thus, for example, in the short story "Liubov Amana" (The Love of Aman), he rewrote the whole book of Esther, replacing Haman's deep hatred for Mordechai and the Jewish people with Haman's unbridled lust and passion for Esther, the Jewish queen. In the poem "Onan," Polishchuk undertook a similar attempt to craft an apocryphal biblical myth, celebrating one of the sexual perversions as a protest against the laws of nature.³⁷

It seems likely that turning somatic metaphors into a key poetic device was but another idea Troianker borrowed from Polishchuk. Sometime around 1920

Polishchuk penned his utopian fantasy novel *Na shliakhu do velykoho maibutnioho* (Toward the Great Future), which remains unpublished. In it, Polishchuk wondered why human beings have crafted a wide array of social, technocratic, political, artistic, and other utopias but did not figure out the simplest one: somatic. In his imaginary future, clothes are eliminated as redundant: “People have long thrown off the unnecessary convention of clothes.”³⁸ Likewise, humans had rejected psychology as a burdensome luxury of the hypocritical past. They did not conceal their sexual desires. On the contrary, they externalized the intimacy of sex, a key moment of their revolutionary sense of beauty.

Perhaps Troianker’s own poetic sensuousness made her so susceptible to Polishchuk’s ideas. At any rate it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate her personal and poetic sensuousness, her body-centered poetic universe, and her consistent eroticism, on the one hand, and Polishchuk’s sexual utopianism, on the other. Troianker was not the only one for whom Polishchuk embodied these personal and artistic qualities, but other contemporaries were not particularly enthusiastic about them. For example, Polishchuk’s physical attractiveness and his iconoclastic vision of sexuality left a deep impression on a young Kharkiv-based stenographer Oksana Chykalenko, who recalled almost eighty years later: “I remember Valer’ian Polishchuk: handsome, with his luxurious puffy light hair. He was not particularly tall. He pushed me off. He talked too freely, precisely on erotic theme. We got together once, two or three friends of mine and Polishchuk. And he started to tell us that people should be like cats, and began comparing people with cats. When a cat wants something, it climbs to the roof and expresses its feelings, meowing. Why are people forbidden to do that? People should have an opportunity to speak out their desires like a cat on a roof.”³⁹

Although the archive of the Avanhard group was thoroughly destroyed by the NKVD in the early 1940s, several details underscore the significance of the encounter between two of its founders. Troianker apparently was one of the three most active members of this small, cosmopolitan, and constructivist literary group that revolved around Polishchuk and opposed other literary groups of proletarian origin: she signed the group’s manifesto and was even reported as one of its founders.⁴⁰ Hryhorii Kostiuk, a keen observer and participant in Kharkiv literary life, portrayed the Avanhard as “Polishchuk’s group of constructivists. It comprised, as I remember, three literary individuals: Valer’ian Polishchuk himself; the young poet Raisa Troianker, famous for her predominantly unpublished poems on sexual themes; and the then-beginner, absolutely unknown, and only later, after the war, acclaimed poet and playwright Oleksandr Levada.”⁴¹ Troianker published her first poetry—both in Ukrainian and in

Russian—in Polishchuk’s literary almanac *Avanhard*, which according to the founder, “started the struggle for a genuine contemporary Europeanism.”⁴²

Perhaps Polishchuk advised Troianker to speak in her own voice, that of a young woman fascinated by her past, her love, and her new urban environment: Polishchuk underscored a number of times how significant feminine voices were in literature and history. He also seemed to be preoccupied—unlike his imperial-minded contemporaries—with the ethnic minority issues in literature that so much disturbed the young Troianker. Their contemporaries did not overlook Troianker’s indebtedness to Polishchuk. One critic argued that one of the best, if not the best, of Troianker’s overtly erotic poems “Trava pryvialena” was marked with Polishchuk’s impact, and another one remembered her in the context of Polishchuk.⁴³

In Kharkiv, Troianker not only joined the *Avanhard*, but also enrolled in KhINO, the Kharkiv Institute of People’s Education, which trained teachers for adult learning institutions, and published her verse. Troianker’s first collection of poetry, *Povin’* (Inundation), was published by the Pluzhanyyn Publishing House, a fact that attests to her continuous association with the village writers’ milieu. Three motifs shaped this collection: the Jewish past, eros, and, to a much lesser degree, communist utopianism. They were represented unevenly in the book: eight poems were on love, and there were three each on Jewish and urban proletarian themes. The sequence of poems seems to have been thoroughly premeditated—Jewish and communist themes introduce and close the collection; erotic themes take the lion’s share of the book.

Although almost all of Troianker’s poems were permeated with a confessional intimacy, her voice was manifested best in her crafty, provocative, and innovative erotic poems, which dovetailed eroticism with nature and, in particular, with Ukrainian autumn landscapes. Her heroine’s encounter with a partner occurred in the fields, right after the harvest season, when rich grain crops shaped memories of the summer and the orange shades of the foliage designated the imminent fall. Sometimes Troianker assimilated her male images into the imagery of rural Ukrainian autumn. She implicitly equated golden love, golden fall, and golden Ukraine. She seems to have transgendered Ukraine, which is feminine in Slavic languages, by associating it with masculine poetic metaphors. If so, it implies Troianker was going against the colonial perception of Ukraine as a beautiful, docile, and subservient female loyal to her powerful yet changeable male lover. Yet Troianker, with one exception, did not bring this idea to completion.

While she linked the Ukrainian yellow autumn with romance, the end of the romantic affair came to be associated with winter. The new season epitomized the new status of Troianker’s alter ego: no more a shtetl girl prone to erotic ad-

venture, she underwent a transformation and became an urban-based mother. This weakened Troianker's ties with the village-centered Pluh and simultaneously strengthened her connections with the urban-focused and highly intellectual Avanhard. A well-read young woman in search of a literary milieu, Troianker was well equipped for this change. She impressed her most well-educated Ukrainian interlocutors. Iurii Smolych, who claimed to scorn Troianker for her bizarre private life yet nevertheless emphasized her fascinating intellectual gifts: "Raia was a peculiar phenomenon among women. Despite her young age (she had not even become a legal adult), she was a girl of unusual erudition: she knew literature very well, genuinely loved it, had a real taste for it, and knew how to differentiate between good and bad; when she was free of her erotic adventures, that is to say, from morning till night, she read a lot, and due to her extensive readings she could easily handle any problem of literature and arts, as well as of science. In particular she loved history and geography."⁴⁴ The end of Troianker's "poetic" fall manifested a new period in the life of her heroine, a fact that Troianker emphasized in her second book of poetry.

In 1930 the State Publishing House issued two thousand copies of Troianker's second collection, *Horyzont* (Horizon).⁴⁵ The book comprised three parts, reflecting different periods of Troianker's life, the most important themes of her verse, and various sets of images she crafted. In terms of genre, they corresponded to the Jewish family chronicle, Ukrainian bucolic romance, and urban lyrics. The first part is written in a poetic *plus-que-parfait*, Troianker's personal past perfect, and its Yiddish subtitle, "Olte und Inge" (Old and New), sets the tone by evoking a bygone shtetl.⁴⁶ Four poems taken from the previous collection were grouped together here and came to be associated with Troianker's autobiographical day-before-yesterday. Predicting the inevitable catastrophe of the traditional Jewish town, Troianker included in this section the Iosif Utkin-inspired poem on poor Haim, a tailor who lost his mind after his family of ten was murdered during a pogrom.⁴⁷

The fourteen poems of the second part, entitled "Dzvinke povitria" (Clear Air), introduced Troianker's heroine, who discovers her talents as a mother, a poet, a lover, and a new female Faustus. Here Troianker's eroticism was no less explicit than in her previous collection, yet it was not left unchallenged. The autobiographical images of a young mother caring for her child and a woman-poet ready to sell her talent to Mephistopheles made Troianker's eroticism more nuanced and ambiguous. Since most of the biographical references reflect Troianker's life before and immediately after her marriage to Turhan, one may surmise that this part of her book covered Troianker's yesterday, or her most recent past.

The third part, “Moie siohodennia” (My Nowadays), consisted of six poems manifesting her today and tomorrow and dedicated to the poet’s encounter with a new industrial city. Troianker’s constructed her urban environment as simultaneously realistic and utopian, resorting to the metaphors of contemporary proletarian poetry and to a futuristic vocabulary. Although Troianker’s utopian future was firmly rooted in her Jewish past, one should bear in mind that her second collection—with its new emphasis on urban culture, idiosyncratic to many Jewish writers of that period—differed significantly from her first.

A new urban dweller, Troianker substituted a booming socialist construction for her only too petty-bourgeois rural past. Yet urban motifs did not push aside Troianker’s engagement with the somatic. The concrete-and-glass bodies of the growing Kharkiv edifices came to replace the decayed body of the shtetl and the passionate yet suffering female body. She claimed to be ready to change the “sad walls for the fires of the proletarian suburbs.” She anticipated her vertiginous enthusiasm when she entered the classroom to teach robust and scary proletarians. Nothing was left of Troianker’s Ukrainian rural landscapes, her motley fall, or her idiosyncratic gloom. Under the decisive influence of Polishchuk, whose “Radio,” for example, celebrated the same promised land of technological progress, Troianker made a decisive step toward constructivist Avanhard poetics, switching to the urban poetry and focusing on her imaginary spacious room in a newly erected skyscraper.⁴⁸ In addition to her new urban metaphors, Troianker portrayed the organized left-minded youth, the optimistic-spirited intelligentsia, and the joyous new-world construction. She seems to have forgotten about her bitter memories and transformed her body imagery into the images of newly built social edifices. Social enthusiasm pushed away her orgiastic excitement. The individual body was transformed into the communally erected buildings. Her universe became simple and straight.

Summing up her first twenty years, Troianker epitomized her new sensibility in the last poem of her *Horizont* collection. She claimed not to know “what a tear means,” rejected “the romanticism of an evening,” and came to scorn the colonial “drizzle of the fall” and “the question mark” at the end of a thought. The streets of her life, she argued, were “as obstinate as Mongolian streets.”⁴⁹ The third part of Troianker’s book dramatically moved away from the myths of the past into the utopia of the future, her new credo. Here is Troianker:

In a street, a movie theater, office, or at work
I dream of the great future city.
My personal anxieties seem chimerical
And the liberating-colorful distances emerge.

If someone shortsighted calls this a “utopia,”
 I would scratch out his eyes,
 For I am already hearing the clatter of the future.
 For I am already reading the script of the upcoming.⁵⁰

This new utopianism notwithstanding, Troianker did not allow ideological clichés to suppress her spontaneous exaltation. The vision of the growing urban miracle mesmerized her, yet Troianker, perhaps not without Polishchuk’s advice, never associated it with the class struggle, industrialization, or the shallow optimism of the party slogans of the first five-year plan. Although she did not acknowledge the utopianism of her dream, she still associated it with orgiastic premonitions, not with a real sense of the empirical reality.

Kharkiv literary critics, moderate Marxists at best and leftist preachers of class struggle at worst, noticed Troianker’s collections but misunderstood them. For some, Troianker’s poetry was a pretext to reflect on her allegedly outdated ethnic motifs, her purportedly unpolished form, her artificial family dramas, and her secondhand eroticism, bordering on the pornographic. For Marxist critics in the 1920s, eros in poetry manifested either a tired decadent and harmful solipsism that challenged the optimism of a nationwide social construction or an individualistic immaturity that could be overcome by joining the ranks of the rosy-cheeked socialist workers. Iakiv Khomenko, for example, analyzed Troianker’s verse “My Dad Is Sad and Calm” in the context of the father-son dichotomy. He emphasized the autobiographical character of this and other Jewish-themed Troianker poems but rejected Troianker’s portrayal of generational conflict as something that “does not have a vital social significance, above all because causes behind this conflict have lost their topical interest.” The didactical and tired Khomenko underscored the lack of originality in all of Troianker’s writings, and her poetically informed sensual experience he found as bad as Akhmatova’s. A certain V.M., most likely Vasyl’ Mysyk (1907–83), a prominent poet “destined for a high flight,” was more benevolent. He noticed in passing some Jewish themes in Troianker, but spent most of his review rebuking the author for overplaying “sexual experience.”⁵¹

Some of Troianker’s poems, written with “courage” and “naturalism,” triggered mixed emotions for the politically correct Mysyk, who did his best to suppress his sympathy. Mysyk wished that Troianker would find her own independent voice, since he considered her Jewish and erotic themes as mediocre and petty-bourgeois as the Russian poetry of Sergei Esenin and the Ukrainian of Volodymyr Sosiura. Dmytro Zahul (1890–1944), first a symbolist poet and later a revolutionary romantic, found Troianker a talented and promising poet with

her characteristic “immediate sincerity and some freshness,” yet he sharply criticized the *Povin'* collection for its shameless eroticism, technical flows, petty-bourgeois taste, painful individualism, and bad language and grammar. Ivan Momot (1905–31), perhaps one of the most talented young literary critics from the Molodniak group and later a member of VUSPP, in his review “Literary Routine,” quoted Troianker’s line “What are you singing, yellow mandolin?” and sarcastically concluded that Troianker’s mandolin does not know how to sing yet.⁵²

On the contrary, in a lengthy review entitled “The Live and the Dead in Ukrainian Poetry,” Iakiv Savchenko (1890–1937) saw a certain promise in Troianker’s first collection. From his viewpoint, Troianker’s small book was thematically limited and stylistically naïve; some of her poetry reminded him of a teenager’s notebook. And yet her openness, her instinctive kindness, and her formal dexterity attested to the professional liveliness of her poetry and her steady spiritual growth.⁵³ Others, such as the much-sought-after critic Mykhailo Dolengo (1890–1981), held Troianker in high esteem, placing her next to other realistic poets, such as Volodymyr Sosiura and Natalia Zabyla. In his extensive review of new trends in Ukrainian poetry, written for the same *Krytyka* journal two months before Khomenko’s review appeared, Dolengo pointed to Troianker’s “motifs of Jewish everyday life presented in a revolutionary light,” briefly mentioned her “bohemian motifs,” and stressed that “surely the poetess has artistic talent.”⁵⁴

Yet almost nobody commented on Troianker’s urban utopianism, on her emancipating eroticism, or on her deep empathy toward the Ukrainian Jewish shtetl. Only the famous Ukrainian literary critic Stepan Kryzhaniv’skyi (1911–2002), though much later, made a clumsy attempt to assess the Troianker phenomenon, calling her “a Ukrainian Sappho,” as if Troianker had celebrated lesbian love, which, as already mentioned, she never did.⁵⁵ Kryzhaniv’skyi was right, however, in his emphasis on Troianker’s unusual, if not pioneering, eroticism in Ukrainian literature. Since Jewish and erotic motifs dominate both of Troianker’s collections and convey her search for a Jewish-Ukrainian synthesis, they will be discussed momentarily.

Constructing the Ukrainian Shtetl

In the early 1920s, the image of the shtetl coterminous with the bygone past of the now-abolished Pale of Jewish Settlement disturbed many East European poets, both Jewish and gentile. Mykola Bazhan pronounced his verdict over the im-

minent death of the traditional Jewish shtetl symbolized in Uman's Jewish ghetto:

The forehead of a hill, as if condemned by faith,
Is clutched by a dilapidated, tarred and severe
Ark of a square rusty synagogue,—
The Torah arch, pressed to the head.
A pestilent and nasty grey moss
Reeking of the cadaver's putrid and mucus
Creeps on the stones, ribs, and pillars,
Of bony and furious synagogues.⁵⁶

Bazhan's shtetl is torn between its decomposing corporeity and its passionate spirituality. The dichotomy of the dying corpse and enraged spirit manifests only too well the shtetl's impotence. As in case of Berdychiv in the poem of M. Bulatovych, the "evil consciousness" of the shtetl was covered by "the black burial shroud."⁵⁷

O. Lan echoed this imagery in his poem "The Ghetto," dedicated to Ierusalymka, the Vinnytsia Jewish district. The "black walls" of his Jewish ghetto sheltered a centennial grief and a silent curse. The ghetto synagogue vainly tried to appease the exhausted people with the dry wisdom of the Talmud. The blind and enraged ghetto, argued Lan, had lost its way to the future. To survive, its Jews should abandon the ghetto, move into the fields, and breathe the fresh air of the ripening wheat.⁵⁸ This imagery coincided nicely with the interpretation of the backward prerevolutionary Jewish past in the critical annals of the emerging socialist realism.⁵⁹

Troianker was among the first to create in Ukrainian literature an ample array of images of the Jewish shtetl. In twentieth-century Ukrainian literature hardly anybody superseded the variety and abundance of her Jewish images, except perhaps Pervomais'kyi in his prose narrative. Yet unlike Bazhan (1904–83), Troianker suggested an ethical and ambivalent rather than ideological and overtly negative take on the shtetl. Politics and ideas were of little interest to her but people were. She was trying to negotiate her colonial past, not to flatly reject it. Troianker's early lyrics portray her native Uman as a shtetl in decay. The contemporary Uman with its amateurish society of local historians, clandestine socialist circles, a rising machine-building industry, or the theater never appeared in Troianker's poetry. On the contrary, she obliterated any recognizable sign of her native town. Her shtetl is a vanishing world in which she hid her uncomfortable yet ineradicable past.

Although she visited Uman long after she had become an established Khar-

kiv poet, in her poetic universe Troianker never addressed Uman by name. Uman for her was nothing but a paradigmatic Jewish shtetl, an anonymous myth, an absolute colonial past. In her depiction of her mother's funeral in "Spohady" (Reminiscences), Troianker introduced a unified image of the "little shtetls." When imagining her return to her parents' house, she claimed not to have remembered whether it was situated in Berdychiv or in Golta, neither of which was her native town.⁶⁰ Her home shtetl was immersed in a deep century-long dream: it did not notice how it had lost its sense of time and its name. Paradoxically, the more acute Troianker's desire to be biographically accurate, the more she tended toward large-scale generalizations, which made her shtetl lose its recognizable corporeity.

Troianker's Jewish shtetl is a myth and whatever occurs there acquires mythological proportions. Wrapped in the generalized metaphor of "a shtetl" or "any shtetl," Troianker presented her mom's funeral as "a funeral," a symbolic fare-thee-well that replicated several motifs in a similar poem by Osip Mandelshtam ("Eta noch nepopravima"; This Night Is Irreparable, 1916) dedicated to his mother's death.⁶¹ Troianker's poem unfolds against the backdrop of a hungry, immobile, and obscure town:

Small, scornfully bespat Golta,
Or perhaps Berdychiv? I don't remember.
Stirred memories dangle in my bosom.
They stand up. They vanish.

Narrow unpaved streets.
Dreadful angst of small *shtetls*.
Grief flattens against the wall.
And at four it is already night.

My mom's life. Dirty feather beds.
A grocery store. Hungry children.
Once straight, her back was
Bent down rushing for a two-penny.

Mom, they buried you in a simple manner.
Old Jews did not walk, they ran.
Outdoors summer turned into fall.
The body swayed on a black stretcher.⁶²

To underscore her message, Troianker amassed epithets: Jews are "old," streets "unpaved," the day is "dead," stretcher "black," and the town "scornfully bespat." Modern urban flowers and Mozart's music, grieves Troianker, are inconceivable at a Jewish funeral. Nothing disturbed the stagnating shtetl except the hasty movements of the Jewish communal coffin carriers. Troianker observes

them as they are running through the cemetery to the grave. They seem to want to get rid of the dead corpse as soon as possible, as if a sudden physical death challenges their endless spiritual agony.

The image of the body performs an ambiguous function here. Troianker focuses on the stretcher on which the black corpse is swaying. She mentions it twice, as if trying to prolong her last meeting with her mother. There is nothing as humane and humanly normal in the shtetl as the swaying stretcher with her mother's body. In contrast with the alien, distant, and dreadful town, her mother's body in its macabre cradle unexpectedly becomes warm and dear. The dead body is dead, but by placing it at the very end of the last line of the poem Troianker makes it graphically oversized, psychologically significant, and poetically focal. In a sense, her mom's dead body seems more alive than the coffin carriers and other inhabitants of the moribund shtetl. Together with the heroine, the early autumn day and the surrounding nature bemoan the death of the little Jewish woman. Death comes to be seen as an organic part of the agonizing Jewish tradition, of the moribund shtetl, and of its natural contour. The personal intertwines with the universal, uplifting Troianker's mourning to the level of a cosmic loss. Her mother seems a last vestige of the shtetl's corporeity, which is now being buried. Loosing Troianker's mother, the shtetl turns into a pure fiction.

Although Troianker did not explicitly identify with the shtetl, she permeated it with her personal experience, her profoundly intimate sufferings, and her almost physically perceptible attachment to things Jewish. If the shtetl symbolized death, to paraphrase Karl Jaspers, this death was intimately close to Troianker. Such intimacy with Jewish culture was unheard of in Ukrainian literature. Critics who rebuked Troianker for depicting an outdated conflict between the old religious and the new atheistic generation were socially right and poetically wrong. Troianker both rejected her Jewish past and deplored its loss. She seemed not to be able to exist as a poet without repeatedly returning to her imaginary Uman, over the ruins of which she sang her lyrical dirges. She gravitated toward the colonial, simultaneously trying to overcome it once and for all. Needless to say, Troianker's nostalgia, frowned on in the late 1920s, would become quite dangerous the 1930s.

Although Troianker's actual visits home were not necessarily imbued with gloom alone, her poetic visions were. She depicted her father's house immersed in poverty, ruin, and sadness. "Grief" is perhaps the word she most often uses when she turns to her native shtetl:

Here it is, the shtetl. Like an old fur coat
 Taken from a chest, naphthalene sprinkled.
 Houses, hungry and sick with trachoma, screw up their eyes.
 Eyes housing an eternal, centennial grief.

The wheel is splashing. Hurry up, old balagola,
 Get forth, pull those ginger worn-out reins.
 The first hut. A poster. Yankel Simon Gool.
 "Salon for haircuts, curling, and shaving."

More houses there—bent, blind Lilliputians,
 Only the old stone synagogue sticks out.
 Seems that it made its neighbors blind and barefoot
 In the name of its old mad senseless god.⁶³

Note the metaphors that underscore the sense of grief: a worn-out overcoat permeated with naphthalene, the reigning sickness, a real and metaphorical blindness of the buildings and their dwellers, and a mad god supervising his last worshippers. The death of the shtetl is conveyed through the metaphor of a deficient or sick body: houses are blind, bent, diminished, hungry, and trachoma-stricken. The poster advertising how to make one's body look better sounds in this context as a bitter mock. As if formulating the diagnosis of the shtetl, Troianker brings us from such symptoms as hunger and trachoma to such consequences as blindness.

Obviously, as a Jewess dragged into the revolutionary maelstrom and thrown onto the shore of the Ukrainian literary avant-garde, Troianker dismissed Judaism as an old-fashioned nuisance from Babel's Gedali thrift shop.⁶⁴ Yet her denial was ambiguous, mitigated by her intimate relations with her family, particularly with her father. Formally it manifested itself in polemical conversations, passionate dialogues, and sensitive pleas, not in a flat-out atheistic rejection. Troianker creates a poetic version of a family disputation, in which she defended her communist idealism against her father's Judaic religiosity. Here is Troianker:

My dad is sad and calm.
 A tired Jew with a Roman nose.
 He can hardly breathe through his cough,
 And he murmurs at night: "vey-vey-vey."

But my dad has not lost his hope
 In the bluish-golden Zion.
 Says he: "A Jewish dreaming soul
 Should live and grow!"

Says he, I am alien and distant,
 For I like neither mezuzah nor Torah,
 I dream not about Zion's heat,
 And I attend a youth cell at night.

Daddy, Daddy! The distant Canaan
 Is nothing but a tale, dream, alien fantasy.

I am working at Vek's plant,
And my child is a young communist.

I do not know the waters of Jordan,
Gloomy cedars and old legends
Of Moses and the hills of Lebanon
And the songs of those who vanished.

The old will die and disappear,
And Zion will no more be blue,
It will turn its color into red
And will knock at the commune door.

And now I don't want to know it,
But you, Daddy, do not curse me.
Yes, your eyes have dimmed because of tears
And mine are joyful and clear.

I work at Vek's plant.
My child is a young communist.
The blue Zion is as far from me
As a distant and alien legend.⁶⁵

Troianker's poem betrays her familiarity with the biblical text, with the religious Jewish concept of the return to Zion, and, if I am reading the text accurately, with some speculations stemming from the Musar (Ethical) Judaism of Rabbi Israel Salanter, one of the key nineteenth-century East European rabbinic leaders.

Yet Troianker's familiarity with things Jewish does not imply she was attached to them. Unable to find better arguments, her father rebuked her for disdaining the most important artifacts of the Judaic ritual: the mezuzah, a folder containing a small, four-inch parchment scroll with the text of "Shma, Yisroel!" (Hear, O Israel! Deut. 6:4–9); the Torah—perhaps not the tradition in its integrity but only the written parchment scroll of the Pentateuch; the idea of ethical self-improvement; and finally, Zion with its all-embracing Judaic symbolism. In reply, Troianker assessed Judaism as alien ("distant Canaan"), vague ("a tale, a dream"), and dead ("songs of the dead"). Her father pointed out real objects and artifacts, Troianker turned them into bodiless metaphors and symbols. Judaism exemplified for her nothing but an artificial concoction. Three words—"legend," "past," and "alien"—appeared in her text as interchangeable synonyms. She emphatically rejected the past as alien and alienated it as legendary. It is bodiless and hence superfluous.

Contrary to Judaic values, Troianker identified with the communist future, exemplified in the image of her daughter, the Octobrist—a member of the "youngest" communist league, modified for seven- to nine-year-old Soviet children. Her house of the future is an edifice, it is robust and somatic, one can knock

at its doors—and who can knock at the doors of Zion? Troianker assured her father that sooner or later yesterday's Zionist utopia would realize its artificiality and join the "communist tomorrow." Although this was not yet true, Troianker preferred her fellow communism-inspired young men and her factory colleagues to the vague and parochial Jewish people. But neither her preferences nor convictions implied that she rejected the dialogue with her father or with her past. She was ambiguous about her Jewish heritage.

Unlike Babel's Liutov, who cut his Jewish ties and taught himself to kill, rape, and ride as a Cossack, and unlike Eduard Bagritsky's comrade Kogan from "Duma pro Opanasa," who confiscated grain from Ukrainian peasants, Troianker never cut the cord connecting her to the shtetl. Yes, her father imposed his rigidity and power upon her, but look, says the compassionate Troianker, how weak, touchy, and powerless his power was! Troianker underscored her self-awareness with remarkable sincerity: "I am a Young Communist League member, but I am not ashamed of loving my dad."⁶⁶ Judaism, this vague and "pneumatic" entity, was alien to her, whereas her father, coughing, murmuring, breathing hard, was still "somatic." Therefore her attitude toward the shtetl was one of kindness and empathy. She consistently perceived her Jewish realm as old, pre-Bolshevik, and Ukrainian. She traced this parallel by marking her Jews with the yellow-bluish colors of Ukrainian national independence.

In the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks, as Taras Kuzio put it, attempted "to eradicate Ukraine's national symbols."⁶⁷ First and foremost, they outlawed the light blue and yellow Ukrainian national symbol, considering it bourgeois, backward, and separatist. A red flag with a dark blue stripe, the new Soviet Ukrainian banner eventually pushed out and cast a negative shadow on any other Ukrainian revivalist symbols. But the conscientious Ukrainian literati, who resisted political subservience, managed to smuggle yellow-blue colorings into their writings. They could sometimes mislead the communist censorship, but never a perspicacious Ukrainian reader.

The attempts to combine a legally endorsed literary discourse with allegedly illegal national-revivalist allusions have not yet been evaluated by scholars, but they deserve an in-depth sociocultural study. Given this lack of study, mention should be made of the ubiquitous presence of Ukrainian national references in the poetry of the 1920s coming from various, if not opposing, literary trends. The following examples in no way exhaust this phenomenon, which far exceeds the scope of this discussion. Mykola Zerov (1890–1937) sang of a "blue of the sky nailed with gold." Drai-Khmara (1889–1939), in his much-acclaimed "Stohnala nich" (The Night Was Groaning), depicted a "blue-golden" lightning that incited a nightmare, the embodiment of wild passion, the drive to free-

dom, and an unbridled free will. Iurii Klen (Oswald Burghardt, 1891–1947) praised the ability of “invincible beauty” to confuse even “the sunny blue sky.” Oleksa Vlyz’ko (1908–34) was particularly preoccupied with the yellow-blue coloring: he juxtaposed a “light blue tuxedo” and the “golden fox-trot”; the “golden burning of the horns” and the “blue blouses” of the workers; the “surf’s blue paw” and “amber”; a “light blue hallucination” and “golden braids.” Indeed, Sosiura, a former participant in the anti-Bolshevik Ukrainian resistance, consistently smuggled Ukrainian nationalist allusions into his verse, combining a “golden dawn” and a “blue valley,” the “light-blue-eyed May” and the “golden moon,” “a deep blue city” and “golden snow,” the “golden will” and the “light blue will” and even praising the “blue gold of your eyes.”⁶⁸

Troianker occasionally used Ukrainian national colors, both in Ukrainian and in Jewish contexts. Her palette seemed to have reflected something more than the random colors of empirical reality. Troianker’s Zion, for example, is bluish-yellow.⁶⁹ The religious artifacts of the old Leyb Troianker are blue (skullcap) and yellow (prayer shawl). The shtetl evening entails a “blue cradle” and “sun beams.” Troianker contrasts “yellow” wallets sold in a Ukrainian town to the “blue air” of Nankin, where the British murdered the protesting workers. Her “yellow fall” is juxtaposed with “sleep” and “dreams” (*sny, snyt*), which phonetically refer to “blue” (*syn*) and sound like puns on Ukrainian *syn* and *syn*, “blue” and “son.” Furthermore, her “yellow mandolin” of the past appears next to the images of “dreams” and a “son,” in Ukrainian *sny* and *syn* (cf.: *syn*, blue). The Ukrainian fall and the Jewish shtetl appear in the same “yellow-blue” frame of reference. If the fall and the shtetl signify the past, or to be precise, the beloved and despised past, then one may only speculate why Troianker repeatedly clustered together the memories of the Jewish shtetl and those of Ukrainian national independence, equating “ethnic” Jewish and “national” Ukrainian. Be that as it may, there is hardly any doubt that she resorted to a secret language of visual symbolism permeated with ideologically charged colors, and that she used this language to bring together her Ukrainian and Jewish realms. It is particularly significant that these colors reflect the palpable somatic status of the shtetl and its inhabitants.

Before she found ways to bring together opposite identities, Troianker mused on the unbridgeable gap between the two. Attached to her Jewish past but already firmly established in her Ukrainian present, in her poem “Mene tato prohnay i prokliav” (My Father Has Banished and Cursed Me) Troianker realized that Ukrainian and Jewish identities were incompatible and irreconcilable. That a consensus between the Ukrainian and Jewish is unattainable she elucidates with her father’s curse (“may the earth fall through / Under both of us, my

Olenka”), with his desperate lament (“Tears are in his eyes, / And in his beard, silver as hoarfrost”), and with his flat rejection of his daughter’s mixed marriage (“For my child has been born from a *goy*”). Troianker uses the strong Old Hebrew designation of non-Jews, “*goy*,” which in the medieval era turned into a curse that counteracted scornful Christian anti-Jewish expletives. Troianker’s exogamy casts a heavy blow on her father (“Oh my cursed, my cursed girl, / There were not enough Jews for her!”). Her mother extends the curse into the next generation, refusing to accept Olenka (diminutive for Olena/Elena) into the family, where biblical names for girls was the norm (My mom cries, “Hers is Olenka, / Not Debora, nor Leah or Nehama”).⁷⁰

The gap between Raia and her Jewish parents is further corroborated by the personal pronouns of the poem: Raia talks to her daughter using “you,” explaining the reasoning of her parents, but her parents address her and her child in the third-person singular. “She,” “for her,” “hers,” “they,”—the lack of the second-person singular emphatically points to the lack of communication between the Troiankers and their daughter. Raia bitterly raises the national identity question, the notorious internal passport’s “fifth paragraph” that would become so crucial for many Soviet Jews beginning in the 1940s, and further exacerbated the problem: who would her daughter be in terms of nationality? Ukrainian like Turhan, her father, or Jewish like her mother? And if she chooses Ukrainian, would it not create the same tension between the Ukrainian Olenka and the Jewish Raia as that which existed between Raia and her parents? Unlike her critics, who found her poetic discussion of Ukrainian-Jewish dichotomy “artificial,” Troianker gallantly ponders the identity of a child who has ethnic Ukrainian features and a Jewish legal mother:

My Olenka has blue eyes
And light-white hair.
What would my daughter answer
If sharply asked, what’s her “nation”?

Troianker’s “sharp question” seems to make the identity drama irreconcilable, but the solution arrives in an unexpected form and from an unexpected side. The Jewish past transcends its own boundaries and reaches out to Troianker’s Ukrainian habitat.

Suddenly Troianker’s mother acquiesces to a new reality and grudgingly, yet partially, accepts her. Addressing her daughter and referring to her new granddaughter, she says, almost literally, “Why don’t you come with . . . what’s her name . . . that one . . . her”:

And my father cannot forgive
That I have a child from a *goy*.

But my mom has said: “Why don’t
Why don’t you come sometime with . . . that one.”⁷¹

Once her parents pronounce their final verdict, Troianker’s family clash catches momentum. The poet does not offer a superficial solution to the conflict. Troianker depicts with warm irony her mother’s desire to see Raia’s child and her simultaneous unwillingness to say out loud her “goyish” granddaughter’s name.

According to Troianker, reconciliation between the Jewish and the Ukrainian is possible on a biological but not on ethnic level: the Jewish grandmother is ready to accept a non-Jewish relative into the family but not the Ukrainian name of that relative. Paradoxically, the third-person singular (*toiū*—“with her”), which indicates a detached object here, performs the opposite function: it points to an object that is approximated to the speaker, integrated into her realm, and, as such, accepted. The child is accepted as a body or living entity, not as idea or a name. Perhaps her mom’s semi-reconciliation, which contained the seeds of a future conflict, is a more fitting culmination to the family drama than an all-forgiveness. In this context, Troianker’s yellow-blue visual symbolism testifies to her consistent attempts to find a cultural solution to the problem beyond the ethnic, the religious, and the political. These attempts constitute her search for a personal Ukrainian-Jewish synthesis. Only a yellow-blue fall can appease both Ukrainians and Jews, particularly because it envelops a new Ukrainian-Jewish eros.

Emancipated Femininity

The groundbreaking discovery of her own body ushered sexual emancipation into the life of Troianker, and sexual emancipation brought her to the discovery of her bodily freedom. Among her partners there were many literary figures, including many European guests, if one believes Troianker’s relatives and contemporaries.⁷² Troianker boasted of having had affairs not only with such celebrities as Volodymyr Sosiura and Konstantin Fedin but also with Panait Istrati, a homosexual. Apparently nobody could resist her explicit sexual curiosity, except Henri Barbusse, whose resolute “no” drove Troianker to tears. She consoled herself by casting serious doubts on Barbusse’s masculinity.⁷³

In the postrevolutionary mid-1920s, the conduct of Raisa Troianker, as well as of Valer’ian Polishchuk, hardly looked abnormal. The younger generation disregarded the arguments of the leading Marxist critics, who took pains to prove that the abolition of private property should not be mechanically extrapolated to family relations. As Gregory Carleton has proved, young postrevo-

lutionary men and women took what they wanted from Marxist polemics on sex. For them, unrestricted sexual relations free from a burdensome marriage contract represented the immediate expansion of revolutionary emancipation. They thought “love-comrade” relations should render obsolete the institution of marriage and its attitude toward women as manipulated and appropriated assets. Marxist vocabulary was routinely used as a cover for promiscuity and license. In vain the leading newspapers again and again emphasized that Engels called on revolutionary proletarians to transform marriage into a voluntary union of two loving individuals and that Lenin restated that the cancellation of private property did and should not imply the rejection of monogamy and family ties.

The ubiquitous discussion of sexual relations in the Soviet press in the 1920s not only manifested the burst of revolutionary eros but also bolstered it. To calm down the spirits and “naturalize” sex within the Marxist canon, Aleksandra Kollontai compared the normalcy of sex to the normalcy of any other common human urge (such as thirst), yet her sober “theory of a glass of water”—equating sex and drinking—unexpectedly triggered an overheated polemic on free love, on the multifaceted interests of human beings who rejected the boundaries of monogamy, and on disorganized sexual relations.⁷⁴ Summarized by a keen critic of these new ethics, the sexual conduct of the young Soviet generation required, first, that any male member of the Young Communist League could and had to satisfy his sexual instincts. Second, abstention was qualified as a petty-bourgeois prejudice. Third, any female member of the Young Communist League had to satisfy the needs of a male, otherwise she was considered a petty bourgeois who did not deserve to be a worker’s institute student or a member of the Young Communist League. In a Kharkiv journal read regularly in Troianker’s circle, a scandalized sociologist flatly rejected this perverse interpretation of grassroots sexual conduct and called for a healthy abstinence.⁷⁵ For Troianker this seemed but another dull straightjacket, one more quasi-religious imposition: she had disdained these restrictive ethics in the shtetl and renounced them again in Kharkiv.

The liberation from a bodily deficient shtetl implied the emancipation of the body. Once Troianker rejected the imposed shtetlesque gender relations, revolution erupted in her poetry in the form of explicit sexual desire. It could hardly have been otherwise because, as Iurii Smolych recorded, “vulgarity and eccentricity have always been characteristic of this small, charming, and excessively erotic woman.”⁷⁶ It was particularly significant that eccentricity, charm, and eroticism permeated Troianker’s poetry, too.

Hryhorii Kostiuk (1902–2002), an accurate and trustworthy Ukrainian literary historian, recalled how a number of respectable Ukrainian writers, engi-

neers, teachers, and scholars gathered in his Kharkiv friend's apartment to have drinks, sing scabrous songs, tell jokes, and recite erotic poetry. They recited Pushkin's *Gavriiliada*, unpublished Sosiura, and, as Kostiuk emphasized, "even more than that, our Raisa Troianker."⁷⁷ In her recollections, paradoxically combining racial antisemitism with sincere empathy toward individual Jews, Dokia Humenna referred to the same hot topic, noting in passing Natalia Zabyla's love poetry and adding that "her poems reflected a fashionable contemporary theme. It was more than eroticism, it was sexualism. It was the fashion, and besides Zabyla, it was represented also in the poetry of Raisa Troianker and Ludmyla [in reality, Luciana] Piontek, the wife of Ivan Kulyk."⁷⁸ Apparently Troianker, although partially unpublished, was popular indeed in the 1920s—to the extent that Volodymyr Sosiura was offended when a critic listed Sosiura in his literary review among the "dead" poets and "such erotic poetess as Raisa Troianker" among the "living" ones.⁷⁹

Given that Ukrainian intellectuals were reported to have recited "our Raisa Troianker" and considered her "alive," even if ironically, one should revisit the opinions of such writers as Iurii Smolych, who held Troianker's poetry only as "pornography," although "formally masterful."⁸⁰ The bigotry of the harbingers of socialist realism, even talented and noncanonical ones like Smolych, allowed them neither to assess accurately Troianker's poetic innovations nor to explain how her verse made its way into Ukrainian periodicals. Moreover, there are reasons to believe that in his *Intimate Confession*, Smolych was more rigid about the literary than about the sexual moments of his Kharkiv youth. Still, Smolych had a hard time contextualizing Troianker, whose explicit eroticism was unparalleled in Ukrainian poetry.

Raised and bred in the midst of rural parochialism and its conservative perception of gender, pre-1917 Ukrainian poetry introduced the whole gamut of love themes. While Panas Myrnyi socialized love, Vynnychenko politicized it, and Lesia Ukrainka romanticized and psychologized it, before the 1920s no Ukrainian poet attempted to eroticize love. Sosiura broke the canon, poeticizing both male and female sexual activism, but Troianker was the first to celebrate erotic passion, to depict a vertiginous sexual encounter, to convey the postcoital confusion of inexperienced lovers, to ponder on the paradoxical sense of embarrassment of a girl who exhibits her body yet is still ashamed of it, and to emphasize the profound feeling of a resuscitated new being after its metaphorical death in the first sexual encounter. She placed her alter ego at the epicenter of her erotic adventure, furnishing it with autobiographical detail and later transforming the erotic encounter into a cultural and social one. For Troianker, unlike for Ukrainian poets before her, self-emancipation signified sexual revolution and

sexual revolution signified the discovery of the erotic and poetic potential of her own body.

In her “Trava pryv’ialena” (The Grass Has Faded), Troianker ponders the birth of a feminine psyche. She manifests a certain sense of balance and taste while portraying how her alter ego became a woman. She pondered every moment of postcoitus stress that transformed her introverted sufferings into a re-discovery of, and reconciliation with, the world around her. She starts with a victimized body—a body in fever, a falling body, a body in need of caressing, a naked body, an ashamed body—and culminates with a body coming to grips with itself and acquiring the calm and confidence of the land. Here is Troianker:

The grass has faded and the fall is numb.
It happened. What’s that? Am I alive?
In the grass my braids got entangled and dispersed,
My body and head are in fever.

My skirt is rumpled. My face is in a torment.
The red stains in the stripes of my underwear.
And the night falls, like a raven, into the abyss.
And the night calls me to fall, too.

My heart is heavy and anxious.
And you, lost, cannot caress me.
And what has happened cannot be reversed.
And my heart is compressed with cold.

You really begged me: be mine today.
And it did happen. Oh, the law of life!
We have forgotten Heine’s book in the grass—
Its leaves are rustling under the wind.

I am surprised. You saw all of me—
But in front of you I am ashamed to fix my stocking.
And go untied. And we seem strangers.
And a random pearl is tearing from my eye.

Oh, never more! I’ll never be the same as yesterday!
I’ll never erase the burning stains from my lips!
And the day is so regular and cheerful.
The tired earth so calm.⁸¹

Moving from the nature of her psyche to the psyche of nature, the poem is permeated with Akhmatova’s metaphors. Akhmatova mesmerized Troianker with her strong poetic female voice, her explicit eroticism, and her classic form.

One can hardly imagine a female poet in the 1920s who could have escaped Akhmatova’s impact. Troianker was no exception. Several examples help to illu-

minate parallels between them. Troianker's heroine forgets a volume of Heine in the grass, whereas in Akhmatova the unnamed but recognizable Pushkin forgets a volume of Parni in an alley at Tsarskoe Selo (*zdes lezhala ego treugolka / I rastrepannyi tom Parni*, 1911).⁸² Troianker's dispersed plaits recall the disbanded feminine plaits portrayed in Akhmatova's Kiev-penned "Zharko veet veter dushnyi" (Oppressive Wind Blows Hot, 1910).⁸³ The feelings the two women experience also seem similar: Troianker depicts the fever of her head and body, whereas Akhmatova experiences a blunt headache and a strange body fever. It is curious that Troianker referred to a poem that obliquely compared her partner with a poet: if Akhmatova's Pushkin forgets in the grass a volume of Parni, who then was that mysterious addressee of Troianker's poem, if not a Ukrainian poet?

Troianker's finale apparently goes back to the finale of Akhmatova's poem "Ia prishla siuda, bezdel'nitsa" (I Have Come Here, the Lazy One, 1911) which reconciles the narrator with herself and her immediate natural environment:

I notice everything around as new.
The wet smell of the poplars.
I am silent. Silent, getting ready
To turn again into you, earth.⁸⁴

Compare Troianker:

And the day is so regular and cheerful.
The tired earth so calm.

But the differences are also telling. Troianker's heroine goes through confusion and pain after sexual intercourse, whereas Akhmatova's heroine experiences similar feelings after writing a courageous message. It is writing that triggers Akhmatova's suffering; in Troianker, suffering is the result of erotic passion. Akhmatova places a written text into the fulcrum of her verse; Troianker makes her verse body-centered. For the former, writing is a renunciation of the past, for the latter, sex is a rupture with the past. These are not minor differences. In this case, as well as in several others, Troianker resorted to and entirely reworked Akhmatova's imagery, pursuing her own purpose. We do not find Akhmatova-like religious symbolism in Troianker.

Akhmatova's solitary self-contained sufferings are alien to Troianker. The romantic solitude of Akhmatova is replaced by the erotic outburst of Troianker's protagonist. Troianker's body language absorbs and transforms Akhmatova's nuanced reflection. Instead of Akhmatova's timid summer and rigid winter Troianker celebrates the abundant fall. Akhmatova says "I breathe moon"; Troianker claims that she "makes love in the transparency of the day." Akhma-

tova becomes a “calm girl in the white field,” whereas Troianker goes to the field to give way to her tantalizing emotions. Unlike Akhmatova, Troianker celebrates her heroine making love, not contemplating it. Akhmatova’s wailing over a lost love is something entirely alien to Troianker, who is usually the first to depart from her significant other. Troianker knows neither Akhmatova’s intense self-reflection nor her cautious manipulation of her heroine’s spoken words. Troianker learns from Akhmatova how to construct a dramatic dialogue within a lyrical discourse, yet in her dialogue she is both one of the actors and the director of the play. Perhaps therefore Troianker radically departs from Akhmatova once she arrives at a new level of self-awareness. She does not allow any imposition: she, Raia Troianker, empowers herself to make decisions, choose lovers, and suffer.

A rupture with the world of a defunct tradition liberated not only Troianker but also her female protagonists. Tartar or Muslim girls enter Troianker’s poetic universe as soon as they replicate Troianker’s own life itinerary. In other words, they are as Tartar or Muslim as Troianker’s girl from a Hong Kong pub is Chinese. Like Troianker’s rebellion against tradition, their rebellion starts with a rejection of religious canons, continues with the celebration of a unrestricted love, and culminates in “equal opportunity” rejoicing.

Here is the poetic monologue of a Tartar girl, who, among other things, mentions the Women’s Department headed by Aleksandra Kollontai, who was misunderstood by many as a theoretician of free love:

“I have trampled down my chadar,
 I myself have cut my plait off.
 There was such uproar in my aul,
 The old mullah has cursed me.”
 And the Tartar girl pushed her copper leg
 Into the sea, as if into the grass.
 “And now the Women’s Department will send me
 To work and study in Moscow.”⁸⁵

Troianker continues her poetic confession using female Muslims and Tartars, her decolonized sisters, as her mouthpiece. To be sure, her *couleur locale* is a sheer fiction: her Muslim and Jew are interchangeable. The *sheytl* (the wig or head covering of a married Jewish woman) becomes a Muslim *chadar*. The shtetl is replaced by a northern Caucasus *aul*, a distant mountain village, while a rabbi defending the last bastions of tradition is transformed into a mullah. Troianker shares with her characters her bygone victimization and an emancipating drive. It is less obvious that Troianker needs her exotic *couleur locale* to camouflage her own pondering on the liberating role of sex. Troianker’s outward celebration of

sexuality makes her symbolism rather bold. She listens to her heroine's confession, charmed by the Tartar girl's explicit eroticism. She admires her heroine's resolute body language and reads it as a writ of her heroine's liberation from religious shackles.

Troianker marked the radical shifts in the lives of her personages, their liberation from religious canonicity, and their sexual emancipation with red or shades of red. "Red" connotes positive values, such as sexual maturity, carnality, physical attractiveness, the quintessence of life. She associated "red" with a transitory present-perfect tense and placed it somewhere between the "yellow" past indefinite and the sober "white" present. Depicting the first sexual adventure of her heroine in her much-acclaimed erotic poem, Troianker's protagonist discovered "red stains" on her underwear. She bemoaned her lost virginity, her irreversible transformation into a woman, and her shameful blood. A similar yet more moderate symbolism enveloped the only dynamic scene in the poem on the Tartar girl. Troianker contrasted the motionless confession of her heroine with her rapid gesture. All of a sudden in the midst of a languid narrative, the Tartar girl briskly (*rvuchko*) enters the sea and makes visible part of her body. Whereas in the autobiographical poem, the girl is ashamed of her body, the Tartar girl feels fairly comfortable, and is fully aware of her physicality, to the extent that she seems to catch the eye of her female interlocutor. The more Troianker departs from her autobiographical motifs, the more pronounced is the physical self-awareness of her protagonists. All of them learn to speak by freeing their bodies from the imposed rigidity of traditional ethics. They are looking for their voice and language and find the language of their bodies.

This transition is further elaborated in the poem on the Muslim girl, another of Troianker's alter egos, who praises her nonmarital love relations with her partner Ali. Here, too, Troianker emphasizes the red symbolism. The Muslim girl burns her head cover in a fire and refuses to confine herself to the *ichkar*, the separate part of a Muslim house restricted for women only. The implicit red of the fire destroys the enslaving past and liberates the body. The explicit red of henna with which her lover paints his beard functions as an erotic attraction. The burning religious artifact releases the Muslim girl: she escapes from what she perceives as the stifling domain of an observant Muslim household into the realm of unrestricted love. She publicizes her relations, taking her lover to a teahouse, an unequivocal Muslim public domain. She boasts that she is as free as her lover. Perhaps this is freedom not only from tradition but also from mutual responsibilities:

My Ali is such a slim Uzbek
He colors in henna his beard.

The Poetry of Love and the Love of Poets

As with other aspects of her sensuous poetry, Troianker's Ukrainian acculturation had a paramount somatic aspect. Her dialogue with Ukraine was an encounter of two bodies: hers, contextualized within Jewish imagery, and his, strongly associated with Ukraine. Troianker reimagines herself through her poetic alter ego as an apostate Jewish girl, a runaway freethinker, a woman, a young communist, and a Ukrainian poet who assumes all these new functions due to and through her encounter with the Ukrainian *he*.

Troianker's universe, small but colorful and intense is inconceivable without masculine images, usually in the form of a Ukrainian poet who saves or does not save her from erotic torment. For Troianker, a love affair with a male partner is inconceivable unless he is another "writing body," namely, a poet:

Azure city in the autumn flood.
I am a simple and pensive girl.
You are a poet renowned in Ukraine
And you cannot love me.⁸⁸

In this case, Troianker's unhampered eroticism is no less striking than her unusual, dangerously charged, and politically subversive prepositional phrase "*in* Ukraine." Throughout the Soviet period, Ukraine was referred to as a territory, not as an independent entity, hence the correct "on [the] Ukraine." One of her critics in the 1920s scolded Troianker for this language error, considering it merely a grammatical one, yet this "error" seems to have been a deliberate choice on Troianker's side.

Indeed, Troianker's preposition struck a sensitive cord. A hot political issue in the 1920s, it has not lost its explosive connotations some eighty years later. After 1991, and particularly after the Orange Revolution of 2004, chauvinistic Russian politicians were scandalized by the ubiquitous democratic mass media's usage of the notion "Ukraine" with the preposition "in" (in Ukraine), and insisted that "on" should be used instead, betraying their scornful attitude to what they considered a genuinely Russian colonial body. Although national revivalist strivings were on the rise in the 1920s, Ukraine remained a territory: things were taking place "on" it (as "on a borderland"), not "in" it (as "in the country"). This usage angered one of Troianker's critics who suspected that the anonymous addressee of Troianker's passion could have been a poet representing the free, sovereign, and independent Ukraine, no more a colonial territory. And so more acute was Troianker's awareness that her love was unfeasible.

Troianker staged the love affairs of her heroines against the scenery of the fall rural landscape, whose Ukrainian attributes are well recognizable. Troianker's

heroine is easily identifiable as Troianker's alter ego and her landscapes are immediately recognizable as Podol, but identifying the prototype of Troianker's masculine protagonists is a challenging task. In the following poem, for instance, Troianker depicts Onoprii Turhan, her husband. Yet the heroine addresses her partner with the name of Oleksa, perhaps hinting at Oleksa Vlyz'ko, a contemporary neoromantic Ukrainian poet and great admirer of Gumilev and Kipling and whose line became an epigraph to one of Troianker's poems.⁸⁹ In addition, Troianker surrounded her characters with visual metaphors, as well as a tango-like rhythm, borrowed from the early poetry of Volodymyr Sosiura:⁹⁰

Leaves are falling, leaves are falling,
 How nice are those leaves, yellow and golden.
 The air smells sharply of November—
 It came from the field, it moved though the valley.
 My hand sticks into the leaf pile as into hair,
 The hair of Oleksa, my love.
 My golden fall, with me your leaves you share,
 It will be easier for you to carry them.⁹¹

Here, as well as in many other of Troianker's poems, the fall is associated with love, love with autumn yellow-golden colors, and the colors—obliquely mediated by the frame of reference created by Ukrainian poetry of the 1920s—with Ukraine. Troianker's eroticism is not self-containing: she naturalizes eros, juxtaposing the time of love with the cycle of nature.

The central moment in the poem is her heroine's dialogue with autumn, the moon, and the landscape. Troianker learns from them that the end of the season and the first frosts are rapidly approaching and her love affair will soon come to a halt. "I dovetail my seventeenth into my plaits," admits Troianker and addresses fall with the question, "and you, tender, how old are you?" To mark the Ukrainian national motif of the poem, Troianker resorts to an unusual designation of November (*padolyst*). Unlike in western Ukrainian and the Ukrainian Diaspora language, it was not canonized in Soviet Ukrainian, which adopted *lystopad* for November, and came to be associated with the "western," "bourgeois" and "nationalistic." Even if Troianker uses the word only to connote the exotic, still she seems to lament not only the end of her love and of her beloved fall, but also the end of the old-fashioned language, which would die out as soon as fall comes to an end. Neither the Ukrainian fall nor her love would survive. The parallels Troianker traces here and elsewhere make one revisit the definition of her poetry as merely erotic. It would seem much more plausible to portray it as an attempt to merge eroticism with the universalized Ukrainian landscape poetry.

For Troianker, the change of seasons becomes inseparably connected with major shifts in her life. The end of fall coincides with the heroine's transformation from a lover into a wife and mother and triggers the shift of colors. Love was yellow and orange, it was music and color. Now a new theme enters Troianker's universe, the white snows that cover the past:

What are you singing, yellow mandolin,
Troubling my blood with memories?
I am now somebody else's wife.
You have overcome your love.

Autumn, autumn in yellow adorned,
And my lips hot with fire
"This love is not the last for me
The final accord has not yet chimed."

I will not kiss anymore
Your courageous and joyous forehead.
I am a wife, soon will be a mother—
And the snows have covered the past.⁹²

The new season moves Troianker from a rural to an urban environment but does not change the character of her passion. She consistently sought and found the love of men of arts. The masculine was appealing as far as it was artful and poetic. Her passion seemed to ignore social and psychological conventions. In her "Students'ke" (Studentesque) poem, implying Polishchuk or Sosiura, she celebrates her new love—less explicit, more nuanced, and more dramatic:

Night is cold as a blade
But I am burning with fire.
Someone distant—as a shot in my bosom,
Someone distant whom I love.

He is a poet. In a noisy blue city
He has a wife and children.
He united his fervent heart
With the grief of his poems.⁹³

The love for a poet, primarily for a Ukrainian poet, becomes for Troianker the *sine qua non* of her erotic adventure. Even when Troianker's fiancé is just a captain on board a ship cruising the Black Sea, she would make him into a poet, as if her love does not know other partners. This is Troianker on her night conversation on board a ship:

You are a captain with a poet's soul.
I told you about my grief,

My nature, gloomy like the Nord-Ost.
 I called you "Bill"
 Instead of a real, tender "Iura."⁹⁴

The change of a regular and prosaic to a romantically accentuated name follows the metaphoric change of her partner's occupation. Note that her sea voyage romance frames the awakening of her poetic vocation. The masculine protagonist creates not only an erotic situation but also generates the awakening of the heroine's creative effort. Thus for Troianker the masculine serves a conduit into the realm of poetry. Troianker's literary inspiration requires a male poet whom she views as timid and powerless: it is she who empowers her male characters, transforming their feeble Iura into a corpulent romantic Bill. But the artistic aspect of her erotic curiosity remains unchanged: her love belonged only to a poet and a poet was synonymous with love; others should not even try to solicit her reciprocity. Perhaps to emphasize and simultaneously to neutralize this idea, Troianker invents an impossible situation: she brings together an image of herself as a gifted poet and as a young mother taking care of her son.

This apparently trivial image presents a challenge. As is known, Troianker gave birth to a girl, Elena Turgan, who grew up in Leningrad and Murmansk and, in the postwar period became a Moscow-based journalist. Troianker never had a son. But in her "Vechir" (Evening) and a few other poems, she changes the gender of her child: the daughter turns into a son marked with carefully selected Ukrainian national symbols. This change deeply puzzled Mykola Kapustians'kyi (b. 1879), a Ukrainian military historian and art critic who received Troianker's first book from her with a romantic dedication. Kapustians'kyi's dense and sometimes undecipherable marginal notes betray his perfect knowledge of Troianker's personal circumstances. Sometimes he also discloses the hints and pseudonyms in Troianker's poetry by putting next to the corresponding lines the names of her husbands or lovers. Kapustians'kyi heavily marked his copy of the book with notes. Thus, on the page where the poem "Evening" appears, next to Troianker's line "My little boy has cried three times already" he left the following bracketed pencil note: "why a boy and not Olenka?" This marginal remark attests to Troianker's by-no-means-trivial attitude to gender.

A perspicacious critic, Kapustians'kyi pointed to something poetically significant for Troianker, albeit he was not able to interpret accurately what he had discovered. Troianker, as it were, poetically transgendered her child by pointing out the significance of the male body as a catalyst in the process of creative writing. Just as her first erotic encounter took her, through pain and shame, to a discovery of her own self, here, too, the pain of a sick child and the shame of a young

mother unable to suppress her artistic zeal bring her to a creative moment that, in turn, results in a poem about this transformation of pain and shame into poetry. Thus transgending becomes an inherent part of Troianker's emancipation process. The body of the Other does not colonize her: on the contrary, she needs it only as an incentive that inspires her introspection, brings her to a new level of self-discovery, and enables her to capture this moment poetically.

Apparently Troianker's heroine's poetic talent cannot realize itself beyond a conflicting realm that constantly challenges her as a mother, a poet, and a passionate and daring lover. Troianker is well aware that the responsibility to her child contradicts her volatile poetic genius, let alone vertiginous love affairs. Yet her talent has the upper hand over social conventions, leading her to the most desirable of all men and most talented of all poets, to Mephistopheles:

Hold on, Mephistopheles,
 Hold on, Mephistopheles,
 I may come at night and sell
 My last blood-written stanzas,
 My wisdom—transparent, like water in a glass.
 Wait, Mephistopheles,
 Your face is cruel,
 And my cheeks are still rosy,
 I will come at night and knock three times
 And will sell my wisdom, and sell my talent.
 Wait, Mephistopheles,
 I am not white-haired Gretchen,
 I am gusty and nervous,
 I am a woman-poet.
 I am looking for an unknown, an unspoken word,
 I know the thirst of inspiration,
 The flight of creative zest.
 It's easy to be a lover
 Even a mother and a wife.
 But how to unite this with the calling of creator?
 The funeral silver-sounding snowflakes are flying,
 I will come, Mephistopheles,
 Wiping off the suffering from my face.⁹⁵

Here, in what can be considered one of her best verses, Troianker brings her body symbolism to its end: she discovers that her poetic talent—always in search of an “unknown, an unspoken word”—transcends the somatic. The “blood-written stanzas” narrate the body, yet the power of narration brings her far beyond the somatic. The snowflakes anticipating death and immortality at the end

of the poem contradict the “red,” the carnal, and the erotic. As if predicting her own northward itinerary, quite real, Troianker sacrifices her “day,” “love,” and “body” for the night, winter, and poetic art.

Who is the addressee of this poem, so unusually philosophical for Troianker? Was this Mephistopheles a pure symbol? Context offers a clue. In an earlier verse permeated with philosophical symbolism, “The Poem on the Old Professor,” Troianker tells the story of an aging scholar courageously doing his research in times of war communism, revolutionary ruin, famine, and cold, and studying the problem of rejuvenating humankind. He spends five hours in line to get his ration, a pound of bread and two of potatoes, and goes back home to feed two creatures—helpless, charming, and hairy orangutans—that he uses in his research on aging. The old professor places his life and health on the altar of science, to the extent that he uses his dissertation, the last thing that he can burn, to warm his room. Not only does he burn his dissertation: he burns himself, too, for the sake of his “golden lover—science.” Troianker praises the old professor’s self-abnegation, assuring the reader that a redeemed humanity will discover his notebook with its secrets for human rejuvenation, as well as the surviving orangutans, and will solve the riddle of immortality.

For Troianker, the old professor is a mythic symbol of constant searching, of self-sacrificial service for a lofty goal, and a bold challenge to the power of death. He sacrifices something more important than his life: he rejects the satisfaction of his own bodily urges for the sake of the embodied results of the subject of his experiment, the orangutans. While Troianker calls him Faust (twice), it is even more important that she also addresses him with the name and patronymic of a contemporary:

Oh, wonderful *Valer'iane L'vovychu*,
You are trying to become the second Faust.⁹⁶

There was only one person in Troianker’s milieu with this name: Valer’ian L’vovich Polishchuk, another visionary, seeker of millenarian utopia, and self-sacrificial thinker. Troianker imagined herself face-to-face with Mephistopheles, as if to imitate the situation in which her imaginary old utopian-minded professor, named after Troianker’s senior colleague, editor, and poetic mentor, appeared vis-à-vis death and eternity. If so, the professor’s research on virtual immortality and Troianker’s poetry replicated one another as mutually interchangeable entities. Their obstinate self-abnegation is similar, too: the professor coughs blood; he “paints his handkerchief, as if with blood.” And Troianker speaks about “blood-written stanzas.”

Thus, Troianker, “a woman-poet,” emerges as the double of her mentor

Valer'ian Polishchuk: they both sought ultimate knowledge ready to challenge the divine, both tend to bridge the “yesterday” and the utopian “tomorrow,” both are ready for self-sacrifice. This was a trap. Once Troianker had made Ukrainian male-poets so crucial to her spiritual growth, she ran the risk of encountering a poet and a male who would not necessarily be Ukrainian, particularly because she was now entirely decolonized and on a par with the Ukrainian poets. Apparently she never mused on such a dangerous encounter. Her premonitions did not deceive Troianker. Her Mephistopheles did appear in Kharkiv, together with three other Russian literary men. And Raia not only fell in love with him but also brought her Ukrainian talent, and her Ukrainian poetry, and her Ukrainian-Jewish themes to the altar of her new erotic madness.

The name of this Mephistopheles was Il'ia Sadofiev (1889–1965). As with many other of Troianker's men, he was a poet. Unlike them, he was a Russian poet, by that time a key figure in the RAPP (Rossiiskaia assotsiatsia proletarskikh pisatelei; Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), a colleague of Maiakovsky and a friend of Esenin, the author of a dozen poetic collections, praised for his revolutionary pathos by the founder of Russian symbolism Valerii Briusov himself. Sleek, self-centered, sprayed with the best cologne, and well dressed, he impressed Raia with his unparalleled self-confidence, with his aura of an established proletarian poet, with his manners of celebrity, with his fascinating physical health, and with his very impressive sexuality. Those who knew him personally portrayed him as a “mighty and robust” individual who “rejected lyrics if they were not followed by the bangs of the hammer.”⁹⁷ Sadofiev visited Kharkiv together with three other members of the writers' delegation, heard Raia at a poetry recital, condescended to some positive remarks, and fell in love with her.⁹⁸ When they were introduced to one another, the acclaimed Sadofiev could not resist Raia's charms. Her second and last collection of Ukrainian poetry carried the dedication:

to you, who sees an individual,
where nobody else is able to see
To my beloved
Il'ia Sadofiev.

Apparently Sadofiev was an unheard-of tiger in Troianker's collection. Raia agreed to become his wife and move to Leningrad.

From the Ukrainian Autumn to the Polar Winter

In 1931 the Ukrainian period of Troianker's biography came to a halt, but without a brief discussion of her later itinerary, the whole picture of her literary ca-

reer would lose its utopian essence. In Leningrad, Il'ia Sadofiev and Raisa Troianker settled into Sadofiev's luxurious apartment in the Vladimir Maia-kovsky Writers' House. Such Russian literary celebrities as Ol'ga Berggol'ts, Konstantin Fedin, Vera Panova, Nikolai Tikhonov, and Mikhail Zoshchenko were among their neighbors. Raia befriended many, men among them, a fact that made Sadofiev burst with jealousy and rage, in most cases, unsubstantiated.⁹⁹ Her easygoing character and his extraordinary self-conceit turned their marriage into a short-lived enterprise. Sadofiev envied Troianker's popular success with the Leningrad literary milieu, and Troianker disapproved of Sadofiev's disdain toward all those who surrounded and worshipped him. To keep Raia under control, Sadofiev resorted to physical abuse. Around 1934, Raia apparently fainted after one such beating.

The accident, similar to her clash with Leonid Jordani, exceeded her patience. Family oppression, domestic violence, and continuous suspicion on Sadofiev's part contrasted sharply with her own independence and kindness. She may have also learned that Sadofiev had an affair with their housemaid and had molested her ten-year-old daughter. Troianker divorced Sadofiev, abandoning her comfortable yet totally dependent life, and moved to Murmansk, a city beyond the Arctic Circle, sufficiently far away to check Sadofiev's renewed advances. It is a bitter irony that Troianker's self-emancipation, which started in the midst of the golden Ukrainian fall, ended up in the reign of white snows, almost literally embodying the itinerary of her lyrical heroine. Two of Troianker's unpublished Russian-language poems from 1935–36 were dedicated to Sadofiev, and a good many of Sadofiev's poems epitomizing his crisis testify that the parting was painful for both sides.¹⁰⁰

Perhaps in reflecting on her escape from Kharkiv to Leningrad to Murmansk, Troianker realized that it was a mixed blessing. Starting from the early 1930s, the Kremlin launched a brutal campaign to suppress Ukrainian national revivalism. In 1931–32, the state-orchestrated famine wiped out the midrank Ukrainian peasantry. The repression of the old cadre of the Ukrainian intelligentsia ushered in the annihilation of all those who supported or followed Ukrainization. As Oleh Ilnytzkyj observed, in the 1930s, the party "launched [a] campaign against Ukrainian culture itself."¹⁰¹ The leading ideologist of national communism Skrypyuk and the far left poet and thinker Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide one after the other. Onoprii Turhan, Troianker's husband and the legal father of her daughter, was arrested on falsified charges, sentenced, and later disappeared in the Gulag. Valer'ian Polishchuk, Troianker's mentor and friend, also was arrested for allegedly plotting to murder Sergei Kirov, sentenced to ten years in the Gulag, and shot without a trial, along with other prominent leaders of the

Ukrainian national renaissance. The same fate was shared by Oleksa Vlyz'ko and Iakiv Savchenko, and Hryhorii Kostiuk was arrested, sentenced and exiled. In 1937, Ivan Kulyk and his wife, Luciana Piontek, were arrested and shot. Dozens of Troianker's interlocutors from the Blakytyni House disappeared. Those who survived, such as Tychna, paid a very heavy price for their physical survival, becoming servile rhapsodists of the regime.

None of the critics who reviewed Troianker's verse survived, except perhaps Vasył Mysyk, who spent ten years in the Soviet Gulag and another three in a Nazi concentration camp. Volodymyr Sosiura, Troianker's early passion, survived only because of the ironic fact that his staunch enemies, the leaders of the proletarian writers' organization Kulyk and Mykytenko, placed him in a psychiatric clinic in 1933, making him invulnerable to the political purges.¹⁰² Given how close Troianker was to those who ended up in the Gulag, there was hardly any chance for her to survive had she stayed in Ukraine. Besides, by the early 1930s, the debates over the revolutionary role of sex in the Soviet press and literature was over. The sanctified and governmentally controlled family—a new holy unit of the rising Soviet society—firmly replaced the emancipating and individualistic eros. This replacement was epitomized in the rising literature of socialist realism that expurgated eroticism once and for all.¹⁰³ There was only one way to read the fact that there were almost no reviews of Troianker's second book, *Horyzont*, published in 1930, in comparison with dozen reviews of her first one: one part of her readership was arrested, another was more concerned with the consequences of collectivization and the destruction of Ukrainian village life, and a third found Jewish, erotic, and futuristic themes out-of-date. Leaving Ukrainian geographic and cultural realms and moving far away to Murmansk was detrimental to Troianker's poetic development, but it saved her life. In the early 1930s she published her translation of the Yiddish poetic tale "A Streetcar" by Leyb Kvitko—and disappeared from the Ukrainian horizon.¹⁰⁴

Life in Murmansk in the 1940s was no less dangerous than in Ukraine in the 1930s. In 1941, the Wehrmacht expected the northern advance to be a decisive military success. Nazi troops were supposed to capture the Transpolar region of the Soviet Union and after Murmansk rapidly move toward Leningrad to secure Nazi predominance along the Baltic Sea coast. But the Nazi advance was checked near the Verman River. Despite regular and fierce bombing, the Nazis failed to capture Murmansk, which by 1943 had an average of four bombs per day per person. Troianker had established herself as the leading *Poliarnaia pravda* journalist by the mid-1930s, six years before the war, and with the breakdown of the war she refused to evacuate to the hinterland, becoming a prolific war correspondent on the Karelia Front.

A former assistant to a circus tamer, Troianker hardly changed in her thirties. To say that she was courageous is to miss the point. She was fearless to the point of recklessness. In July 1941, she realized that Sadofiev had refused to bring his fourteen-year-old stepdaughter from Staraiia Russa, where she was sent for summer vacation, back to Leningrad. And Troianker knew that the Nazi advance brought the front very close to Staraiia Russa. To save her daughter, Troianker traveled barefoot through and across the front lines some hundred kilometers, found her daughter digging trenches, and brought her back to Murmansk.¹⁰⁵ Later she was reported to have gone to the front lines in a fancy sheepskin coat, sexy leather boots, and a charming knitted beret, and to have spent time among the numerous protagonists of her articles, poems, and humoristic feuilletons. A. Sinkliner, the military interpreter who illustrated his memoir with Troianker's verse, which he knew from memory, wrote about the 104th Division: "Among Murmansk dwellers visiting the division was a miniature woman with her beret flirtatiously moved to the side. It was the Murmansk-based poet Raisa Troianker. During one of the meetings with the soldiers, she went out into the lawn where the soldiers were sitting and simply said: 'I will read to you my poetry.'"¹⁰⁶ Troianker's courage was proverbial: a central Murmansk postwar newspaper that retold one of Troianker's frontline reports dubbed her "fire-proof."¹⁰⁷

In addition to her journalistic activities, Troianker was active as a public and literary figure. Antonina Shabaeva, a frontline war nurse and the heroine of one of Troianker's war publications, recalled being in a Murmansk bomb shelter where Troianker made a public presentation dedicated to March 8, International Women's Day: "I was tired, hungry, and cold. And then I entered the hall and suddenly saw a short and charming woman reciting poetry and speaking very nicely about us women. I forgot my tiredness and hunger."¹⁰⁸ Perhaps Irina Koltsova, who survived the war in Murmansk, articulated the feelings of many of Troianker's fans, writing: "Raisa Troianker was our star, our love. I was a schoolgirl then but I remember her very well. She often visited schools, pioneer camps, spoke to us children, and was a bright, beautiful person, a charming woman. When I was evacuated, somebody from Murmansk sent me her poem on a Jewish girl tortured in Kiev by the Nazis. Once I recited this poem at a party. Later people I did not know stopped me and asked me to recite again those verses on Luba from Kiev. They were Kievans."¹⁰⁹

Troianker's sole Russian collection, *Surovaia lirika* (The Stern Lyrics, 1942), fell short of her two Ukrainian books. Whereas Troianker's Ukrainian verse is innovative, picturesque, and rich in imagery, her Russian poetry is imitative, charged with war propaganda and clichés, and based on a limited variety of

images. In her Ukrainian poetry, Troianker successfully transformed Akhmatova's erotic metaphors, yet she succumbed to Nikolai Gumilev's military images in her Russian verse. One will search in vain for joyous eroticism, the gloomy Jewish past, or the utopian future in Troianker's Russian compositions. The rattling Russian military supplanted her feminine Ukrainian imagery. The problem of her Russian verse was not that it was Russian but that it was imperial. Several of the poems that she penned in Russian while still in Kharkiv show that the switch to another language altered her perception of Ukrainian-Jewish reconciliation issues.¹¹⁰

Following the undeclared fashion for Gumilev established by the prewar generation of Moscow Institute of Literature and Philosophy poets, in her Russian poems Troianker turned the bellicose passions and military fatalism of Gumilev's warriors into the enthusiasm and stoicism of her Soviet soldiers. Even more than to Gumilev, Troianker owes the "sternness" of her Russian lyrics to Rudyard Kipling, perhaps the most evident source of Gumilev's colonialist imagery. Troianker's *The Stern Lyrics* portrays rank-and-file soldiers defending Murmansk: a sailor, the master of northern seas; a signaler, never in despair; a hero-pilot and a border guard; a military hospital nurse; a blood donor; a submariner; and the average Murmansk dwellers who contribute to the victory.

Troianker's new protagonists are imperial heroes who stepped out of wartime propaganda posters: they dream of Stalin and pledge themselves to Lenin. They protect the sleep of Soviet children and hate the abominable monstrous enemy. Epic warriors who know neither private life nor individual feelings, Troianker's soldiers rally around sacred symbols of the Soviet motherland and the noble task of destroying the Nazi evil. They are part of a transformed neoromantic myth: submarine sailors fight new pirates "unknown even to Mayne Reid"; soldiers are "Soviet giants"; planes, "red-star birds."¹¹¹ All of them are stoics ready to sacrifice themselves for the common cause. Their worldview is best articulated in the military signaler's proverbial "everything is calm on the line." Troianker's repetitive call for revenge, dubbed "a sacred word," and a firm belief in the defeat of the enemy transformed her book into a poetic continuation of Il'ia Ehrenburg's acclaimed antifascist pamphlets that were regularly published in *Krasnaia zvezda* and collected in the widely circulated three-volume edition *The War*.¹¹² Troianker's metaphor of the Nazi "blitzkrieg" turning into "blitz-crack" seems to be a good match to Ehrenburg's puns built on German-Russian bilingualism.¹¹³ It comes as no surprise that Konstantin Simonov, perhaps one of the most prominent Russian followers of Kipling, shared a connection with Raisa Troianker: Simonov and Troianker were reported to have been seen and pictured together reciting their poetry to one another.¹¹⁴

Luckily, the “stern” style did not entirely eliminate Troianker’s “lyrics.” Although the soldiers’ deeds acquired epic magnitude, Troianker’s empathy for her heroes remained profoundly intimate, sincere, and movingly personal. She talked to her soldier-protagonist as his demanding wife and protecting mother. In her best Russian-language verse, particularly in the poems portraying the events on the Ukrainian front, Troianker regained a voice that combined dramatic polyphony and tender lyricism. In her “My ne prostim!” (We Will Not Forgive!) Troianker sketched a previously flourishing town of her beloved native Ukraine, most likely Uman, now a grim town in ruins: the school where she studied reading was no more, blood covered the town’s apple trees. Depicting Ukraine, Troianker resorted to direct quotations from Pushkin and Gogol (“the town where the night is dark and the stars are countless”).

Yet it is particularly significant that when Troianker’s voice made its way through the militaristic clichés, she abandoned Russian and turned to Ukrainian and Jewish images. Evoking biblical lines while portraying the cruelty of the Nazis, Troianker called for revenge—an eye for an eye and a death for a death—and then switched to Ukrainian. The line in italics is in Ukrainian in the original. She addresses the enemy directly in Ukrainian, whereas the Russian lines are in the epic third person.

And the elders will say—*we will never forget that nightmare,*
Forever be damned murderer, brute!
 And my motherland, as omnipotent as the Sun,
 Resolutely repulses the enemy!¹¹⁵

It is noteworthy that the context of this poem is Troianker’s native town (again unnamed), which was destroyed by the Nazis. Though one may read this incursion of the Ukrainian into the Russian verse as nothing but a tribute to *couleur locale*, her poetic bilingualism in this poem and on a more general level seems to be more complex.

Once Troianker started speaking through her characters, her rigid black-and-white palette generated new colors. Troianker discovered that her lover from the frontline trenches had gray eyes like the gray-eyed king (*seroglazyi korol*) of early Akhmatova and that the sky above Murmansk retained its prewar blue. But Troianker’s triumphant “rage of a soldier and bravery of a poet” eliminated the other colors and stifles the poet’s genuine voice. Her Russian marches seemed more welcome than her Ukrainian erotic lyrics. Her readers welcomed her Kiplingesque celebration of a disdain to death and readiness for self-sacrifice. Many soldiers wrote her from the trenches: “We are going into the battle with your poetry, Raisa Troianker!”¹¹⁶

The Golden Queen of the North

Indeed, Troianker was loved by many. Once when her apartment was bombed during the Nazi air raids and burnt to ashes, the Troiankers moved to the Hotel Arktika together with many evacuated Moscovites and Leningraders, mostly writers, painters, and actors. Here Troianker befriended and enjoyed a mass following among literary and military men serving on the Northern Front, such as the military writers Vladimir Beliaiev (1909–90), Aleksandr Mariamov (1909–72), Iurii German (1910–67), Valentin Pluchek (1909–2002), who later became the director-in-chief of the Theater of Satire in Moscow, and Konstantin Simonov (1915–79). Some of them dedicated their verse to Raia. She merited her Murmansk nickname “Golden Queen of the North,” with which many literary men and her colleagues addressed her. Her surviving Murmansk photos reveal a vivacious and charming woman with shining and appealing eyes and a palpable spiritual inquietude. Black-and-white pictures are unable to convey the attraction of her bright red hair and her deep black eyes, so unusual in the Russian north.

Troianker’s charms could not easily be erased from memory. Forty years after her death, when her granddaughter Alexandra, then an actress at the Moscow Sovremennik Theater and in film, referred to her grandmother in a conversation with men well in their seventies and eighties, the former became genuinely overexcited. In December 2004, she penned the following recollection: “Her life was immensely rich and dense. In addition to her poetic gift she was also a muse, and the muse elicits deep, integral emotions. Most importantly, she had warm and humane relations with everybody. Perhaps because of that, their faces shone when her name was mentioned. It seems to me whoever knew or saw her was in love with her. This was the impact of her concentrated feminine beauty. And together with her astonishing bravery, which never overshadowed her femininity, it made an irresistible impression.”¹¹⁷

Raia captured the poetic imagination of a good many literary men. Among them were Aleksandr Martov, an actor of the Moscow Comedy Theater; Evgenii Grigor’iev, an actor of the Murmansk Theater and Troianker’s last legal husband; and Aleksandr Skleznev, an *Izvestiia* newspaper war correspondent at the Northern Front. In their poems they called Raia “the black diamond in a ginger setting,” a “cozy cabin” amidst “windy space,” and “the ginger sun—the Northern Mistress.” Although the results of their inspiration were of variegated quality, their poems dedicated to Troianker nicely substitute for the absence of critical reviews of Raia’s poetry over the war years.

There was, though, much better poetry. Apparently Sadofiev dedicated to Raia a number of his unpublished poems, among them “Ne vsiakii mozhnet uvi-azat’” (Not Every One Can Link), praising her

character trait—
 Firm and languid pace.
 As the starting line above the poem.¹¹⁸

After their divorce, Sadofiev portrayed his relations with Troianker in the long poem “Krivoe ravnovesie” (The Crooked Balance), which captured his pain, irritation, and bewilderment, published in *Literaturnyi sovremennik*. In a 1934 letter to Troianker he included the poem “Raika-Liubke” (To Beloved Raia), quite unusual for this strong-willed poet who shunned pathetic lyricism and disdained sentimental metaphysics:

For a poor Sofievka house.
 For the joy on a stretched cape
 For the orange volume of songs,
 For everything I bear in my heart
 Tearlessly, in the final days,
 Evoke me today.

Among those who adored Troianker was Konstantin Belkhin (1912–43), a Murmansk-based war journalist and poet who perished at the front. He is reported to have dedicated many poems from his Laplandia poetic cycle to Troianker, yet his only posthumous publication does not include any dedications. But Troianker’s archive contains at least two poems Belkhin dedicated to Raia, one of them underscoring the generosity and gratefulness that Troianker inspired:

I thought my friendship with stars had ended.
 I thought that the song’s foliage was falling.
 But without thinking whether ’tis early or late,
 I say: oh ginger, my golden one!
 I catch big stars in a handful,
 Avid, I swallow fresh blueness,
 And without thinking whether ’tis early or late
 I say: thank you ginger, my golden one.¹¹⁹

Anatolii Kuznetsov, a Murmansk-based author of frontline diaries who lived during the postwar period in Zaporizhzhia, left a poetic recollection of one of Troianker’s appearances in a Murmansk bomb shelter, where she recited Russian poetry in front of fear-stricken, exhausted, and desperate town dwellers:

A dozen short-term meetings—
 And a lasting light for many years.

In those years of bloody battles
 Among poets for me you are the best.
 It is calm in the city bomb shelter.

During the bombing, under the “Five-A,”
 You recited Blok’s *Scythians*,
 Even now I hear the words.
 It’s scary, if next to you
 There is no friend’s hand.
 I have to remember forever
 That night and your verse.
 Leaving the war Murmansk,
 I swear with everything I can swear:
 If I am alive, by all means
 I will return here with the victory!¹²⁰

Apparently during the war Troianker became one of the central figures in Murmansk, if not as a poet than at least as a *Kulturтрегер*, a public figure and inspiring lecturer. Yet her journey—from the Ukrainian shtetl, with its Jewish themes, through Ukrainian rural bucolic poetry to Alexander Blok’s *Scythians*, with their emphasis on the Eurasian Russo-centric geopolitical myth—pointed to the fragility of the Ukrainian-Jewish encounter. In her Russian lyrics Troianker abandoned her Ukrainian-Jewish motifs. Her itinerary obliquely signified that neither Jewish nor Ukrainian—ethnic or national—themes had a place in the Russian imperial discourse. Russian poetry gladly accepted her with the voice that was not entirely her own. A Ukrainian-Jewish poetess on state service, she had to suppress her own Ukrainian and Jewish voice and join the imperial chorus. Troianker’s drama was that she did it with gusto.

Cherished by war correspondents, soldier-readers of *Poliarnaia pravda*, and the citizens of Murmansk, the thirty-six-year-old “Golden Queen of the North” Raisa Troianker died of cancer in Murmansk on December 29, 1945, leaving behind her sixteen-year-old daughter.¹²¹ When she was hospitalized, she joined the Communist Party and was awarded the “Za oboronu Sovetskogo Zapoliar’ia” medal (For the Defense of the Soviet Transpolar Region). She was buried in a cemetery that later became the site of the Zashchitnikam Zapoliar’ia Memorial (Monument to the Defenders of the Transpolar Region). By the late 1970s there was no trace of her grave. Locals, however, remembered her quite well. Murmansk, where Troianker published her only collection of Russian poetry, considered Troianker a poet of its own. In April 1980, local television featured Troianker’s daughter Elena, her granddaughter Alexandra, and former war nurse Antonina Shabaeva in a television program “And the Rage of the Soldier, and the Courage of the Poet,” as part of the show “The Muse in the Military

Trench Coat.”¹²² The Murmansk museum of local history included Troianker’s Russian book of poetry, *Surovaia lirika* (1942) in its permanent exhibition, placing it next to portraits of World War II heroes and combat weapons.¹²³ In the 2000s, Murmansk e-net journalists on the site *Murman Day* recorded her birthday among the most important dates in the city’s history.

A Note in the Margin

Raisa Troianker was far from the only Jewish woman who established herself in the Ukrainian cultural milieu. Varvara Bazas, a futurist poet of the 1920s, and Dokiia Zhmer, a writer and dissident in the 1950s, were also visible on the Ukrainian literary horizon. Nor was Troianker the only “erotic” poetess in the 1920s: some critics and memoirists mention Natalia Zabala and Luciana Piontek in the same context. Yet there are unique features that single Troianker out. A Russian- and Yiddish-speaking shtetl Jewess, she made the Ukrainian language instrumental in her self-emancipation. In a sense, Troianker freed herself through Ukrainian: the pathos of this liberating process permeates her poetry. She was welcomed into the Ukrainian intellectual environment, which equipped her with poetic imagery, stylistic devices, and themes that facilitated her Ukrainian acculturation.

Troianker used Ukrainian as a medium to develop herself into a public figure, a woman, and a poet. The Ukrainian language helped her to negotiate the meanings of, and feelings about, her shtetl past. Ukrainian men helped her to rediscover her body and she discovered the body image in Ukrainian poetry. Eroticism and sex brought her to Ukrainian poetry, and she brought eroticism and sex into it. Ukrainian writers were partners in her sexual adventures, and she turned them into her love-heroes in her poetry. Her eroticism flatly rejected sentimental, if not pathetic, features of Ukrainian love poetry. Troianker made her eroticism visible, passionate, and somatic: it was revolutionary and subversive. She connected social, personal, ethnic, and sexual emancipation in a single nexus of unparalleled images. Seventy years before the celebrity feminist writer Oksana Zabuzhko penned her novel *Poliovi doslidzhennia z ukrains’koho seksu* (Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex, 1996), Troianker started this fieldwork in life and poetry.

There is little doubt that her encounter with the Ukrainian language made Troianker into a poet, but it is unusual that Troianker continued the tradition ranging from Lesia Ukrainka to Lina Kostenko that elaborated the image of a woman-poet in the Ukrainian literature. As a woman-poet, Troianker placed the image of a poet in the center of her imaginary love story. As a *zhinka-poet* (woman-poet), she adored not only men but literary men: eros for her was always

about art and about Ukraine. And she smuggled Ukrainian national colors into her poetic realm, celebrating Ukrainian land, Ukrainian men, and decolonized independent Ukraine. She was on the brink of transgenerating the image of Ukraine, traditionally associated with a servile, docile, and colonized feminine: Troianker came closer than anybody else in the twentieth century to associating Ukraine with masculinity—something she found powerful and positive. It was not enough for Troianker to decolonize herself through Ukrainian: she deftly grasped the demise of the Jewish shtetl, of traditional East European Jewry, and of her own family. Troianker contributed to Ukrainian poetry an unparalleled Jewish imagery imbued with intimate autobiographic detail. Nobody before her (and after her only Pervomais'kyi in his prose) has ever parted ways with Judaism by depicting it with such grief and profound empathy as Troianker.

Whereas Russian literary figures adored Troianker, dedicated their verses to her, and commemorated her in their memoirs, the memory of Troianker in Ukrainian culture—as well as of many other outstanding literati of the 1920s—was almost obliterated. With some exceptions, those Ukrainian literary figures who survived the purges were silent about Troianker in their memoirs. Some references to her, especially in works published in the West or after the breakdown of the USSR, did not change the perception of her more than modest place in Ukrainian cultural memory. With the beginning of perestroika, Troianker sporadically reappeared in Ukrainian publications. One of the first articles about her was published in the Russian-language, Kyiv-based journal *Raduga*—no wonder that it briefly mentioned Troianker's Ukrainian poetry and emphasized her iron-clad Russian military lyrics. Mykola Sulyma, a solid scholar from the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences who published four of Troianker's poems in one of the first Ukrainian erotic journals *Lel'*, portrays Troianker in his brief note as the first female futurist or avant-gardist and as a Don Giovanni in a skirt. The focus on the high quality of Troianker's erotic themes in the L'viv journal *Postup* is another manifestation of the recent interest in her poetry. An addendum to a chapter from Iurii Smolych's erotic memoir *An Intimate Confession*, partially published in 2004, related several fascinating episodes from Troianker's romantic biography and sketched her multifaceted character, but said very little about her poetry.¹²⁴

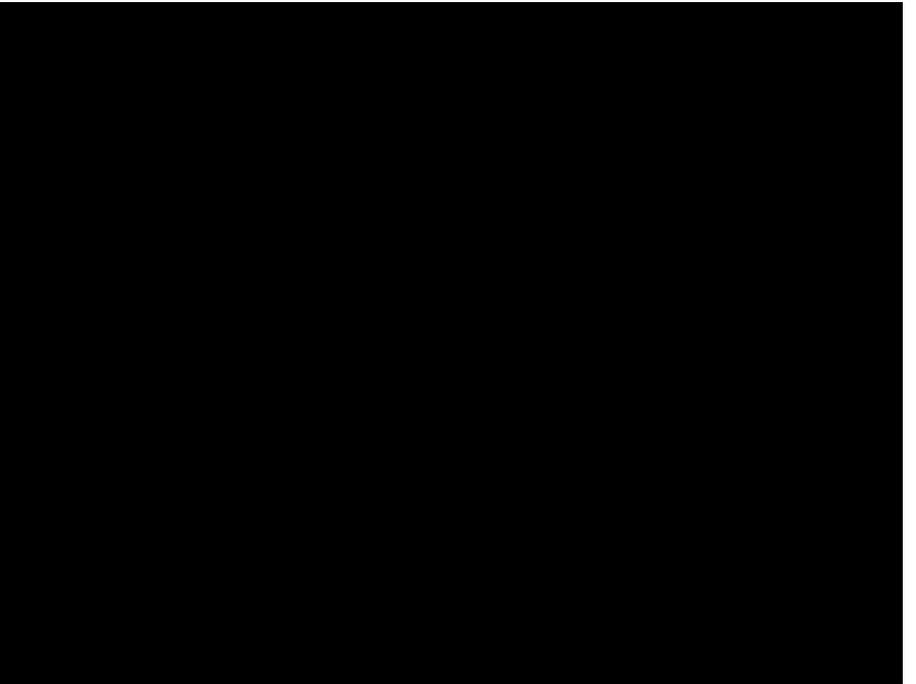
The commentator on Volodymyr Sosiura's posthumously published memoir did not bother to find out anything about her but merely noted, "*Troianker Raisa*—little-known poetess [*malovidoma poetesa*]."¹²⁵ The posthumous recollection of Troianker as the Ukrainian Sappho testifies to the fact that Ukrainian cultural memory is indifferent to her Jewish-Ukrainian legacy, a fact that made Svitlana Matvienko regret that Troianker's eroticism had been overemphasized,

whereas her “Jewish motifs” and “transparent, pure lyrics” were by and large neglected.¹²⁶ In this sense Troianker may be seen as a double of Hryts’ko Kernerenko. Like Kernerenko, Troianker attempted to craft Jewish themes and images in Ukrainian poetry. Like him, she did not establish a viable pattern that informed the literary endeavors of later generations of Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent. And like him, she was resuscitated in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the wake of a rising postmodern interest in previously outlawed themes, including religious, ethnic, and erotic ones. In addition, comparing Troianker to Ivan Kulyk, one might want to observe that Troianker’s example proved that a gender-based Ukrainian-Jewish symbiosis might be as fragile as the one based on class.

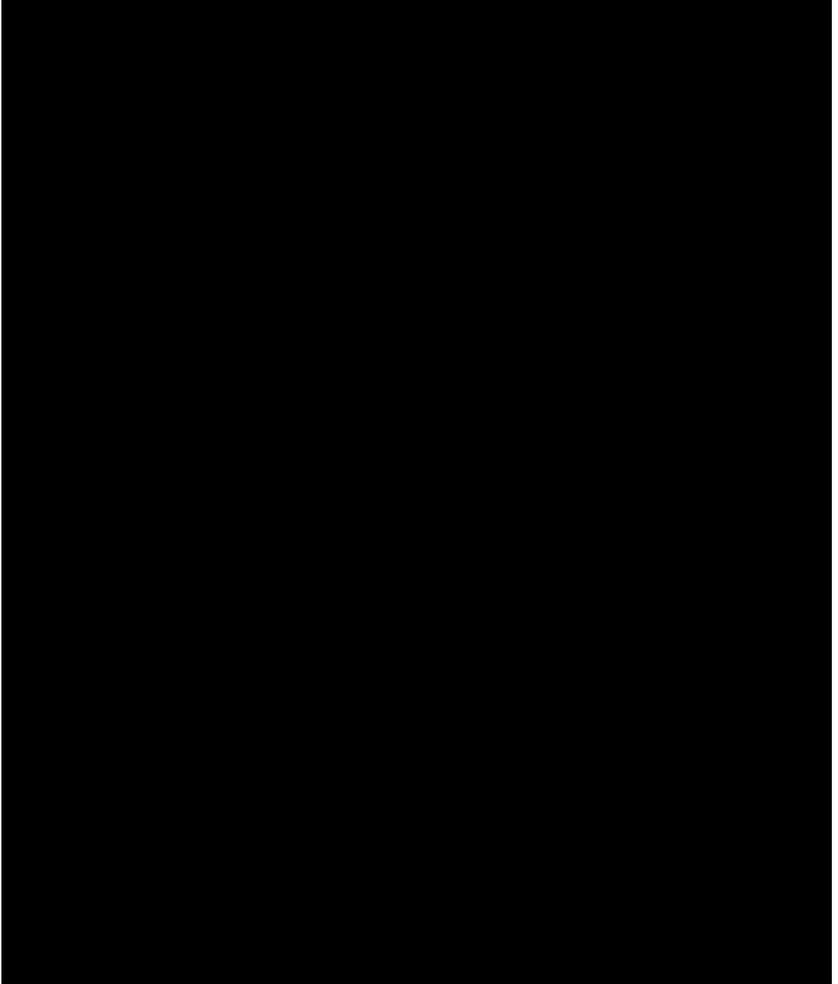
The time between Troianker’s splendid start at the age of sixteen and the end of her Ukrainian career at the age of twenty-one was too brief to create a feasible literary paradigm that could have triggered the birth or shape the development of the Jewish cultural encounter with the Ukrainian. Her promising beginnings abruptly ended and her switch from Ukrainian to Russian can be interpreted as a default acknowledgment of the victory of the imperial Russian culture over the once again colonized Ukraine. At the end of her career, the Russian, the imperial, and the bellicose suppressed the Ukrainian, the anti-colonialist, and the unashamedly Jewish. Amazingly, Leonid Pervomais’kyi started exactly where Raisa Troianker finished. Amid state-sponsored anti-Jewish and anti-intelligentsia persecutions, Stalin’s purges, the murder of conscientious Ukrainian literary figures, and the triumphant and pugnacious march of socialist realism, he managed to find his way out of the imperial discourse, bringing his Jews out of the shtetl to Ukrainian agricultural settlements, to the fronts of World War II, and into the midst of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.



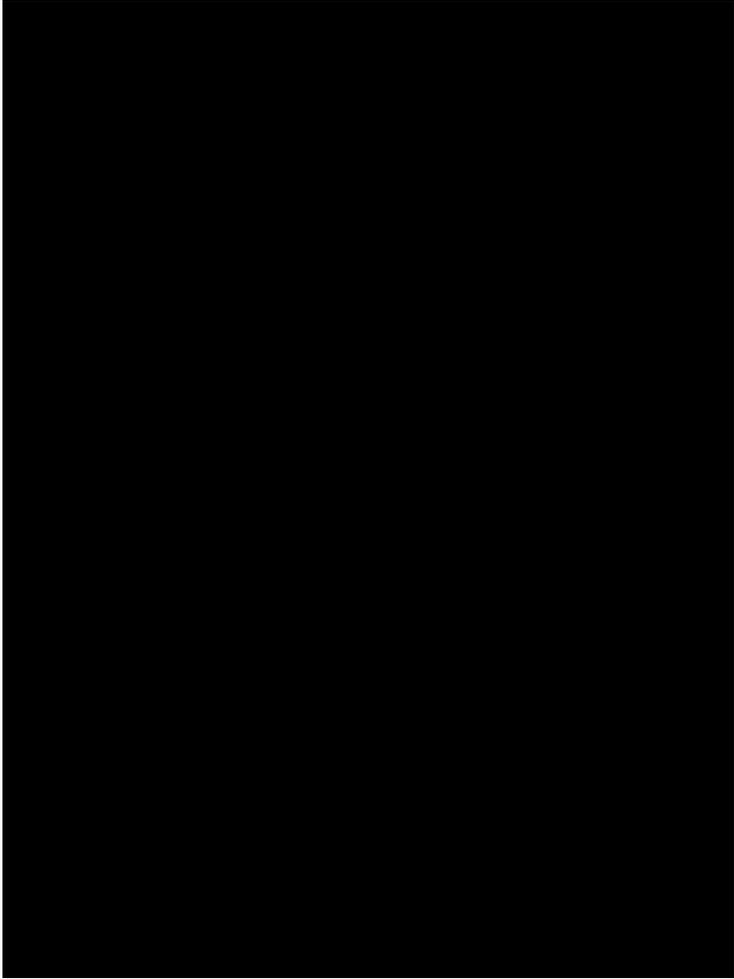
Huliai-pole, city council, former Althausen Hotel, late nineteenth century. YPSPC.



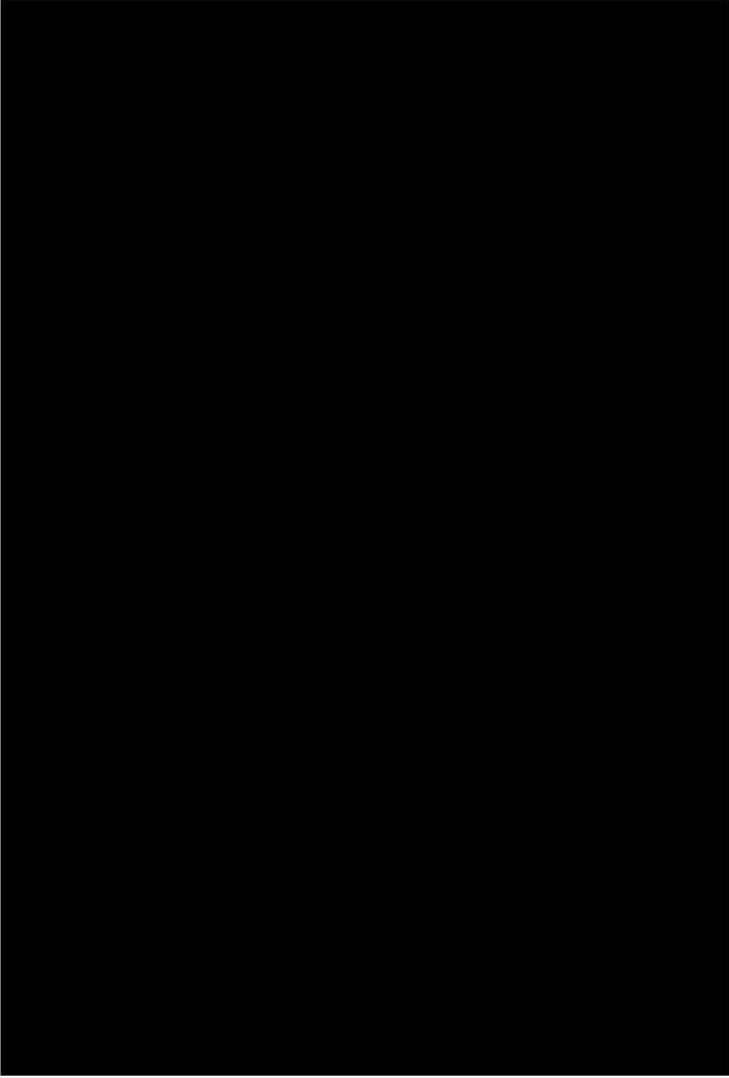
The Huliai-pole Local History Museum, formerly the Mutual Credit Bank, ca. 1901.
The Kerners were among its main sponsors. YPSPC.



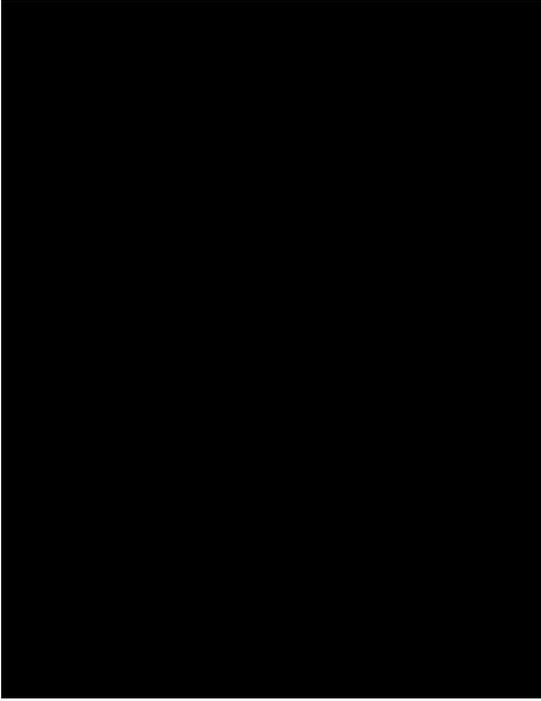
The title page of Kernerenko's play *Liubov pevna—kara temna* marked by censor, 1887. Courtesy of VRILNANU.



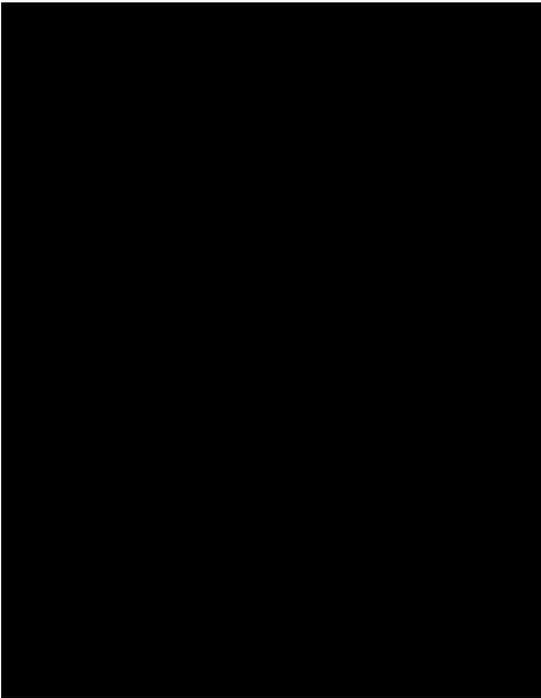
Kernerenko's letter to Ivan Franko, January 17 (30), 1906. Courtesy of VRILNANU.



Title page of Hryts'ko Kernerenko's *Nevelychkyi zbirnyk tvoriv*, 1890.
Courtesy of TsDAMLUMU.



Huliai-pole hospital, formerly the Big Synagogue. The Kernerers had permanent seats here. YPSPC.

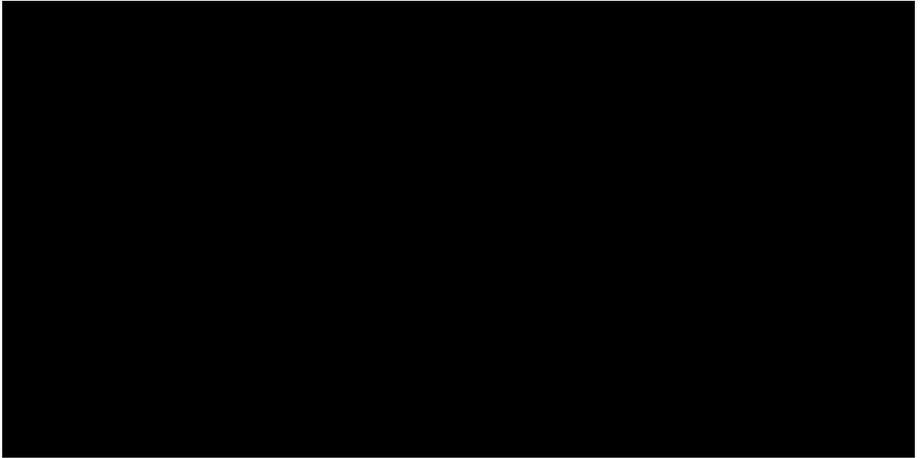


Title page of Ivan Kulyk's *Moi kolomyiky*, 1921. Courtesy of TsDAMLUMU.

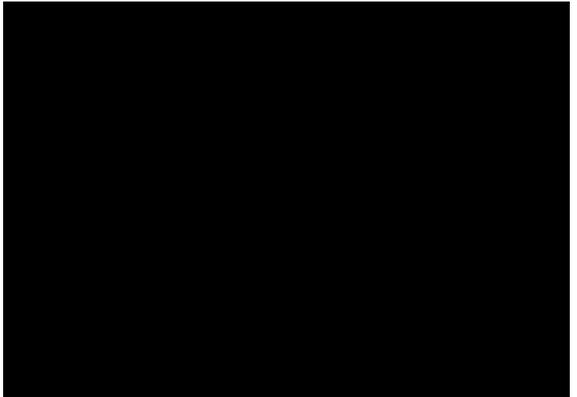
Title page of Ivan Kulyk's *Bruk
i molotok*, late 1920s. Title page.
Courtesy of TsDAMLMU.

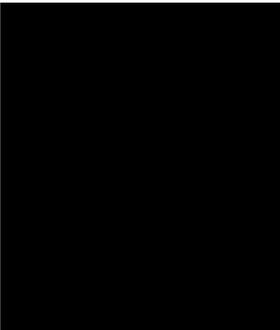


Below: Pages from Ivan Kulyk's
Zelene sertse, 1923, showing the title
poem. Illustrations by A. Strakhov.
Courtesy of TsDAMLMU.

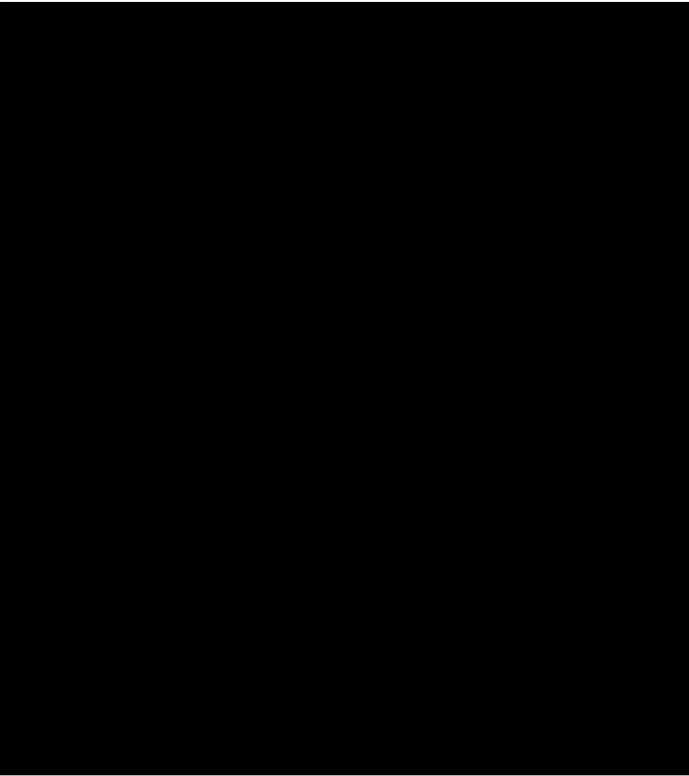


Title page of Ivan Kulyk's
Zmuzhnila molodist', 1935.
Courtesy of TsDAMLMU.

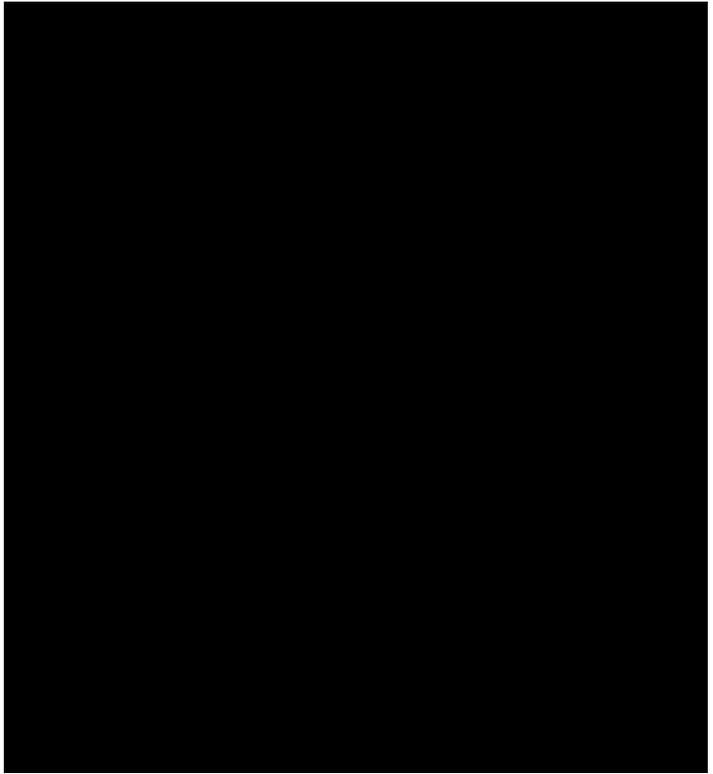




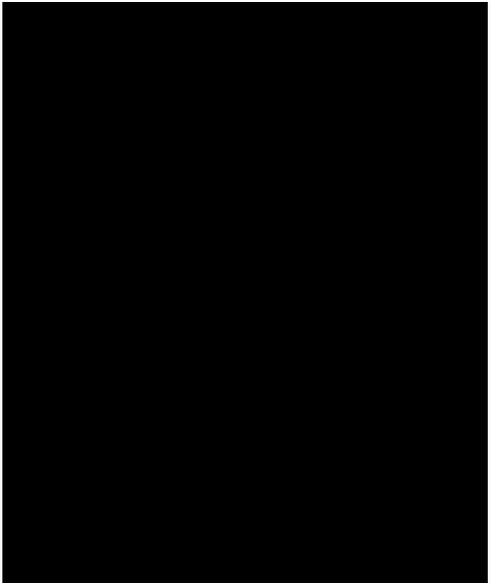
Ivan Kulyk, 1919. Courtesy of VRILNANU.



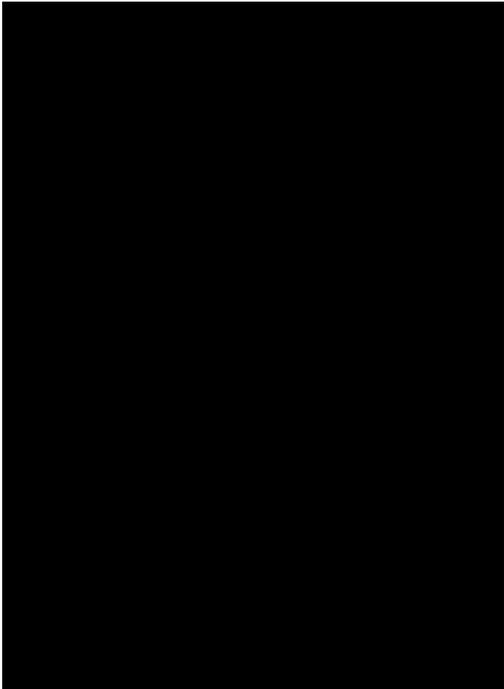
Raisa Troianker with her daughter Olenka (Elena). Kharkiv, 1925.
Courtesy of Alexandra Turgan.



Above: Troianker's husband,
Onoprii Turhan, and their daughter,
Olenka Turhan (Turgan). Ca. 1930.
Courtesy of Alexandra Turgan.



Title page of the Russian section of
Radius avangardovtsev, an avant-
garde literary almanac, 1928.
Courtesy of TsDAMLUMU.

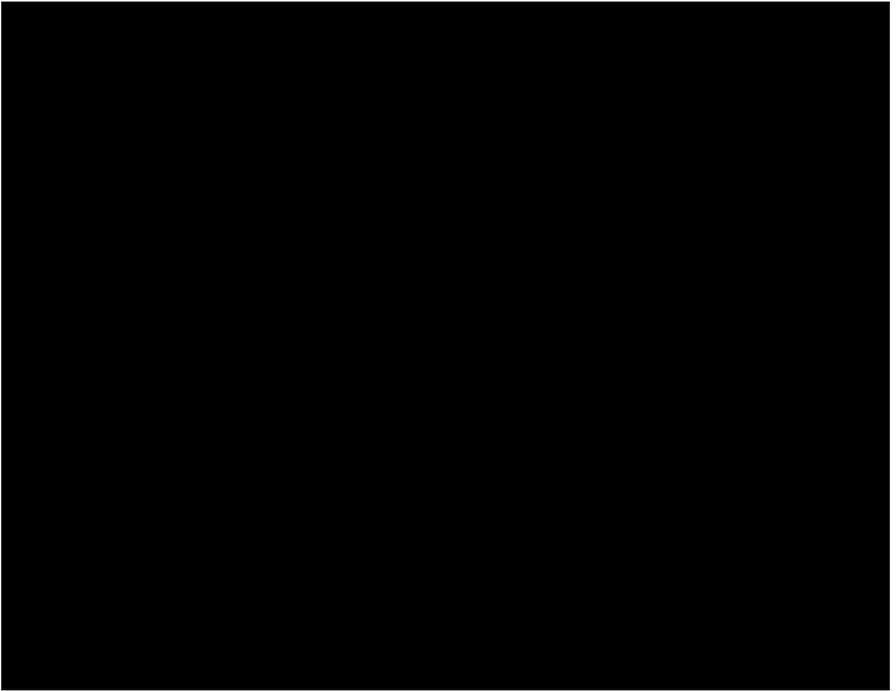
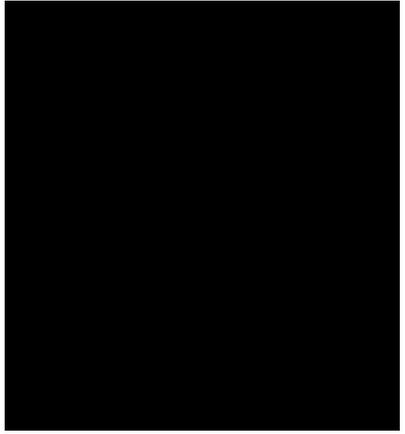


Raisa Troianker. Murmansk, 1942.
Courtesy of Alexandra Turgan.

Below: Left to right: Captian Vasil'ev,
Zoia Voronina (hospital nurse), and
Raisa Troianker. Murmansk, 1944.
Courtesy of Alexandra Turgan.



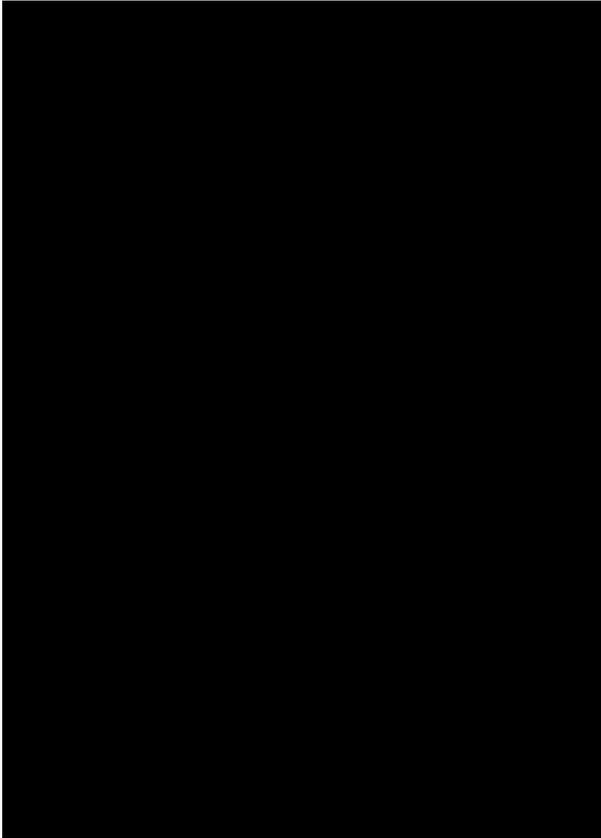
Raisa Troianker. Murmansk, ca. 1945.
Courtesy of Alexandra Turgan.



A hut of the parents of Leonid Pervomais'kyi, where he lived between 1918 and 1924.
Courtesy of Sergei Parkhomovsky.

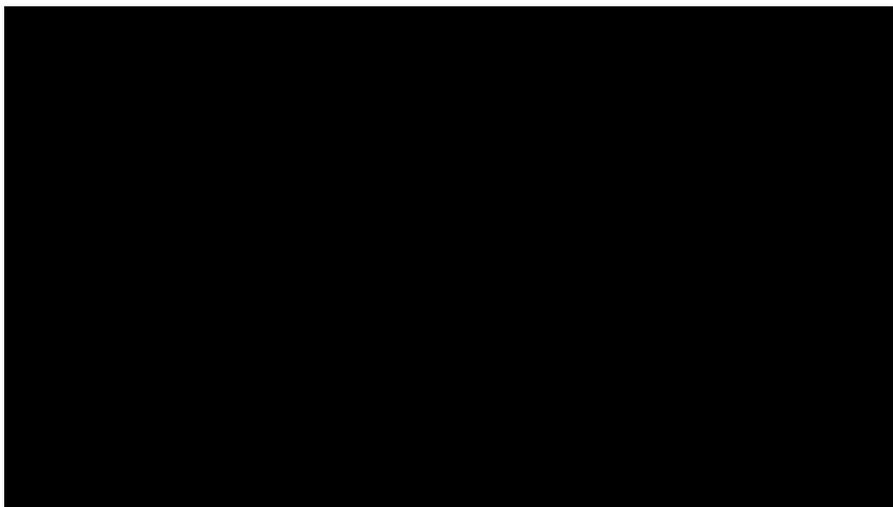
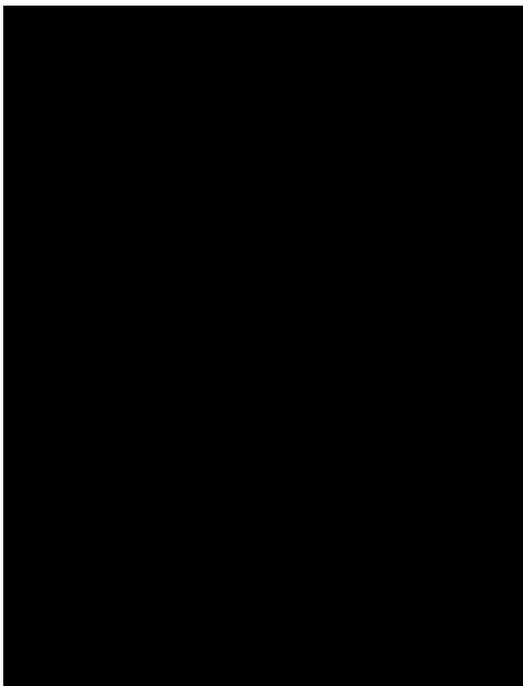


Leonid Pervomais'kyi, 1926.
Krasnograd. Courtesy of
Sergei Parkhomovsky.

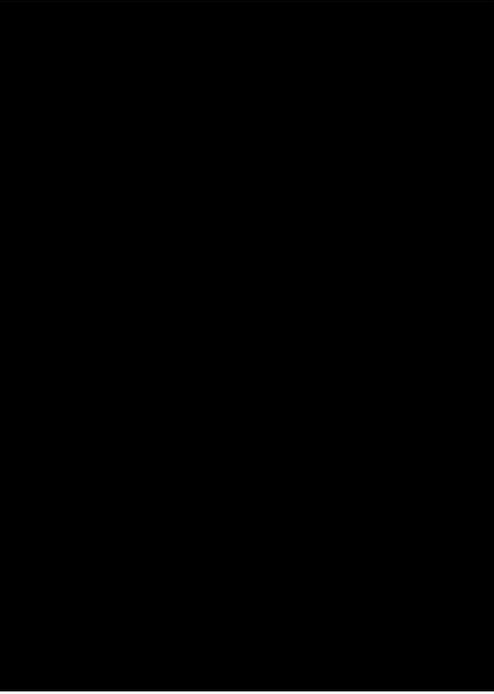


Title page of Leonid
Pervomais'kyi's *Den' novyi*,
1926. Courtesy of TsDAML.MU.

Leonid Pervomais'kyi and his wife
Evdokiia, 1927. Krasnograd.
Courtesy of Sergei Parkhomovsky.



Returning from the 99th Red Army Division, 1941. Pervomais'kyi has his right hand in his pocket and his left hand on the truck. Courtesy of Sergei Parkhomovsky.



Leonid Pervomais'kyi at his Irpen
dacha near Kyiv, 1946.
Courtesy of Sergei Parkhomovsky.

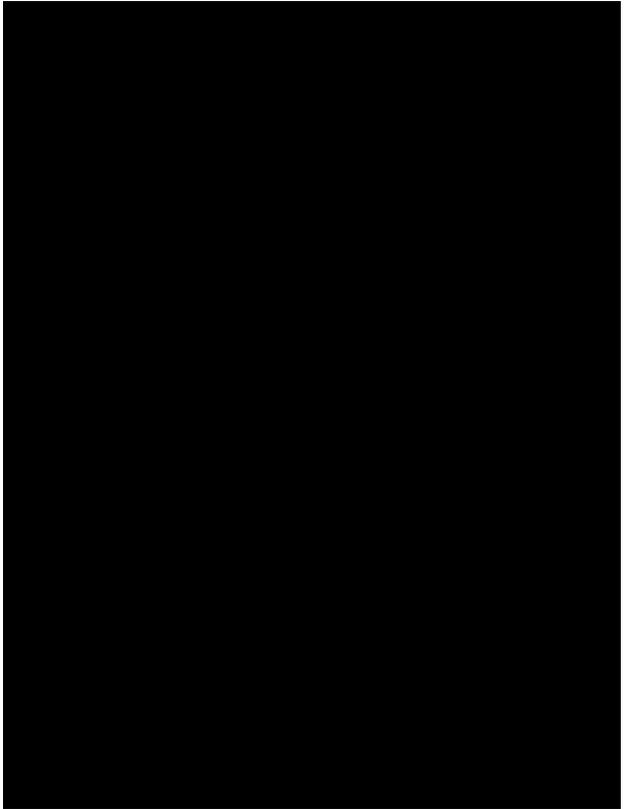


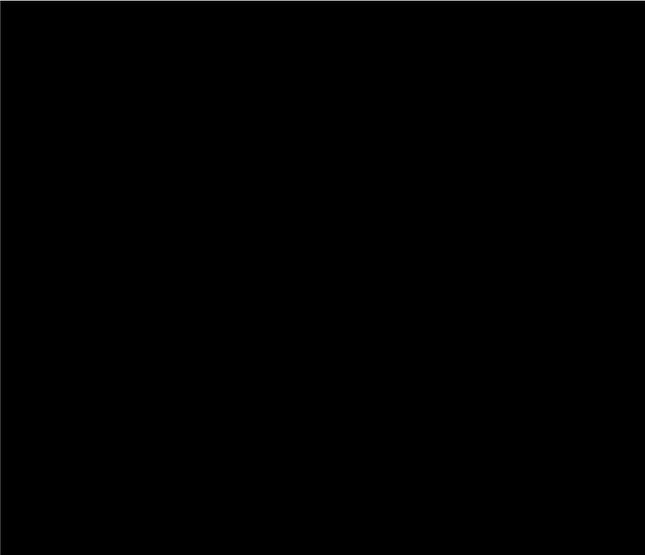
Leonid Pervomais'kyi with his wife Evdokiia and their cat in Irpen, spring 1973.
Photo: Sergei Parkhomovsky. Courtesy of Sergei Parkhmovsky.



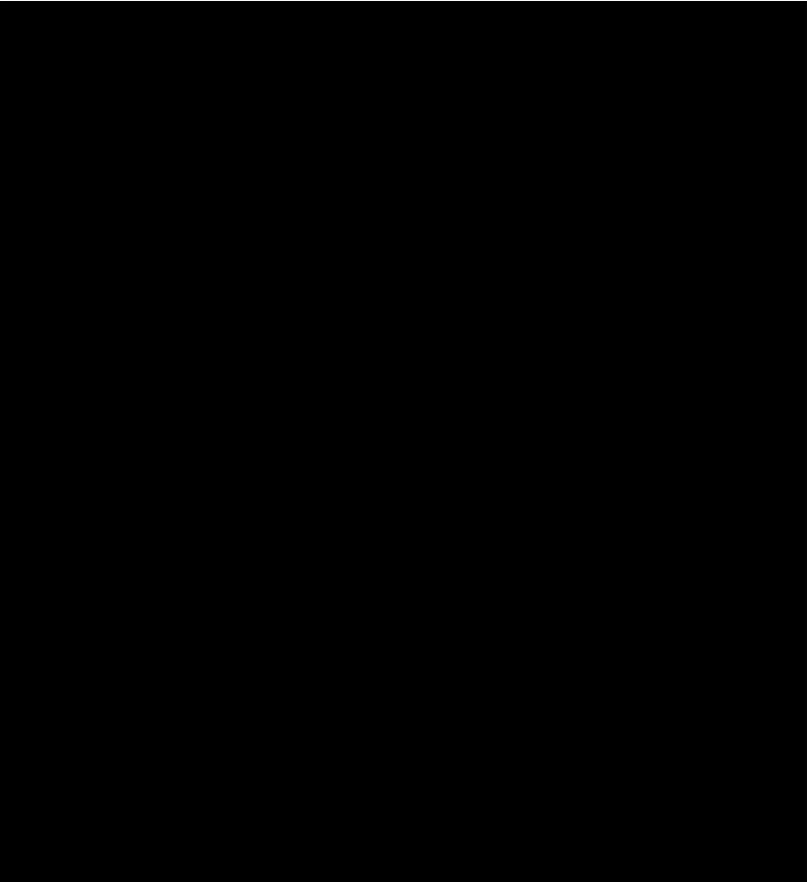
Czernowitz, Rathouseplatz, 1910s. The city council is in the center of the photo, the Jewish Communal House (1908), with mansard roof, just to the right of it. Collection of Ignacio Sternberg. Courtesy of Jerome Schatten.

Title page of Moisei
Fishbein's *Iambove kolo*,
1974, Fishbein's first col-
lection of poetry. YPSPC.





Moisei Fishbein and Victor Yushchenko, then a pro-Western Ukrainian candidate for president, 2003. YPSPC.



Moisei Fishbein in Lisova Kazka hotel, Bukovina, 2005. YPSPC.



Moisei Fishbein, Kyiv, Gostynnyi dvir, 2005. YPSPC.

Being for the Victims

Leonid Pervomais'kyi's Ethical Responses to Violence

A celebrity among Ukrainian writers and highly ranked in the national pantheon, Leonid Pervomais'kyi defies classification. His critics repeatedly emphasized his unique capacity to change and grow. A Soviet Ukrainian romantic of socialist convictions and proletarian orientation in his early work, he had turned to classic poetry—which one of his Western critics dubbed “hermetic” and a Ukrainian one “ontological”—by the end of his career.¹

Two idiosyncratic features constantly informed Pervomais'kyi's work. First, his writings always challenged imposed ideological patterns and transcended the historical limits of representation. He portrayed Jewish integration into the Ukrainian peasant milieu, at a time when most of his Jewish colleagues stood for integration into either urban or Russian culture. He never stopped introducing the Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement into his narratives, even after party bosses dismissed them as nationalistically charged and unacceptable. Time and again, he returned to the tragedy of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, while his contemporaries in the Soviet Union were supposed to believe that the Nazis had targeted Soviet citizens in general, not Jews, and that the mere hint at Jewish centrality in Holocaust martyrdom was Zionist propaganda. Moreover, Pervomais'kyi openly challenged the perpetrators of the late-Stalin-era antisemitic campaigns, while his colleagues, aghast, kept their mouths shut, fearing of a new wave of repression.

Second, for Pervomais'kyi, being a poet signified reviving and recording voices of the victimized, raped, humiliated, oppressed, imprisoned, silenced, and murdered. In a story Pervomais'kyi wrote at age sixteen, an autobiographical eight-year-old Jewish child who has just witnessed a pogrom and the rape of

his sister fills his mouth with water and sprinkles it on his sister's face to bring her back to consciousness—and to make sure she regains her ability to speak. Metaphorically, this is what Pervomais'kyi did throughout his literary career: he helped the victims of violence speak up, and he made their voices heard through his poetry and prose. Pervomais'kyi identified with the deprived shtetl Jews and the silenced victims of the Ukrainian famine, the anonymous Red Army soldiers perishing on the front during World War II and the voiceless Holocaust martyrs, the persecuted literati of various epochs and nations and the executed Soviet Yiddish writers. At the end of his career, he came to identify with the martyrdom of creative writing, with persecuted poets such as himself, and with the suppressed voice of Ukrainian poetry.

Always concerned with the voice of the speechless, Pervomais'kyi was silent about himself. His biography has never been written. His entire prewar archive was lost, except for perhaps one manuscript saved by a friend.² Aware of the KGB surveillance, he was always on the alert in his postwar correspondence, which has been published only partially and without adequate commentary. What is known about Pervomais'kyi's life is meager—entire periods of his career, for example, the 1930s and the 1960s, remain a mystery. Almost nothing is known about his attitude toward the Ukrainian national revival under Petro Shelest or the persecution of national-minded dissidents under Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi. There were (and still are) dozens of people who knew Pervomais'kyi personally between the 1940s and the 1970s, but they all agree that he almost never spoke about himself and shrug their shoulders when asked about his personal life. His short autobiography provides no information on his life after 1934, which is particularly puzzling given that he wrote it in 1958.³ People who knew him in the last decades of his life recall his sense of self, sobriety, and stoic silence—hardly enough to reconstruct his attitude, for example, to the persecutions against nationally conscious Ukrainian thinkers, to the Six Days' War much discussed in the contemporary Ukrainian media, or to his literary detractors, rivals, and friends. This makes research of his career and identity particularly daunting.

Pervomais'kyi's personal documents are located in three government archives in Moscow and Kyiv, some of them not in his personal collections, but a significant part, unpublished, are either privately held and not known to scholars or in the possession of Sergei Parkhomovsky, his grandson living in Austria, and out of reach for scholars.⁴ The most important part of Pervomais'kyi's epistolary legacy, his letters to Sava Iosypovych Holovaniv's'kyi, a Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent, are in the possession of the Holovaniv's'kyi family and are unavailable. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that Pervomais'kyi's early writings on

Jewish themes—including novels, short stories, journalism, and plays—have not been published since 1930, have never made it into his collected writings, and can be found only in the special book depositories of literary archives, not in the libraries. Some of his writings on Jewish themes that were partially reprinted were thoroughly purged of their Jewish substance and, should one want to make sense of them, need to be compared with the rare, original publications of the 1920s. Based on the pool of available sources, both published and archival, this chapter pursues a threefold task. It focuses on the way Pervomais'kyi constructed his dual Ukrainian-Jewish identity in his prose and poetry, sometimes consciously imitating Heine's toying with his dual German-Jewish identity; it reconstructs briefly Pervomais'kyi's life as a Ukrainian literary figure of Jewish descent; and it analyzes how the Jewish themes and imagery in Pervomais'kyi's early work morphed into something more universalistic, without losing its Ukrainian-Jewish ingredient.

Pervomais'kyi tended to transcend the cultural and national, the religious and gender, and the class and ideological borders that in most cases separate the broadly interpreted "colony" from the no less broadly understood "metropolis." His stance in most cases is best depicted and easily recognizable as anticolonialist, but one should keep in mind that Pervomais'kyi would reject this definition as ideologically, geographically, or ethnically based and therefore wrong. This makes him very different from other Ukrainian writers of Jewish descent like Hryts'ko Kernerenko or Ivan Kulyk, whose anticolonialism was ideologically, culturally, and class shaped and much more straightforward. It also differentiates him from such a poet as Moisei Fishbein, whose anti-imperial rhetoric is nation-centered. Pervomais'kyi exemplifies what could be called the anticolonialist ethos: an approach that considers human values higher than national, religious, ethnic, political, or gender differentiations. For him, the voiceless and powerless possess the truth, their ethnic or religious origins notwithstanding. Therefore the rapprochement between two previously voiceless Jews and Ukrainians, was for Pervomais'kyi a focal point, but not the only one, among his many other encounters that brought together the victimized and the silenced.

First Encounters with Ukraine

Leonid Pervomais'kyi was born Illia Shliomovych Hurevych (Rus.: Il'ia Solomonovich Gurevich; Yid.: Elya ben Shloyme) on May 17 (May 4, old style), 1908, to a Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-singing Jewish family from Konstantinograd, later renamed Chervonohrad, in Poltava Province. The motley provincial town comprised an administrative Russian center, a Jewish shtetl, and

a Ukrainian village. Known in the early eighteenth century as the Bilivka fortress and erected along a fortified line stretching from the Dnieper to the Donets River, the town emerged on the frontier to guard left-bank Ukraine from the Tartars. In the early twentieth century, it still boasted the remains of its once formidable walls, which reminded people of its bygone might and which may have inspired the military themes reverberating in Pervomais'kyi's lyrics. In one of his autobiographical poems, "Na Poltavshchyni" (In the Poltava District), Pervomais'kyi recalls his childhood home, which protected him from "thunders and storms, / like the walls of the centuries-old fortress."⁵ Chervonohrad boasted two other prominent Ukrainian writers, Ivan Senchenko (1901–75) and Oleksandr Kopylenko (1900–1958), both known for their pro-Jewish sympathies.

In his Heine-esque "Podorozh do Chervonohradu" (Travel to Chervonohrad), Ivan Senchenko, a good friend of Pervomais'kyi, left a detailed portrayal of their native locale:

Before 1917, Chervonohrad was a lively town to which all the province dwellers flocked. In addition to two gymnasia and a prison, here stood the high building of the district administration and uncountable stores creaking with people on the market days and floating on the calm waves of income on regular days, since throughout the year Chervonohrad was one and the same human swarm. On top of that, Chervonohrad was adorned with three churches, two movie theaters, two theaters (a winter and a summer one), a bookstore with Russian books and the kiosk of ginger-haired Iosyp with Ukrainian books, a branch of the state bank, a branch of the Russian Asiatic Bank, the Rural Bank, the pedagogical courses and the higher professional school. In addition, near Chervonohrad were located a well-managed research lab, headed by the agronomist Eremenko known across the province; sugar plants owned by Laniv's'kyi, Karliv's'kyi, and Martyniv's'kyi; two breweries—in Shakhivka and Vil'khovyi Rih—five big steam rolling mills, of which two belonged to Krychev's'kyi, one to Yirkhin, one to Marholin and one to Belyi. . . . Also in Chervonohrad were the Helferich Sade agricultural machines depot and, nearby, the experimental brick tile factory of the Chervonohrad district administration, very popular here, and especially in the Shakhivka village, some ten buildings, including huts and barns, that took pride in their tiled roofs and ornamented dates—1913, 1913, 1914.⁶

Besides pride in the town's economic growth, Senchenko's recollection refers obliquely to another important feature of the town: its multiethnic and multicultural environment. His red-haired Iosyp, for example, was a Jew dealing in Ukrainian books: Senchenko himself often went to him for books and usually obtained one even if he was penniless. As will become clear momentarily, what was but one of the town's features in the case of Senchenko became the key one for Pervomais'kyi, whose earliest works focused on the Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement.

Unlike his good friend and colleague, Pervomais'kyi was much less interested in Chervonohrad's movie theaters, research labs, factories, banks, and sugar plants. His native town carved quite a different image in his memory. For him, Chervonohrad was first and foremost about his own encounter with Ukrainian songs and the Ukrainian landscape. The songs were sung by his mother, who "was only forty, but Jewish mothers turn grey when they are still forty."⁷ Pervomais'kyi repeatedly recalled in memoirs, letters, and dedications that his poetry was a reflection of his mother's Ukrainian songs.⁸ Because rural Ukraine spoke the language of his mother's songs, argued Pervomais'kyi, he easily identified with it and claimed it as his native land. The image of his mother, the Ukrainian language, and Ukrainian songs coalesced in his poetic imagination.

In the midst of a horrible antisemitic campaign in 1949, the very day when Pervomais'kyi was accused of antipatriotism, "rootless cosmopolitanism," and Jewish nationalism, he responded with the poem "Na ukrains'kii zolotii zemli" (On the Ukrainian Golden Land), an anthem to his bygone Ukrainian utopia in which he dated his poetic talent to his Ukrainian mother tongue:

To me that woman was a mom;
 Her songs resonate in my songs,
 From her lips I heard my first word,
 That I later endowed with mighty wings.⁹

The Ukrainian songs of Pervomais'kyi's mother seem to have turned him away from Chervonohrad urbanism and placed him vis-à-vis the surrounding rural landscapes. Pervomais'kyi's poetic Chervonohrad was not even a town: it was a vast land as limitless as *Poltavshchyna* (Ukrainian for Poltava province), a multisyllable Ukrainian word with an augmentative suffix and prolonged sibilant. For Pervomais'kyi, it was more important that he lived among rural landscapes on the picturesque Berestova riverbank than in Senchenko's town with its factories and theaters. Pervomais'kyi's Ukraine was a peasant milieu and a village landscape. Portraying his native land, he introduced the silent sounds of the steppe, the light wind flying over the river banks, the green gates of the forests, the transparent leaves falling into cold well water, all those images of the "fairy tale" or "fairy song" of Ukrainian folklore and romantic poetry that originated in his mother's songs and informed his childhood memories.¹⁰

The meeting of little Iliusha Hurevych, the future Pervomais'kyi, with Ukraine was not always idyllic. As a child, he witnessed the Jewish pogroms unleashed by various disorganized gangs of looters and rapists of peasant or déclassé origin during the civil war. Violence inclemently burst into the Hurevych

house and settled there for the long years of the war, and the nine-year-old Pervomais'kyi saw it at close hand, retaining in his memories above all the victimization of his female family members. For him, the pogroms exemplified the ugliest version of the Jewish-Ukrainian encounter. Pervomais'kyi never silenced them. His short story "Tretia zhinka" (The Third Woman), which appeared in *Literaturnyi iarmarok* (The Literary Fair), one of the high-ranking Ukrainian literary almanacs of the 1920s, focused on two images: a child Avramele (diminutive of Abraham) and his raped sister. The story knew no doubts: the Cossacks were the pogromists; the Jews, the victims. Yet Pervomais'kyi returned to the same plot in a later story, presenting a more nuanced portrayal of the pogroms, very different from what one finds in the narratives of Russian-Jewish, Yiddish, or Hebrew writers, or even in Pervomais'kyi's own early writings.

Already an accomplished Ukrainian writer, Pervomais'kyi penned the short story "Odna nich z dytynstva Iliushi" (One Night from Iliusha's Childhood, 1937), about a routine pogrom in a Jewish home perpetrated by a group of Cossacks. The story betrayed some familiarity with Vassili Grossman's "Odnazhdy v Berdicheve" (Once upon a Time in Berdichev, 1934) and Isaac Babel's "Istoria moei golubiatni" (My Dovecot, 1926), both of which consider Jewish responses to various forms of anti-Jewish violence. Like Babel, Pervomais'kyi perceived the Cossacks through the eyes of a little boy who scrupulously recorded the circumstances of the pogrom yet was hardly capable of making sense of it. The absence of an ideological frame of reference (so characteristic of Grossman's literary characters), the Babelesque perception of a child, and the emphasis on detail made the perception of the pogrom touching and humane. One would not find in Pervomais'kyi's story the blatant anti-Cossack accusations and ideologically biased descriptions so popular in contemporary one-sided Ukrainian or Jewish stories on Ukrainian civil war warlords. The narrator's visual memory reflected the Cossacks not as greedy antisemites thirsty for blood, as they were captured by the intimidated Jewish imagination, but rather as hungry, poor soldiers, dismayed by their retreat and sympathizing with their victims.

Pervomais'kyi's Ukrainians were both the pogromists and redeemers. After the first pogrom and in the wake of the others, Iliusha recorded how the Ukrainian family next-door, the Hudziis, gave shelter to his parents—not because of their sense of self-sacrificial humanism but rather out of habitual human sympathy for a victim and a neighbor. Pervomais'kyi seems to have construed his Ukrainian-Jewish encounter by resorting to a complex vision of Ukrainian-Jewish relations, reflected in Shevchenko's *Haidamaky*, and by simultaneously turning this vision inside out, as if offering a new reading of the age-old Ukrainian-Jewish animosity.¹¹ Whereas Shevchenko humanized at least some Jewish

“bloodsuckers,” such as Yankel, Pervomais’kyi humanized the civil war *haidamaks*, introducing Ukrainians who were not necessarily nomadic thugs. He rejected the received Jewish perception of Ukrainians as ferocious murderers and staunch antisemites. Jews suffered indeed, but the pogromists were victims too: here Pervomais’kyi transcended ethnic and personal bias and demonstrated an unheard of sympathy for the victims of social, economic, or ideological oppression who victimized his own family. There was hardly anybody among contemporary Jewish writers capable of a similar humanistic gesture and ethical balance, Babel included.

Born in a Bookbindery

Pervomais’kyi’s parents, the Hurevyches, were common provincial and hard-working Jews that could hardly make ends meet. They lived on the outskirts of the town in a tiny hut, one half of which, sunny and spacious, they leased to a Ukrainian family, squeezing themselves into the other part, stuffed with big old furniture. Like this old furniture, Judaism occupied a depressing and disproportionate place in Pervomais’kyi’s imagination. His parents were not as traditional as the Kulyks and the Troiankers and perhaps not that extraordinarily poor: Shloyme (Rus.: Solomon), his father, was a bookbinder, and Hane (Rus.: Anna), his mother, a seamstress. Yet when Pervomais’kyi turned six, the Hurevyches sent Leonid, then Illia (or in the diminutive, Iliusha), to a *heder*, a private Jewish elementary school that taught Hebrew reading skills and some basics of Judaism. In addition to the Pentateuch, with the classic eleventh-century commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Shelomoh Itshaki, 1040–1104) taught by a local *melamed*, the school owner’s daughter taught the obligatory Russian language and literature, as required by the tsarist administration, which enforced and imposed a comprehensive Russification on the Jews.

This unequivocal sign of an encroaching modernity—Russian language and literature—did not save Chervonohrad’s *heder* from physical violence against its pupils, that notorious vice of the Jewish elementary school lamented by Russian-Jewish *maskilim*, the ardent proponents of enlightenment and educational reform. Pervomais’kyi’s *heder* was still a dull, intimidating, and overcrowded institution that commonly accepted physical abuse. The young Leonid could not withstand the conduct of his female teacher of Russian, whose sharp palm not infrequently left burning pain on his and other pupils’ necks. Despite his parents’ threats and curses, he ran away after four years of study and swore never to go back. On top of that, he wanted once and for all to erase the *heder* from his consciousness.¹² One may only speculate whether he rejected his “Jewish” edu-

cation because of the “Russian” physical violence he encountered in the elementary school, yet the consequences were clear: he did not return.

Despite his disrupted education, the ten-year-old Pervomais’kyi’s first love was letters. He found it in the bookbinding shop where the Hurevyches dispatched their stubborn son so he could learn at least a useful trade, if not Hebrew and Russian. By that time, Pervomais’kyi’s elder brother had died and the old Shloyme badly needed the help of an apprentice. In addition to a number of Ukrainians that Pervomais’kyi befriended there, the bindery shop shaped him culturally and spiritually. In the short story “Z Pisni Pisen’: rapsodiia” (From the Song of Songs: A Rhapsody, 1935) based on his life experience, Pervomais’kyi emerges as a self-taught boy who spent all his days in the bindery. He glued letters to book spines; restored and bound books by Tolstoy, Korolenko, Gorky, Defoe, Swift, and Stowe; and at night read through what had been bound during the day.¹³

In the mid-1920s, Pervomais’kyi argued that he had never been able to imagine himself without the binding shop of his childhood: it begat him as a reader, writer, and thinker. Even if Pervomais’kyi—like many other European literati of the twentieth century who drew heavily on childhood imagery—could claim he was “born from his childhood” (*rodом із дитства*), there was perhaps only one item in the bindery shop that was of particular significance, second only to his mother’s songs: the image of the book. When conceiving his literary biography, he dated his first spiritual endeavors to this discovery. Here is the self-reflecting nineteen-year-old Pervomais’kyi:

When ten years old I was born to the world and I was born a bookbinder. From then on I have changed jobs more than once: I was a librarian, a typist, the director of a “living” newspaper, an accountant, I worked on the beet plantations, yet my first profession left its mark on me. I love the book. With an inner trembling I turn over the pages of an old, forgotten, neglected book—I feel how life springs from each and every tiny letter, which so much resemble every other letter stamped on its yellow pages. . . . The hot torrent of life springs from the letters. When I was ten years old, most of all I liked books printed with the antique Peter the Great or Tsarina Elizaveta types with their long letter *yat*’ and their “hard sign,” obstinate, clumsy, as if its right hand were cut off. Cautiously I turned the pages of the old volumes of *Russkaia starina* or *Otechestvennye zapiski*. I did not understand anything in their intricate script, but I enjoyed their orderly rows, their columns of letters. Running heads on the upper part of the folio seemed to me like the commanders of the columns, and the more figures there were in the running head, the higher was the rank of the commander. I read books without control, at random, whatever came into my hands.¹⁴

It comes as no surprise that this revealing paragraph, from the first page of the autobiographical story “V paliturni” (In the Bookbinding Shop, 1927), was

erased—either by a Soviet censor or by Pervomais'kyi himself—from subsequent editions and never made it into his collected writings, unlike the story in which it first appeared.

The censor had good ideological reasons. Before anything else, Pervomais'kyi took the book for what it was: a physical object, with its smell of freshly cut binding cloth, its fuzzy leather spine, its reddish or gilded edge-cut, its carefully bound and sewn together notebooks, its cut or uncut pages, its deeply imprinted and almost tactile type, its elaborate title page vignettes, its size and weight, and its letters with their vertiginous yet impenetrable meaning. The book in Pervomais'kyi's imagination was emphatically humane: it preserved human touches—the sweat of the binder, the insomnia of the typesetter, the whim of the owner commissioning the inclusion of several random writings under the same cover, or the marginal notes of long-deceased readers. Each letter had its individual character, which could be aggressive or crooked, languid or funky, resilient or rebellious. For him, the book signified freedom; nobody had power over it. Yet for a Soviet censor, Pervomais'kyi's perception of book lore was conspicuously conservative. Pervomais'kyi seems to have appreciated things emerging from time immemorial, as if he were some sort of an austere neoclassicist and not a gung-ho Komsomol poet, as he identified himself in the 1920s when he penned this story. Surprisingly, as if contradicting what Pervomais'kyi's stated about his “blotted out” four years in the *heder* preceding his, as he put it, exile to the book-binding shop, to some extent his attachment to the book could have been a product of his previous Jewish experience, perhaps an unconscious one and due not only to the Yiddish language, the bookbindery lingua franca.

In the Jewish elementary school, Illia Hurevych was exposed to the study of the Talmud and to readings from the Torah, as was every Jewish child his age. At the time he told his parents that he would never go back to the *heder*, he had not yet reached his confirmation age and had not yet become Bar Mitzvah. Yet as a boy in the family of an observant Jewish artisan and a frequent synagogue-goer, he regularly saw the whitened parchment of the Torah scroll unrolled in front of the reader and the congregation. Pervomais'kyi could not but visually capture the scroll's handwritten Hebrew letters with their three-stemmed “umbrellas,” called in Aramaic *tagin*, or “coronets,” sticking out from the letters. What were those coronets? For hundreds of years, Jewish children asked this question and received the same answer, taken from a famous Talmud story, quoted by each and every teacher in a Jewish elementary school. When Moses ascended to heaven to receive the Torah, he found the Almighty engaged in affixing *tagin* (three small upward strokes in the form of a crown) to the Hebrew letters. Moses asked, “Master of the Universe, Who is forcing Your hand [making you to add crowns to the letters]?” The Almighty replied: “There will be a man, after many gener-

ations, whose name is Akiva ben Yosef and he will expound a multitude of laws upon each stroke of these coronets.”¹⁵

Schoolchildren were supposed to believe that the *tagin*, the coronets, symbolized the multiple meanings of a written sign of the sacred text. Perhaps Osip Mandelshtam alluded in his “Conversations on Dante” to the same coronets when he wrote that as far as the literary word is concerned, “it is a bundle and meanings stick out from it in various directions.” It does not seem impossible that Pervomais’kyi’s metaphor of the “hot torrent of life springing from every letter” stemmed from the same source. Apparently it was his attachment to the letter, the word, the text, and the book that later informed the self-reflective matrix of his thinking and shaped much of his poetic imagery. Hence if there was something profoundly “Jewish” in Pervomais’kyi’s late lyrics, to which we will duly return, it was this attachment to, concern for, and anxiety about the fate of the verbal signs of his Ukrainian poetry.

Fascinated with letters, Pervomais’kyi worshipped paper. A close look at the physical essence of the book prompted Pervomais’kyi the binder to suggest that letters turned speechless paper in an eloquent interlocutor. This would seem a stretch, an exaggeration, or a semiotic paradox had Pervomais’kyi himself not emphasized that his writing was inspired by a desire to make his voiceless friend, a piece of paper, speak up. In 1927, he penned the following confession:

And as in childhood, now, too, I share my thoughts with my only acquaintance, with my only true friend: paper.

My silent friend! My love belongs to you, my sleepless nights belong to you, the entire suffering of my heart torn apart by my recollections, all my tears shed in the cursed bookbinding shop belong to you! Is it not too much, you would ask. But also the whole joy of my short life, the moments of unfathomable uplifting, when my heart was beating hot, nervous, when I wanted to embrace the entire world with my feeble hands, when a single flower, sprout, or stone aside a road generated a happy thought, a living confidence—and all that also belongs to you.¹⁶

Thus not the Jewish God nor the Bolshevik Party, but a sheet of white paper became Pervomais’kyi’s utmost value, his most trusted authority, and his confessor. This image implied that writing a book was hard work, tantamount to the proletarian job of the binder, rather than a white-collar occupation. It suggested a limitless potential of cultural symbolism that could place the man of letters in the center of the universe and give the artist freedom and escape. And it pointed to the ethical measure of writing: mercy to those who cannot speak on their own and who need somebody’s help, as a sheet of paper requires the help of the writer. Pervomais’kyi’s path toward the exploration of his newly discovered sym-

bols of culture and its far-reaching ramifications, however, was long and by no means straight.

New Horizons

In the mid-1920s, Pervomais'kyi sacrificed his symbolism for the sake of a new romantic, revolutionary, and socialist vision of what he called "life," which he perceived as "joyous, beautiful and radiating." This "life" was synonymous with the revolutionary stream pushing Jews out of the ghetto, most preferably onto arable land, into the rising urban industry, into the Bolshevik revolution, and toward socialist culture. The young Pervomais'kyi became entirely immersed in its energetic current. Still a teenager inspired by the locally quartered International revolutionary detachment and shocked by its tragic fate—the detachment was brutally murdered—he left the bindery, found his way to a local cell of the Young Communist League, and turned to revolutionary romantic verse-making, to be sure, in Ukrainian. Looking for work, he moved from Chervonohrad to the town of Lubny, where he collected books for village libraries; ran a Komsomol club; worked for the local branch of the Pluh literary group that united "village"-oriented writers; edited the newspaper *Chervona Lubenshchyna* (Red Lubna province); and performed in an amateur theater that staged plays on Lenin, the Bolsheviks, and the revolutionary war. An amateur actor, he stood on guard with his rifle and discharged the mourning salute to commemorate the death of the leader of the world proletariat. He recited his Ukrainian revolutionary poetry to friends and acquaintances, seeking their immediate approval.¹⁷

His change of name followed his change of identity. Regardless of what was inscribed in his Soviet passport, Illia Hurevych was no longer Illia Hurevych. He adopted the first name of Leonid, an acclaimed warrior in ancient Sparta, and changed his last name to the Soviet neologism *Pervo-may* (The First of May), emphasizing his total support of democratic ideals and, above all, of the emancipated world proletariat.

Pervomais'kyi outlined his new worldview in his first published poem "My" (We, 1924). The "life" or, to be precise, "just the beginning of life" praised in the poem implied a revolutionary rupture with the past; it was "song, word, plough, and deed" with which Pervomais'kyi was tailoring the "lethargic centuries."¹⁸ Pervomais'kyi clarified this vision in the play *Mistechko Ladeniu* (The Shtetl Ladeniu, 1931–34), in which a shtetl Jew explained to other shtetl Jews reluctant to resettle on the land in southern Ukraine, "Life is a collective farm in the Kherson province." In addition, at the very end of his first short novel, *The Promised Land*, he penned an enthusiastic panegyric to his new vision of "life,"

adorning it with biblical metaphors, mostly from the book of Psalms, that claimed to praise the divinity:

In front of him stretches the black, beaten road, all rutted—he knows that this was also the road to his goal which was and which will be covered with thorns and stones, yet here it is, the promised land of humanity, already approaching and shining. He sees it, his bosom is filled with an ineffable desire to pronounce one word which would be the acknowledgment of a goal, the oath to attain it, but he cannot hold his feelings and then in his heart is born a song:

- Here it comes, life, incomparable, radiating as the sun!
- Take timpani and harps and sing hosanna to its coming!
- Take your best feelings and put them under its feet!
- Join like vibrant streams an incomparable and living sea of the humanity!
- Give your strength for life. Draw them from life.
- Sing the song of the young and joyous, for here it comes, incomparable, beautiful, radiating, as the Sun—life!¹⁹

Obviously, “life” for the seventeen-year-old Pervomais’kyi was a concept with an immense variety of signifiers, one of which was the “Ukrainian land,” another, the “road to happiness,” and yet another, “moving out” from the shtetl.

With his optimistic poetry notebooks in a cloth shoulder sack, and inspired by the social transformations occurring around him, Pervomais’kyi moved to Kharkiv, where the then-influential party and literary bosses, such as Ivan Mykytenko and Ivan Kulyk, recognized his talents and took him under their aegis.²⁰ Sava Holovanivs’kyi—with whom Pervomais’kyi was in close yet complex relations from the mid-1920s until his last days, and who was an admirer of Ivan Kulyk—recalled referring to Pervomais’kyi’s becoming a mature Ukrainian literary figure: “I guess that Ivan Kulyk performed a gigantic role. In a young lad with a fourth-grade education, he immediately recognized an individual who managed to take with him everything from the treasures of his father’s bindery and, with the help of his own education and the revolutionary experience of a famous Bolshevik, Kulyk attracted his protégé to all those cultural and intellectual treasures.”²¹ Pervomais’kyi impressed and befriended Kulyk: he sought the endorsement of his senior colleague, followed his reading recommendations, and recited aloud to him his new compositions.²² Indeed, as a youth writers’ leader, he also cleaved to Kulyk as to a party boss, who at that time used his party leverage to rally independent literary clubs, groups, and organizations around the state-sponsored VUSPP, the All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers.

In Kharkiv, the uncrowned capital of the state-orchestrated Ukrainization campaign, Pervomais’kyi’s enthusiasm generated a remarkable productivity. He

edited the *Molodniak* (Yearling) literary journal, which was close to the group of the established proletarian writers supervised by Kulyk, published nine books of prose and one book of poetry, and frequented the Slovo House, where he impressed his listeners by reciting his plays from memory.²³ An active Komsomol member, Pervomais'kyi helped literary bosses fight against all sorts of "quasi-proletarian" literati; he also supervised groups of proletarian-minded writers, encouraging them, quite amusingly, to select their would-be brides first and foremost from among the pool of young female members of the Communist Party.²⁴ At the height of his career, he spent several months riding a horse through the narrow paths of the Pamir Mountains. Back in Kharkiv, he established himself as a playwright, and his plays were accepted and performed in Ukraine and throughout the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, his second book of poetry was highly praised by the most demanding critics. In early 1930, when he had just turned twenty-five, the major state publishing house offered to issue his first collected writings.

Revolution demanded offerings, and Pervomais'kyi gladly brought them to its altar. For the sake of his personal career, public success, and literary opportunities, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his empathy for old books and libraries, for the Jewish culture of yesterday, and for the shtetl life. Pervomais'kyi elucidated these offerings in his Ukrainian drama "Kommoltsy" (The Young Communist League Members, 1930), later renamed "Pochatok zhyttia" (The Beginning of Life), which romanticized the first generation of passionate young Bolsheviks.²⁵ A certain Neifakh, a graphically Jewish protagonist, joins a group of members of the Young Communist League, harbingers of the new Soviet power in a small Ukrainian town. Pervomais'kyi ascribes to Neifakh his own life experience and his own dreams. Like Pervomais'kyi, Neifakh is a real bookworm: his interests range from the French Revolution to Asian geography. Among the semi-literate young men, he looks like a revolutionary Socrates. Ironically replicating Pervomais'kyi, who in the early 1920s headed the House of Farmer Library, Neifakh strives to become a people's commissar of the Village Libraries. In full accord with Pervomais'kyi's own choice, Neifakh sacrifices his books for a more serious vocation and joins the revolutionary army.²⁶ Books colonize him while he seeks freedom.

By the same token, the cemetery guard and gravedigger Elya (Eliyahu), one of the Jewish protagonists of Pervomais'kyi's play *Mistechko Ladeniu*, rejects old Jewish books for what he called a real life in a Kherson collective farm: "Where is the truth? In new words or in the yellow rotten paper of an old book? I don't know but I cannot guard the dead."²⁷ Bowing down to the yellow pages of a rotten old book is as bad from his viewpoint as religiously prescribed guarding the

dead: both colonizing patterns are to be eliminated from the happy future. Unlike his characters Neifakh and Elya, however, Pervomais'kyi did not entirely reject his books. He reflected on his rupture with the past, embodying it in a series of short stories, essays, a novel, and a play on Jewish themes that appeared between 1926 and the mid-1930s. In them, Pervomais'kyi attempted not only to squeeze a Pale-of-Settlement Jew out of himself but also to overcome the literary spells that prominent writers, first and foremost Isaac Babel, had cast on him.

Out of the Ghetto

Pervomais'kyi began as a Ukrainian-Jewish prose writer. The earliest collection he published, *Den' novyi* (The New Day, 1927), containing short stories penned in the mid-1920s, vividly portrays the decay of the old shtetl and the birth of the generation of new Jews who once and for all abandon their native shtetl, whose religious obscurantism they find old-fashioned. The birth of the new Jew is exemplified by one of the characters in the story "V dev'iatnadtsiatyi rik" (In the Year 1919); he leaves his Jewish hut, joins the retreating Red Army, and remarks to his old parents, "Do not say the kadish for me if I do not come back."²⁸ The artistic designer of the first edition of *The New Day* shrewdly captured the tone of the book by placing on the cover a gloomy old-fashioned white-bearded Jew, the small huts of a shtetl in the background, and the falling leaves of autumn covering the shtetl and the Jew.

If not for Isaac Babel, Pervomais'kyi's imaginary shtetl Jewry could have been different. The dense imagery of traditional life in the former Pale of Settlement in Babel's *The Red Cavalry* had a long-lasting impact on Russian, Yiddish, and Ukrainian writers. Thousands of readers memorized stories from *The Red Cavalry* in the 1920s, so that even Jorge Luis Borges, writing about Babel for the Buenos Aires women's journal, *El Hogar*, was aware of Babel's popularity.²⁹ The irresistible Red Cavalry Cossacks made the reader absorb the imagery of Babel's Jewish shtetl dwellers, although shtetl Jews were not as salient in *The Red Cavalry* as the Jewish gangsters in his *Odessa Stories*. In contrast to the robust, jovial, and brutal Cossacks, the Jews of Babel's Ukrainian and Polish shtetls were portrayed as decrepit, old, and agonizing. The towns that emerged on the pages of *The Red Cavalry*—Zhitomir, Kozin, Novograd-Volynskii and the like—smell of imminent death. Babel's Jewish universe is gray, stagnating, gloomy, and fatally ill. Jewish towns are paved with dead stones; people and objects in the Jewish realm are covered with a thick layer of dust; and the reek of putrid corpses, dried blood, and excrement contaminate the shtetl air. While Cossacks are

laughing, devouring, drinking, copulating, and exhibiting their brutal masculinity—or to use the Bakhtinian word, celebrating their lower-material bodily stratum—Babel’s shtetl is trembling, coughing, and awkwardly concealing its infertility. Unlike the Cossack-like Jewish gangsters in *Odessa Stories*, the Jewish images in *The Red Cavalry* symbolize the vanishing Polish-Jewish past.³⁰

Babel’s pattern, dominant in the mid-1920s and in the 1930s, turned into a sine qua non for those depicting traditional East European Jewry. Il’ia Ehrenburg accepted it at face value when taking his picaresque adventurer Layzik Roitshvanets from godforsaken provincial Gomel to the country’s capital. In his Ukrainian *Notes of a Consul*, perhaps also under Babel’s impact, Ivan Kulyk compared the poverty and agony of the Indian reservations in Canada to a moribund Jewish shtetl in Poland. In the 1920s in Jewish schoolbook illustrations, the shtetl appeared as a narrow and stiff room in which an ever-yelling long-bearded Jew is bent over the pages of the Talmud, surrounded by yawning, crying, sleeping, joking but always shabby children. Following Babel’s lead, such Soviet Yiddish writers as Leyb Kvitko, Natan Zabara, and Avrum Vevioroka celebrated robust, physically adept, and hard-working Jews who abandoned the shtetl, moved to the newly established agricultural colonies in southern Ukraine, and began working the arable land. Izi Kharik, a Soviet Yiddish writer and poet, instead of reiterating his incantation “Shtetele, disappear!” began celebrating the new Jewish peasants’ “day of harvesting.”³¹

Yiddish writers identified as losers those Jews who were stuck in the past and preferred to remain behind the counter of their devastated shtetl stores. The move from the shtetl to the village turned into a widely applied metaphor, making one critic praise Perets Markish, who “takes Jewish poetry from the shtetl into the expanse of the fields.”³² Long before Vassili Grossman in his story “Once Upon a Time in Berdichev” and Boris Iampols’kii in his novel *Iarmarka* (Fair, 1943) departed from Babel’s powerful imagery, the rebellious eighteen-year-old Pervomais’kyi revisited the Russian-Jewish fusion language of Babel’s *Odessa Stories* and the decrepit shtetls of his *The Red Cavalry*, offering a brand new synthesis of Ukrainian and Jewish imagery.

Pervomais’kyi’s first significant Jewish composition, the Ukrainian novel *Zemlia obitovana* (The Promised Land), was written in 1926, published in 1927 in the *Molodniak* journal, and later reappeared three times in various book editions.³³ Like the narrator of Babel’s *Red Cavalry*, Pervomais’kyi portrayed a shtetl, a decayed and filthy town governed by economic oppression, poverty, and Judaism and doomed to oblivion and death: “The shtetl went to sleep early, lulled by the evening song, switched off its lights and then it became quiet, as if

the day's noise never existed and as if the virgin land of the steppe was not littered by the rubbish of crooked and broken huts of the crippled shtetl artisans who lived like moles in their holes, amidst dirt and tribulations."³⁴

At the center of Pervomais'kyi's epic plot is a character called Ierukhim: a name that in Russian-Jewish and Yiddish literature signified an unhappy shtetl Jew whose life is but one single calamity caused by his Judaic rites, as in Grigorii Bogrov's novel *Zapiski evreia* (Notes of a Jew, 1871–73).³⁵ Pervomais'kyi entirely recasts the traditional Jewish pattern. To celebrate the liberation of his teenaged Ierukhim from the ever-growing pressure of Judaism, Pervomais'kyi places his main character within a traditional Jewish family framework, perhaps not too different from his own. Avrum-Iankel, Ierukhim's fifty-year-old father, like the old Jewish dad in Raisa Troianker's contemporary shtetl poetry, is a pious Jew who spends his early mornings praying in the synagogue and who entertains himself over Shabbat by drinking heavily at the *kiddush*, the prescribed Shabbat blessing pronounced over a cup of wine. Indeed, he regularly and physically abuses his unruly son, who develops an aversion both to domestic violence and his parents' Judaism.

But the "fanatic and drunkard" Avrum-Iankel is also a dreamer. The Land of Israel, the land of his forefathers, the Promised Land is constantly on his mind and, since he is permanently drunk, it is also on his tongue. "Revolution," laments Avrum-Iankel, "Oh, those *shedydim* [devils]. If not for them, I would have long been in Palestine. Money I had already saved, but now—neither money, nor Palestine." He addresses his son: "Listen, Ierukhim: you will grow up and will leave for Palestine. You will not stay among those *goyim* [gentiles], you must leave. So far I have been beaten by a district policeman, and by a town policeman, and by the haidamaks and the Germans, by the Bolsheviks and Denikin and again the Bolsheviks. . . . Who knows who's gonna be next to beat us?"³⁶

Painstakingly reproducing his shtetl *couleur locale*, Pervomais'kyi introduces many Jewish religious notions into his Ukrainian, mostly in their Yiddish version, and even provides systematic explanatory notes. Yet while discussing Avrum-Iankel's dream, he avoids using the commonly accepted *Eretz Yisroel*, Yiddish for the Land of Israel, and uses Palestine instead, as if to merge Zionist political references with the traditional Jewish ones, seen by socialist atheist propaganda as identical—and identically bad. Even at his son's Bar Mitzvah, Avrum-Iankel delves into a depressing song about a wailing Jew moving to Palestine, instead of joyously celebrating his son's becoming an adult bound by the entirety of Judaic divine commandments. The father did manage to instill the utopia of the Promised Land into his son, yet in Ierukhim's imagination it morphed into a utopian vision of the teenagers' much-sought-for beautiful

country on the shores of a no less beautiful sea. In the midst of sadness and heavy drinking, the father and the guests demand that Ierukhim should give a solemn oath over a glass of brandy that he will enter into the land promised to his forefathers. As elsewhere in the text, which is chock full of ethnographic minutiae, here, too, Pervomais'kyi introduces Yiddish (*haint shver ikh af dem kidush gleyzl* = now I swear) to make sure his reader realizes that the environment he describes is Yiddish, religious, and backward through and through.

Ierukhim does and does not fulfill his oath. In search of his own promised land, he runs away from the fastidious synagogue-centered shtetl, which physically abused him, mercilessly suppressed his voice, and disdained his visionary self. His escape triggers the premature demise of his mother and the progressive paralysis of his father and turns Ierukhim into a vagabond beggar. Soon he joins a gang of railroad muggers, ever-hungry and penniless teenaged boys, who feed him but humiliate him as a Jew. Although the description of Ierukhim's ordeals as an unlucky pickpocket is construed as the inversion of the Christian Oliver Twist, who found himself in the motley company of the Jew Feigin, Ierukhim's adventures should not distract the reader from the terrifying passages focused on the country's famine. Pervomais'kyi succinctly sketched the atmosphere of overwhelming fear that makes parents abandon their children, leaving them to the good will of the famine-stricken society. Pervomais'kyi reminds the reader at the outset that the action takes place around 1921, when the Bolsheviks had started planning the New Economic Policy, making sure that the donations from the West, and from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in particular, would help them to feed the hungry nation and rebuild the war-ravaged economy.

And yet, given the later context of the Ukrainian famine in 1932–33, it is difficult to disassociate the events depicted in *The Promised Land* from the catastrophe that wiped out several million Ukrainians in the early 1930s, particularly since Pervomais'kyi, in a poignant prophecy, talks about the unprecedented magnitude of the tragedy.³⁷ Some direct references to the catastrophic effects of the Ukrainian famine may also be found in Pervomais'kyi's play *The Shtetl Ladeniu*. Perhaps these very references to an altogether prohibited theme, and not merely the abundance of Jewish ideas and metaphors, made both texts, *The Shtetl Ladeniu* and *The Promised Land*, quite impossible to print in the Soviet Union after 1933. That Pervomais'kyi raised the issue of famine—he was finishing *The Shtetl Ladeniu* in 1933 when it was in full sway—allows us to place him, together with Osip Mandelstam, among those very few who dared raise their voice in favor of the Ukrainian victims of the famine in the midst of the deafening and unanimous silence reigning in the contemporary Soviet literature.³⁸

Pervomais'kyi's reference was not inconsistent with his unwritten motto: to identify with the victimized, colonized, oppressed, and doomed.

Driven by famine to crime, Ierukhim finds himself in a colony but eventually makes his way out, becomes a typesetter at a printing press (remember Pervomais'kyi's empathy for "living" letters), and joins the Komsomol. No longer a shtetl Jew—the shtetl dwellers dub him a *goy* and a *gazln*, Yiddish for a non-Jew and a thief—Ierukhim goes back to his native town. His return manifests his final rupture with Jewish tradition. Not only does Ierukhim eloquently articulate his own vision of the non-Judaic and nonreligious Promised Land in his conversation with his dying father, but he is also eloquently silent when tradition imposes on him the recital of an obligatory mourning prayer at his father's grave.³⁹ Although the story of Ierukhim may or may not have referred to the author's personal story, Pervomais'kyi charged his main character with the task of pronouncing what may be viewed as the early Pervomais'kyi's response to the Jewish tradition, but by no means the final one.

To demonstrate that Ierukhim—as well as his author—was intimately familiar with this tradition, Pervomais'kyi crammed his text with such Judaic notions as *mafiir*, the privilege to read the final excerpt of the weekly Torah reading; the *bimah*, a table-like elevation on which the scroll is placed; and the *oren ha-koydesh*, the holy ark in which Torah scrolls are placed. Yet he made Ierukhim indignant about Judaic restrictions imposed on Jewish-gentile interaction—Jewish xenophobia that East European rabbinic authorities imposed on the community in response to millennia of gentile hatred and persecution of Jews. This is Pervomais'kyi's Ierukhim, a double of the runaway Troianker or Kulyk and perhaps of Pervomais'kyi himself, articulating his response to spiritual, psychological, and physical violence:

He started to realize that his running away was a sort of a protest, unskilled, senseless, yet the protest of a child against a blue synagogue dome sprinkled with golden stars, against the trade taking place under that dome for the privilege of *mafiir*, for honors, for what else? For all sorts of things. From out there, from that *bimah* emanated the conservative spirit of a rabbinic sermon instilling the fear of a terrible god, the merciless yehovah, a degenerated grandpa. A Jew is not allowed to do anything. You would like to do this?—No! You may want something else?—No! Because from under the synagogue dome the Jewish god closely watches you singing his painful melody:

(a Jew must be a Jew,
a Jew must sing psalms,
love his wife,

go to the synagogue and eat challah and gefilte fish on Fridays . . . and a Jew—
whoever he becomes—must think about Palestine, the land of his forefathers).

Oh, the Jewish god! He looks very much like Jehudah-Leyb Yirkhin, the manufacturer of white buttons and starched collars. Nu, yes! The Jewish god does not need human love. He needs the love of a Jew to a Jew! Do not buy from a goy, do not befriend him, do not walk with him. A Jew must know who he is, hence the latter. Oh, that narrow-mindedness of a Jewish ghetto! How many geniuses and talents have you brought forth? How many more could you have produced if not for your painted dome or for the antique synagogue and for the toothless one-eyed Jehovah threatening with his fist from the “oren ha-koydesh”?⁴⁰

Recall one of the “negative” commandments that both the grown-up Pervomais’kyi and his characters flatly rejected: the ban on the rapprochement with the Other, in this case with the surrounding Ukrainian people. It was his sympathy for non-Jews and non-Jewish culture, in this case Ukrainian culture, that shaped Pervomais’kyi’s imagery and pushed him away—at least for the time being—from his early ethnocentric prose.

Like Troianker’s parting with the shtetl, Pervomais’kyi’s departure from Judaism in *The Promised Land* is ambiguous. He uses a good deal of fusion imagery firmly rooted in Judaic tradition to convey his rift with it. Direct and implicit Jewish references make Pervomais’kyi’s old shtetl world not only rejected but also appropriated by the reader.⁴¹ Wittily, Pervomais’kyi did not footnote the final conversation—heavily based on the Judaic subtext—between Ierukhim and Avrum-Iankel, yet one can easily reconstruct it. Appealing to his father’s background, Ierukhim claims to have found what he had sworn to find: “The land?” Ierukhim’s entire body leaned forward. “The promised land? Probably I have found it, dad. . . . It is not overseas, no. . . . Do you understand?” The reader might not understand, but his father certainly does. Ierukhim cites the weekly Torah chapter *Nitsavim* from Deuteronomy 30:12, which underscores the humane side of the Jewish tradition, indicating that the Torah is about interpersonal, social, and cultural relations, rather than about a vague awe before a distant celestial authority. *Lo ba-shamayim hi ve-lo me-ever la-yam hi*—“It is not in heaven and it is not overseas.” Pervomais’kyi translates Judaic notions into metaphors: his Promised Land is Ukraine, his chosen nation is the people of this land, and his Pentateuch, “life” as it is. Ierukhim, whose voice had always been suppressed, wins by rejecting the homiletic monopoly over the Bible and boldly claiming his own right to understand and interpret the sacred text.

Pervomais’kyi is not entirely satisfied when Ierukhim rediscovers his own voice. The shtetl is full of voiceless Ierukhims; everybody is a Ierukhim in a shtetl. To foster the collective emancipation of the shtetl Jews, Pervomais’kyi decides to take them out of the shtetl and integrate them into the Ukrainian environment, replicating the decision of the Bolsheviks to resettle impoverished

Jews on farmland in southern Ukraine and the Crimea. Pervomais'kyi undertook this experiment in his much-acclaimed play *The Shtetl Ladeniu*, nowadays completely forgotten. Whereas his other plays enjoyed a mixed reception, *The Shtetl Ladeniu*, as Pervomais'kyi mentioned in his brief autobiography, "enjoyed universal success."⁴² *Ladeniu*, an imaginary Jewish town in Belorussia, is a charged name: it conveys either harmony (from the Slavic *lad*) or kindness (from the Ukrainian *lado*) or Pervomais'kyi's indictment of the Jewish past (from the Yiddish *loden*, to sue). Its diminutive Yiddish suffix also emphasizes the author's irony and sensitivity toward his Jews' attachment to their native shtetl.

Pervomais'kyi starts *The Shtetl Ladeniu* exactly where he left off in *The Promised Land*: at a graveyard. While a small group of religious Jews obsessively prepares for the burial of Kargman, the synagogue beadle, others are preparing for the exodus to the newly established collective farm in Kherson Province in southern Ukraine. With the glorious future on the horizon, they do not want to be part of the prayer quorum: let the dead bury their dead! They have other things to deal with. They decide what to do with the Passover flour sent to them from America and vote for the list of the agricultural commune members on which, at the last moment, the poor Riva manages to include her father, Elya, the cemetery caretaker and gravedigger. Like the protagonist of *The Promised Land*, Riva and Elya, the poorest Jews from the lowest level of shtetl society, decide to part with their traditional past. Once the list of the Jewish colonists is approved and the "capitalist" Passover flour sent back to America, there appears in the shtetl a certain Iosef-Itse Kargman, the son of the deceased synagogue beadle, a former industrial worker, and a military man. He comes, as he says, to "bury the shtetl" and to lead the Jews to their happy agricultural future.

The newly established Jewish collective farm exposes class antagonisms in both Jewish and Ukrainian societies. The Jew Kusher, of bourgeois origin and now the keeper of the storehouse, and the Ukrainian Korchma, a former kulak whose land was expropriated, for various reasons dislike Jewish colonists. Both names are significant: *Kusher* is the Ukrainian Yiddish for "proper" (kosher), *korchma* the Ukrainian for "inn." Both names refer to what Soviet ideology classified as the "opium of the people," the relics of the accursed tsarist past. Korchma cannot reconcile himself to the loss of land: he wants Jews to fail and does not spare any means to hasten their failure. He prophesizes: "Jews have settled on the land, and the signs of draught have already become visible."⁴³ Korchma finds support in Kusher, who takes every opportunity to scold Jews for betraying their traditional occupations, to encourage their return to the shtetl, and even to incite local Ukrainian peasants against the Jewish ploughmen.

Their scheming falls on fertile soil, for there is no unity among the Jewish colonists. It is easy to get the Jews out of the shtetl yet difficult to get the shtetl

out of the Jews. Pervomais'kyi mocks the religious parochialism, which continues to shape Jewish mentality and makes them wonder: What should they name their collective farm, "Jewish Luck" or "The Third International"? Why is Marta, the wife of their leader, Kargman, not Jewish? Should they, Jewish agricultural settlers, cover themselves with prayer shawls and pray for good rain, abundant crops, and the safe birth of a new baby boy even if they are no longer in the shtetl? Since Kargman is in no hurry to return from the provincial center with a tractor—just as Moses was in no hurry to descend from Mount Sinai with the Tablets—the corrupt colonial past has the upper hand for a short period. Kushner provokes a fight among the Jews, makes them elect him the new head of the collective farm, urges them to consider leasing their land to Korchma, and has them dispatch an invitation to the *melamed*, Shimon Gets, still residing in Ladeniu, to come and again teach Judaism to a repentant flock. Here the class struggle gains momentum, making one of the main characters proclaim that "nations do not fight, classes do." Socialist providence triumphs at the end: the golden harvest fills the barns; the plotters are arrested; Kargman comes back with prizes for the best agricultural workers; the Ukrainian peasants reconcile their differences with the Jewish colonists; and the sudden arrival of Shimon Gets, demanding the teaching position that had been mistakenly offered to him, makes the end of the play not only happy but also funny.⁴⁴

Yet the charm of Pervomais'kyi's dramatization of the collectivization program is in its innovative style, language, and imagery rather than in its unsophisticated Marxist plot. In the play, Pervomais'kyi elucidates his grand metaphor: his "life," his Jewish collective farm, and his Ukraine become one. There is no need to seek the Promised Land anywhere beyond Ukraine: Ukrainian socialist and agricultural utopia is the Promised Land. The Ukrainian village furnishes an unparalleled rapprochement between the formerly oppressed Jews and Ukrainians. The integration of the moribund and impoverished Jews into Ukrainian peasant culture brings the rise of a new Jew—robust, optimistic, and speaking pure Ukrainian. To emphasize this equation, bordering on the mythical, Pervomais'kyi realizes that the more recognizable his myth, the more significant its effect. He pens a socialist travesty of the book of Exodus, articulating the necessity to get Jews out of the shtetl and resettle them on the land. In accord with his new myth, the shtetl Ladeniu and its economic bondage and hardships becomes the new Egypt, and Ukrainian agricultural settlements embody the postcolonial land flowing with milk and honey. Shtetl and petty trade symbolize prison, slavery, and death, while Ukraine and village acquire the taste of the salvation.

Underscoring the supreme value of this solution, Pervomais'kyi introduces a certain Pinia Schneerson: he had left for colonial Palestine and become a worker

in a quarry. It is easy to imagine, Pinia was constantly suffering from the British-orchestrated Arab-Jewish clashes. While the Holy Land is a subjugated British colony, the Ukrainian-Jewish agricultural colony is a liberated Holy Land. Indeed, Pervomais'kyi was not alone in this attempt to rework the outdated Judaic myths along Soviet propaganda lines. Soviet Yiddish mass culture used the same hybridization of socialist imagery and old Judaic liturgical or biblical references, constructing a new genre of Jewish musical folklore. For example, in the popular Soviet Yiddish song "Ven bolshevikes volt kumen," the form of *Dayyenu* (It Would Have Sufficed!) from the traditional Passover Haggadah, the key text recited over the Passover seder, with its emphasis on gratitude toward and the mercy of the Almighty, was juxtaposed to the economic and social innovations of the merciful Bolsheviks: the 1920s references mock the Exodus myth, whereas the Exodus story helps mythologize the 1920s as a new era of collective redemption. Both Bolsheviks and the Almighty share grace, about which Jews should feel greatly excited.⁴⁵ Pervomais'kyi fits well into this new Yiddish-Soviet fusion, yet his principal character is not ideology.

Pervomais'kyi's early prose on Jewish themes effectively utilizes the linguistic experiments of Isaac Babel, making them utterly Ukrainian. In Babel's *Odessa Stories* and in his play *Zakat*, one finds an attempt at a Russian-Jewish language that comprises Ukrainian colloquialisms, Yiddish syntax, Hebrew-Aramaic phraseology, Midrash (homiletic narrative) stylistic devices, and Russian prison slang. The plenitude of international merchandise that Odessa porters smuggle into the town is tantamount to the abundance of foreign derivatives that Babel introduces into his Russian language. Indeed, the succinct and aphoristic dialogues of *Odessa Stories* make Babel's language experiment contagious. Pervomais'kyi gladly picks it up. He introduces Jewish conversational constructs by combining rhetorical questioning, aphoristic replies, and brisk intonation shifts like the following: "Where is the shtetl going? Where are you going, Naftali, when you take the Friday night train while every honest Jew goes to the synagogue? To the Kherson collective farm!" In dramatic situations, his personages comically use Yiddish prepositions literally translated into Ukrainian: "Don't talk to me *for* the socialism . . ." (*ne hovory meni za sotsializm*).

Sometimes Yiddish subordinate clause makes a "serious" Ukrainian sentence into a hilarious one: "He talks in such a way that one gets what to think about, indeed." His Naftali uses personification to describe Soviet power, a caring and reliable kin: "Your American relatives think about you on the Passover, whereas Soviet power wants you to live the whole year as a human being." Like Babel in "Konets bogadel'ni" (The End of the Poor House), Pervomais'kyi makes his characters into petty philosophers who constantly ponder existential

questions while simultaneously showcasing their lowly cultural level: “We do not want to think about death. We are *clutching* to life.” Consider this brief monologue of the gravedigger, a positive philosopher: “When someone talks all his life to the dead, his first words to the living are insane. Who are you? Doctors and professors? Bring then your prescriptions and shovel them into the mouth of someone who has started to talk to the living!” Some elements of Pervomais’kyi’s Ukrainian-Jewish language have no way of being conveyed in English since they entail elements of untranslatable village dialect: his peasants for example, call Jews *iavrei*. For Pervomais’kyi, as well as for Babel, words have weight and form: “I am a stove-maker. I use words as bricks,” says one of the hard-working Jews.⁴⁶ Note the image of Kargman, the head of the collective farm, who like Babel’s Litov served during the civil war in the Red Cossacks regiment (of peasant origin) rather than in the revolutionary infantry, mostly proletarian.

This linguistic hybridization notwithstanding, Pervomais’kyi immediately abandons it once his Jews leave the shtetl. Settled on the land, most Jews turn to the clear, grammatically perfect and dramatically uplifting Ukrainian language, even when they talk about Jewish issues. Consider, for example, the Jewish colonists who gather to write a letter to their former rabbi, who is now more distant for them than the Turkish sultan for the Cossacks: “‘To the spiritual Rabbi Schneerson.’ Have you written? Write this: ‘We are writing to you a letter on the day of our great holiday, when our collective farm has stood on both legs, the collective farm about which you said that there could not be a Jewish collective farm, you, old and staunch antisemite.’” Among other things, the linguistic change that occurs with Jews has a liberating, if not redemptive, effect. One of the characters wants to put it in black on white in the letter to the rabbi: “And also write that my husband, who was afraid to open his mouth in public, and who was silent for the entire ten years, and with whom I live and whom I know, so that my husband—started to talk!”⁴⁷ Since this person started to talk in Ukrainian, Pervomais’kyi thus argues for the Ukrainian acculturation of Jews through agricultural labor and class modification, which would make former fusion-language-speaking petty traders into full-fledged literate Ukrainians of Jewish origin. Moreover, this change helps the formerly oppressed and voiceless Jew regain his voice!

By successfully settling Jews on the land, the socialist Enlightenment accomplishes what Tsar Nicholas I failed to do: assimilate the Jews through productive, predominantly agricultural labor. Once this is done, Pervomais’kyi seems to argue that Jews would undergo a major shift, acquiring a new identity based on a new environment (village), new productive labor (agricultural), and a new culture (Ukrainian). This transformation on the basis of class identity and

occupation is all the more important since the negative personages, such as Stepan, a déclassé puppet of Korchma, use the Russian-Ukrainian concoction known as *surzhyk*, a language of Ukrainian village dwellers trying to integrate into the urban, Russian-speaking milieu.⁴⁸ For the early Pervomais'kyi, direct Russian borrowings in Ukrainian and the inability to suppress Russianisms in conversational Ukrainian is a negative sign entailing a triple treason: betrayal of agricultural labor, the village milieu, and Ukrainian culture. In short, not only is Ukraine a better promise than Palestine but Jewish settlers are better Ukrainians than the Ukrainian outcasts. Ultimately, Pervomais'kyi argues for the speedy integration of the Jews into a Ukrainian peasant culture, an astonishing solution for the Jews with their millennia-long urban-dwelling track record and the three hundred years of Ukrainian-Jewish animosity carved in the cultural memories of both people.

The critics praised Pervomais'kyi's treatment of Jewish themes. Some liked the author's warmth and empathy toward his Jewish shtetl images. An anonymous critic of *The Promised Land* grasped some important features of Pervomais'kyi's criticism of the traditional Jewish utopia. He noted that amid pogroms, persecutions, hardships, and continuous mockery, the shtetl-based paupers in the former Pale of Settlement sought redemption in a magic word: Palestine. Although Pervomais'kyi rejected old-fashioned obscurantism, he still loved his Jewish ghetto, which obstinately cleaved to its worn-out Torah, its ruined synagogue, and its frightening God, long abolished by the October Revolution. Quite commendably, argued the critic, Pervomais'kyi's characters came to appreciate the value of the "incomparably beautiful life, radiant as the sun," so much more real than the visionary Palestine.⁴⁹ Other critics, for example A. Klochka, noted in his review of Pervomais'kyi's book *A New Day*, entitled "A Shaky Bridge" (1927), that "the description of the poor Jewish shtetl" betrays in Pervomais'kyi "a profound connoisseur" of the shtetl life and emphasized that the writer is capable of constructing an original plot and vivid characters against its backdrop.⁵⁰ In addition, the critics praised Pervomais'kyi's symbolism—the death of the old shtetl elaborately intertwined with the burial imagery of his play—and found plausible Pervomais'kyi's portrayal of the "unlucky and exhausted people [the Jews] whom the proletarian revolution transformed into strong selfless fighters for the shining life of labor."⁵¹

Ukrainian-Jewish Usage

Despite the absence of evidence, it is not improbable that Pervomais'kyi and Troianker knew each other, for example through Ivan Kulyk or other common

acquaintances in the Blakytyni Literary House, and could have influenced one another in Kharkiv around 1926. Certainly the crafting of Ukrainian-Jewish imagery that Troianker undertook in her poetry was paralleled in Pervomais'kyi's autobiographical prose penned at the same time. Pervomais'kyi's early stories, partially collected in a book entitled *Nevyhadane zhyttia* (An Uninvented Life, 1958), comprised chapters of a never written, novel-length autobiography featuring a Jewish boy Iliusha, the author's alter ego.⁵² But the modern reader of *An Uninvented Life* does not find its Ukrainian-Jewish imagery particularly salient. The stories defending the victims of civil war violence were themselves victims of neocolonial violence, which in this case took the form of Soviet censorship. We can only engage Pervomais'kyi's Ukrainian-Jewish themes by looking at the original versions of the stories published in Ukrainian periodicals in the 1920s and 1930s. It turns out that postwar Soviet censorship, first, successfully shuffled or twisted Ukrainian and Jewish voices and, second, neutralized a negative portrayal of the Russian impact on the Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue.

Consider "V paliturni" (In a Bookbinding Shop, 1928), the story that opens the third volume of the formidable seven-volume Soviet edition of Pervomais'kyi's collected writings. Here the author introduces a group of apprentices, both Jews and non-Jews, sweating day and night in a bindery, sharing their meager food and professional habits, and laughing over Yiddish anecdotes that all of them understand perfectly well. Iliusha, a Jewish lad mastering the art of a binder, is looking for friends and finds himself more attached to a Ukrainian lad, Pan'ko, with whom he shares reading impressions, than to a Jew, Feivel, whose spicy jokes and disapproval of book reading do not find favor in Iliusha's eyes. Pan'ko, a victim of physical abuse at home, truly befriends Iliusha, who was "exiled" into the bindery for having resisted a schoolteacher's physical violence. The two suffering creatures of two different social and religious backgrounds realize that they have something to share with one another. Ironically, it is Iliusha who tells Pan'ko about Taras Shevchenko, triggers the Ukrainian boy's fascination with Shevchenko's *Kobzar*, and provides Pan'ko with a copy of the book at the conscription center when, in the last months of the World War I, Pan'ko is drafted into the imperial army.⁵³ As in *Mistechko Ladeniu*, the main Jewish character is attracted to the Ukrainian cultural milieu and seems closer to a victimized Ukrainian peasant boy than to his déclassé Jewish brethren. However neutered, the 1950s version of the story does cautiously touch on the Jewish-Ukrainian theme, at least on the level of the plot and characters.

But this theme was remarkably visible in what one may want to call the original version of the story, which appeared in the *Molodniak*. This version told the story of Pervomais'kyi's spiritual growth in the bindery, a multiethnic environ-

ment in which a Ukrainian and a Jew for the first time started to talk to one another. The interethnic implications of their encounter almost entirely disappeared in later versions of the story. For example, Moyshe Tarnopil'skyi, who in the 1928 version is a Jewish secondhand book dealer from whom the Ukrainian Pan'ko buys Shevchenko's *Kobzar*, loses his Jewish name and identity in the 1958 version: in a country that had declared the construction of socialism accomplished and a new identity, the Soviet citizen, already created, it was inappropriate to have a Ukrainian lad obtaining *Kobzar*, the Bible of the Ukrainians, through a Jewish mediator. It had also become bad taste to emphasize a character's national, especially Jewish, identity: Jewish realities like *rebbe* or *heder* were conveniently replaced by the culturally neutral "teacher" and "school." Feivel Zavulonov, whose last name dated back to Zevulun, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, turned into Feivel Katsenko. Also noteworthy is that in the later version, the only direct allusion to Jewish cultural heritage was the reference to some "indecent Jewish songs" that Feivel sang out loud while working.

The 1928 text delineated the ethnic, if not national and religious, identities of both of its personages. Not only were Iliusha and Pan'ko well aware of the cultural differences separating them, they also tried to ponder and explain this separation. For both lads, Shevchenko became the point of rapprochement and departure. The joint reading of Shevchenko demonstrated how far both characters were from one another. Pan'ko, flabbergasted with his discovery of Shevchenko, turned to Iliusha:

"What a book! It's the first time that I have read something like that. Everything is written about us. But why does he not like Jews so much?"

The next night, we both read Shevchenko. Pan'ko was exited but the bitter and short word "yid" that I found on almost every page offended me and I went to bed. I have been sick and tired of hearing this word from Hanka and Stepan, Maleivka village boys, from the janitor Savka, from the police in the town park, and I could not understand how my best friend Pan'ko admired the poetry of a person who could not avoid this word even in his verse.⁵⁴

The encounter of a rebellious yet ghettoized Jew with Shevchenko could hardly be different. Pervomais'kyi's Iliusha could not place Shevchenko in an accurate historical and sociolinguistic context. Neither was Pan'ko capable of explaining that the word "yid," standard and neutral for Shevchenko, eventually became insulting and derogatory because of Russian linguistic imperialism.⁵⁵ Nor was there a Jewish mentor to tell Iliusha that Shevchenko cannot and should not be reduced to his attitude to the Jews, a highly complex issue on its own.

Iliusha seemed to ask how it could be that the greatest Ukrainian poet, so merciful to the oppressed Ukrainian people, was at the same time incapable of

seeing the all-too-obvious injustice done to Jews squeezed in the Pale of Settlement like some harmful outcasts. The encounter of a Ukrainian and Jewish boy over a page of Shevchenko in fact polarized readers: Iliusha did not find any reason to love Shevchenko, whereas Pan'ko failed to find a way out of the ethically awkward situation. That both characters were acutely aware of the gap between them did not preclude rapprochement, which lasted until Pan'ko's death at the front. To some extent, the fate of Pervomais'kyi's Ukrainian-Jewish encounter reflected in the earliest version of his "In the Bindery" was similar to Pan'ko's fate: the Russian imperial military and Soviet censorship wiped out both.

In the light of newly discovered archival data testifying to Pervomais'kyi's later reediting of his early autobiographical stories, it seems that the writer's initial goal was indeed to fashion a thick Ukrainian-Jewish narrative. In the 1950s, Pervomais'kyi eliminated many of the Jewish references and neutralized the Jewish content of his early stories, either in an attempt to secure for them a separate book edition if not some room in his collected writings, or under the pressure of censorship, or both. Although not all his short story drafts are available, extrapolating Pervomais'kyi's corrections from one of his texts onto others would lead us to the conclusion that in the 1920s the writer tended to construct Ukrainian-Jewish prose whereas in the 1950s he wanted to sound more universal and less Jewish.

The short story "Parasol'ka Pinkhusa-Moti" (The Umbrella of Pinkhus-Motia, 1926) furnishes grounds for such a conclusion. This small book of three stories (where "The Umbrella of Pinkus-Motia" appeared for the first time) was praised by the critics—one of whom called Pervomais'kyi, "a profound connoisseur of the poor shtetl Jews able to create vivid images against the backdrop of the nicely reconstructed shtetl quotidian."⁵⁶ To be sure, the Ukrainian-Jewish encounter appeared in the very center of Pervomais'kyi's shtetl. The story's main character, Pinkhus-Motia, is a poor and inoffensive shtetl carpenter with an irresistible philosophy of life: "A simple mixture of fatalism and optimism helped the old man to survive."⁵⁷ In addition, Pinkhus-Motia is a genuine shtetl philosopher, who lives the life of a traditional Jew, takes care of his orphaned grandson, performs his everyday religious rites, repairs his neighbors' old furniture, and rebukes an unjust God. The worn umbrella that follows him in summer and winter makes him particularly human and tragicomic.

In the midst of ruin, poverty, and the ongoing civil war, Pinkhus-Motia cheers up his fear-stricken Ukrainian neighbors after they have abandoned all hope and belief. Black humor is his preferred genre. When confronted by the most ardent skeptics, he retorts with a macabre joke: "Do not pray to my or your God, pray simply to God! You should invent him and pray to him. . . . And if

your God betrays you, banish him from your heart and look for another! What is God? It's the branch of a tree on which you will hang yourself. Choose one which is firmer."⁵⁸ The carpenter Pinkhus-Motia, "inoffensive, rebel and heretic," and his Ukrainian friend, a tailor, do not survive the upcoming pogrom. Both fall victim to a bored White Guard officer looking for fun in the streets of the god-forsaken shtetl. The murderer beheads and scoffs at the dead Pinkhus-Motia: he pulls his body to a fence, puts his head into one of Pinkhus-Motia's hands, and his open umbrella in the other. Perhaps the final image becomes symbolic of the demise of shtetl Jewry: Pinkhus-Motia is sitting like a decapitated king with his scepter-umbrella and orb-head, a king whose kingdom is gone forever.

A pioneering publication of some excerpts of the draft of "The Umbrella of Pinkhus-Motia,"⁵⁹ as well as the recovery of the full 1958 draft of the story with the author's corrections,⁶⁰ allows us to discuss the impact of Soviet censorship on Pervomais'kyi's reediting of his own Jewish stories. The all-powerful God of the Hebrew Bible, who in the 1926 version of "The Umbrella" had been able to stay the motion of the sun and send down rain on a sunny day, in the 1958 version of the same story was metamorphosed into "nature." The religiously minded Pinkhus-Motia turned into an "old philosopher." The main character, with an explicitly Jewish name, "*Reb* Pinkhus-Motia," had by 1958 become an implicitly Christian "good man." In 1926, Pinkhus-Motia had wrapped himself in a peculiar Jewish *tales*, which in 1958 turned into a neutral prayer shawl. When, back in 1926, Pinkhus-Motia had been immersed in thought, he twirled his earlock; yet in 1958 his earlocks were precociously cut off. In 1926, Pinkhus-Motia had threatened God, exclaiming, "You will not any more be my God and God of my people!" whereas in 1958 the "God of my people," with its easily recognizable liturgical and biblical reference to *Elohei Yisrael* (God of Israel), disappeared.⁶¹

Stylistically, the 1958 text (later incorporated into all editions, including two mass editions of Pervomais'kyi's selected writings) was rewritten so that it would conceal the linguistic characteristics of the protagonists. It seems as though the Soviet censor (or Pervomais'kyi himself) was aware of the connection between "name," "culture," and "myth," and he bent over backwards to eliminate ethnically significant "names" that entailed religious "myths" and national "cultures."⁶² Even the full name of Pinkhus-Motia (Shiber Pinkhus Motia Khunovich) and of his grandson Itsik, which refer to a Yiddish-speaking milieu, did not make it into the 1958 version. The Ukrainian carpenter, Dratva (whose peculiar name connotes the "thick thread of a shoemaker"), lost his idiosyncratic Slavic name and remained merely a "carpenter." The later version also eliminated sharp anti-Russian overtones. In it, the speech of the White Guard officer, like that of any other character in the story, was Ukrainian.

Originally the story was not only more “Yiddish,” it was also more “Russian”! In the 1926 version, the murderer of Pinkhus–Motia and his Ukrainian friend had been the only one who spoke Russian, or to be more precise, twisted Russian. This final detail is particularly significant, given that another White Guard officer, apparently dismayed by his comrade’s baseless hatred, had spoken Ukrainian. One might want to argue that back in the mid-1920s, Pervomais’kyi had tried to shape the linguistically marked images of the Jewish–Ukrainian dialogue that had been jeopardized by an abrupt and murderous Russian intrusion. But even in the 1950s, Pervomais’kyi took pains to preserve some features of the Ukrainians and Jews, whose class origins and powerlessness did not contradict the imposed literary canons whereas their ethnic background certainly did.

The Soldier of the Empire

Although Pervomais’kyi enjoyed a relatively secure position among his literary colleagues until 1949, the political shift of the 1930s cast its shadow on his poetics. Once the Union of the Ukrainian Soviet Writers was established in 1934 and the capital of Ukraine transferred to Kyiv, Pervomais’kyi moved to Kyiv and settled in the Rolit, one of the most prestigious residential buildings of the new Soviet nomenklatura erected for the privileged members of the Union of Writers. Like the Kharkiv-based Slovo House, the Rolit sheltered some sixty of the most prominent literati, at least twenty-four of whom were of Jewish origin. The interference of the Kremlin in the Ukrainian nation-building process, however, brought Ukrainian cultural endeavors to a halt and destroyed the cultural framework informing the Ukrainian–Jewish dialogue of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The many publications on Yiddish writers in the Ukrainian press that focused on and bolstered the Ukrainian–Jewish rapprochement yielded to propagandistic articles celebrating the friendship of the socialist peoples of the USSR. Journals in which Pervomais’kyi began his literary career, and which favored Ukrainian–Jewish rapprochement, were shut down.⁶³ Pervomais’kyi’s *The Shtetl Ladeniu* and *The Promised Land* disappeared from the repertoire and were not reprinted even once. Ukrainian newspapers of 1933–34, when compared with the same titles of the late 1920s, provided an impression of a thorough pogrom, if not a coup, having taken place in the republic. After 1933, Pervomais’kyi would never ask Volodymyr Sosiura to recite for his close friends his famous poem “Mazepa,” as he had done in Kharkiv: Mazepa again, as in the times of the Russian Empire, turned into a separatist, an outcast, and a traitor.⁶⁴

In the public realm, the Jewish–Ukrainian rapprochement was curtailed. Two of Pervomais’kyi’s colleagues in the Rolit, the Yiddish writers Itsik Kipnis

and Dovid Gofshteyn, risked their lives trying to save the talented Ukrainian writer Dokiia Humenna from starvation: she dared criticize party policy in the villages during the years of famine and came to be considered a leper among the writers.⁶⁵ Persecutions against Ukrainian writers now accused of bourgeois nationalism, separatism, and fascism acquired a new impetus. During the height of the Great Terror, Ivan Kulyk and Ivan Mykytenko, Pervomais'kyi sympathizers and supporters, were executed. Pervomais'kyi had to wait almost thirty years for the opportunity to repay his debt to Kulyk by contributing to his posthumous literary rehabilitation. On top of that, in the mid-1930s Pervomais'kyi realized that pursuing the career of a Ukrainian-Jewish writer could lead straight to the basement of the NKVD. Pervomais'kyi continued to write his short stories on Jewish issues until 1937, but with Isaac Babel's arrest he could well expect that the fate of a Jewish-Ukrainian writer would hardly be different.

Always cheerful, Pervomais'kyi in the mid-1930s became introspective, sober, aphoristic, and succinct.⁶⁶ In 1930, Sava Holovanivs'kyi, on the brink of complete despair, told him about Maiakovsky's suicide (Maiakovsky literally and metaphorically brought Holovanivs'kyi into poetry), to which Pervomais'kyi calmly replied, "Pull yourself together and try to comprehend what has happened."⁶⁷ Thirty years later in his poem on the persecuted Spinoza, who was despised by his fellow Jewish countrymen, he advised his protagonist: "Grind your diamond and withstand everything."⁶⁸ This poignant motto, bordering on the stoic, emerged not only from Pervomais'kyi's personal life circumstances but also from his literary predilections, which in the 1930s had switched toward Rudyard Kipling.

Pervomais'kyi's treatment of Kipling should be seen against the backdrop of the English poet's overwhelming, albeit implicit, presence in the Soviet culture of the 1930s, an issue that has been shamefully neglected in scholarship. Indeed, the "Russian," or in this case, the "Soviet" Rudyard Kipling was not exactly the Rudyard Kipling familiar to Western audiences. The Soviet Kipling provided the young generation of Soviet literati of the 1930s with the imperial literary framework and with the epic-making images of the rank and file ready to sacrifice their lives for the great imperial cause. A new Kiplingesque framework matched the necessities of the rising Stalin regime, and Kipling's imagery shaped popular attitudes toward the regime. When one turned to Kipling's legacy, one tacitly claimed that the Soviet state, communist ideology, and socialist society were more valuable than the feelings, sufferings, and fate of a human being. As Kipling put it, "There is neither Evil nor Good in life / Except as the needs of the State ordain."

Soviet Young Communist League poets, Pervomais'kyi among them, were galvanized by the example of Kipling's Tommy Atkins, for whom duty and obedience became utmost personal values. They misunderstood Kipling's all-embracing imperialism, considering it a manifestation of his naive internationalism. They translated Kipling's imperialist sympathies into the idolization of the new Soviet empire, the USSR.⁶⁹ For them, workers at the Kuznetsk coal mines and on the Far East construction sites, village motorists and proletarian artists, brave polar pilots and tireless Belorussian dairymaids were soldiers of the empire, sacrificing their private human happiness in order to realize the communist paradise. Former national minorities, and industrial and agricultural shock workers hardly able to convey their experiences, suddenly joined the mighty chorus celebrating the epic-making state-building experiment. Being part of this chorus became a privilege and sacred duty in what Terry Martin has called "the affirmative action empire."

Kipling's obedient and down-to-earth "young British soldier" became no less essential for the singers of the expanding Soviet universe than the marching rhythms of Kipling's verse. Soviet Kiplingesque poetry became astonishingly popular with the breakout of what came to be known in Soviet historiography as the Great Patriotic War (June 22, 1941), which made the idea of perishing for the common cause, be it Stalin or Mother Russia, something more than just an abstract metaphor. Among the generation of young Soviet poets of the 1930s, there was hardly a single individual—except, perhaps, for the young David Samoilov (pseud.; real name—David Samoilovich Kaufman, 1920–90)—who was neither impressed by nor found himself under the impact of Rudyard Kipling.⁷⁰ In Ukrainian literature, Kipling was popular both among those who accepted Bolshevism, such as Ivan Kulyk and Oleksa Vlyz'ko, and those who rejected it, such as Oleh Ol'zhych and Dmytro Dontsov. In prewar Ukrainian literature there was perhaps no one who resorted to the imagery and themes of Rudyard Kipling as consistently as did Pervomais'kyi, although his use of Kipling was schismatic, if not subversive.⁷¹

In the 1930s and 1940s, Pervomais'kyi often turned to Kipling, whose poetry he knew well through his close friend Oleksa Vlyz'ko, perhaps the most consistent Ukrainian admirer of Kipling.⁷² Pervomais'kyi's early Komsomol-shaped poetry was imbued with a morphed Kiplingesque "serve, serve, serve as a soldier." Some of the chauvinistic poetry that he penned in the 1930s elaborated Kipling's motif of the holiness of state service as, for example, in his servile "Siohodni nebo nad Moskvou" (Today the Sky over Moscow, 1936), in which he argued that "The great glory of our days / Becomes our duty."⁷³ Poems such as

“Balada vartovykh” (Ballad of the Sentinels, 1931) explicitly cite the source and develop the theme from Kipling’s well-known epitaph, “The Sleepy Sentinel.”⁷⁴ The recurrent motif of the sapper in his lyrics could have been inspired by the Kiplings Sappers.

Pervomaiskyis poetic cycle “Uhorski rapsodii” (Hungarian Rhapsodies, 1934–35) juxtaposed Kiplingesque self-sacrificial rhetoric and the anticolonialist struggle of the Hungarian people, in particular, of Sándor Petőfi (1823–49). Other poems, such as his classic “Snih letyt” (The Snow Is Falling, 1942), elaborate Kiplingesque metaphors and Kiplingesque refrains (as in his “Boots”) to convey soldiers’ stamina overcoming the elements and death.⁷⁵ Even after Pervomais’kyi turned to new themes and images in the postwar period, he still retained some of his Kiplingesque military metaphors as, for example, in the poem “Pislia boiiv” (After the Battles, 1945):

And yet I feel like a soldier,
For I got used to the soldier’s generous fate.
Believe me, my lot is not bad—
Between you the living and, in a field, the dead.⁷⁶

Yet there was a palpable difference between the Kiplingesque Soviet poets and Pervomais’kyi. The Ukrainian poet did not share the Kiplingesque jangling militarism. Nor did he identify with the Kiplingesque readiness to sacrifice the individual for the sake of the impersonal and imperial. While others adapted Kipling for their epics, Pervomais’kyi transformed him through his lyrics. Epic distance between himself and a stoic-minded sentinel was inconceivable for Pervomais’kyi. He celebrated the soldier’s soft irony rather than his dry stoicism. His Russian colleagues praised the self-sacrificial act of the revolutionary soldier on the battlefields of international socialism; Pervomais’kyi pointed to the uniqueness of the soldiers’ life. The singers of the immortal deed of a Soviet soldier underscored the greatness of the cause for which he died, while Pervomais’kyi emphasized the tragedy of his death. The former taught Soviet citizens to endure and withstand hardships; Pervomais’kyi taught them to be merciful. His sentinels bemoaned the death of Lenin, crying out loud. His sapper, an ironic thinker, treated death as his routine and macabre interlocutor. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Pervomais’kyi turned to Kipling to humanize the voiceless soldiers on the fronts of the Spanish Civil War and, later, of World War II. Pervomais’kyi made his soldiers into philosophers by revealing the spiritual richness of their inner world. Simultaneously, he turned his poets (Camões, Cervantes, Heine, Petőfi or Máté Zalka) into soldiers, reminding us about how fragile and dangerous the poets life is.

This is what Pervomaiskyi did, for example, in his Kiplingesque ballad “Saper i smert” (The Sapper and Death, 1943). Reminiscent of the philosophical discourse through which an ironic thinker appropriates and domesticates death, it is based on the sapper’s ability to speak out loud with a mortar shell:

The sapper is holding death in his hands
And talks to it,
This is his habitual job
As if he does not know other ones.⁷⁷

The ability to speak furnishes the sapper—a silent, serious, and rigid lower rank—with an upper hand over death and destruction. But not only that. Pervomais’kyi further uplifts his sapper by turning him into his double who, like the poet, neutralizes violent empirical reality by inventing its images and making them speak. By the same token, in “Ivanhorod” (1942), a rank-and-file soldier overcomes the tedium of war through his ability to recite poetry while standing on guard duty, exhausted:

Perhaps there were worse travails
In the lives of each of us.
I am standing and reciting poetry
To make time run faster.⁷⁸

Thus Pervomais’kyi’s soldiers regain their voices, becoming thinkers, poets, and philosophers wrapped in trench coats. Their self-irony transcends Kiplingesque imposing pathos. For them, victory is “as young and happy, as our battalion bugler,” and the survivors remember the grenade explosions “like an old soldier remembers the number of his Three Line rifle.”⁷⁹

Some of Pervomais’kyi’s poetic decisions may have originated in Pervomais’kyi’s deep empathy for his friend Oleksa Vlyz’ko, whose poetic talent he admired.⁸⁰ Vlyz’ko adored Kipling and in Kharkiv in the 1920s would recite his work in the middle of the street, scaring passersby. Pervomais’kyi presented Vlyz’ko as a talented young man who finds his way to dazzling rhymes and mesmerizing rhythm, trying to defeat a sickness unheard of for a poet. Vlyz’ko, hard to believe, was stricken with an incurable disease that eventually took away his ability to speak and hear. His public appearances were horrible, for he could not hear his own voice, was incapable of reciting his own poetry, intimidated many of those who did not know about his disease, and could not grasp the extent of his physical failure. In a poignant memorial essay on Vlyz’ko, Pervomais’kyi emphasizes not so much Vlyz’ko’s Kiplingian imagery as the Ukrainian poet’s desperate attempt to regain his own voice. It was his deep sympathy for a poet doomed to virtual dumbness rather than Vlyz’ko’s masterful Kiplingesque variations

that formed Pervomais'kyi's attitude to Vlyz'ko and, by default, to Kipling.⁸¹ Vlyzko's tragic fate, to be executed among other representatives of the Ukrainian national renaissance, only sharpened Pervomais'kyi's belief that the humane should predominate over the ideological.

Transforming Kipling for his own poetic purposes, Pervomais'kyi revisited Kipling's key notion of duty. In spite of Pervomais'kyi's numerous self-portraits in the genre of the "artist as an old soldier" and his profound sense of duty recorded in the memoir, Pervomais'kyi's "duty" had nothing to do with the soldier's unquestioning obedience to authority. The only sense of duty Pervomais'kyi acknowledged was his loyalty to his own vocation, his themes, and his ethical principles. Jewish images and Jewish themes appeared in all his creative work in the 1920s and early 1930s and found their way into his later writings as well, although he conveyed his Ukrainian-Jewish sympathies to his readers only sotto voce. For this Pervomais'kyi paid dearly.

A Holocaust Survivor

In 1943, in his essay *Uchytel istorii* (A History Teacher), Pervomais'kyi wrote of his protagonist: "The war stepped down from the history textbook and was marching through the roads of his motherland."⁸² In 1941, Pervomais'kyi volunteered for the Red Army. The Russian military documents issued to "Pervomaiskii-Gurevich Il'ia Shlemovich" in 1942 testify that he was appointed "a literary instructor of Front Radio on the Southwestern Front."⁸³ Together with the retreating troops, Pervomais'kyi moved eastward into Russia, leaving the southwestern region, in other words, Ukraine. It was a bitter experience. On leaving Ukraine, Pervomais'kyi took with him a small piece of earth, a reminder of the land and country to which he belonged. Shortly thereafter, he wrote:

I picked a piece of earth on the road,
 Washed by the autumn rains.
 Heavy and dark, it was running cold,
 Like a poor heart drained of blood.
 The darkness behind us waved with fires.
 The horn has called. I rushed to the trucks.
 Forward we moved, as commanded,
 But I could not throw back on the road
 A small piece of your earth, Ukraine.⁸⁴

The poem that told this story was one of his most patriotic poems and reflected his deepest empathy toward, and identification with, Ukraine. His feelings were epitomized in the image of "a small piece of Ukrainian earth" picked up "on the

road,” the last remnant of what once was for him “the road of the . . . promised land of humanity, already approaching and shining.”

Written in the genre of a ballad, the poem juxtaposed the minutiae of wartime routine with the bitter feelings and utmost hopes of the author:

This was all that remained with me
 For memory about the days of my youth
 The land, where I grew up and matured,
 About my native steppe, rivers, and hills,
 About an old trunk of a grey willow
 That leaned over the current
 Of my past . . . A piece of earth!
 It constantly lies on my heart,
 Uniting my anger and my pity
 Into one stream with you, Ukraine!

The repetition of the image of a piece of land in each of the stanzas turned the poem into a powerful lament for the fate of Ukraine. On hearing the poem recited by Pervomais'kyi in ice-cold Moscow in the winter of 1942, Pavlo Tychyna was reported to have been left speechless and Maxim Ryl's'kyi to have exclaimed, “What a language!”

The collection of poems *Zemlia* (The Land, 1943), which included among others “A Small Piece of Your Earth,” brought Pervomais'kyi the reputation as one of the best Soviet poets and earned him the 1946 Stalin Prize. Il'ia Ehrenburg and Vassili Grossman were among those who shared Pervomais'kyi's belligerent patriotic stance and identification with the land and people that had been conquered and humiliated by the enemy: there is evidence that at the front the author of “A Small Piece of Your Land” befriended both. Pervomais'kyi spent all four years as a war correspondent: his 1945 documents listed him as “Major Pervomaiskii—Gurevich Il'ia Shlemovich, on active military service as *Pravda* military correspondent.”⁸⁵ Praising the stamina and stoicism of the rank-and-file soldiers during the war, Pervomais'kyi retreated with the army from Kyiv to Stalingrad and then moved westward through Romania, Austria, and Hungary.⁸⁶ He experienced neither the ordeal of living under the Nazis in the occupied territories nor the fate of a POW in a concentration camp. Before the Nazis entered Kyiv, Pervomais'kyi managed to move his Jewish family—Evdokiia Pevsner, his wife; Susanna Hurevych, his only daughter; and Berta Pevsner, his mother-in-law—out of town and send them to be evacuated. It is hard to know at what point he came across the Jewish experience in World War II, but the Holocaust came to occupy a salient place in his writings.

Pervomais'kyi was anything but an epic narrator of the World War II experi-

ence. To convey what happened to his brethren, he eliminated distance between himself and his images, imagined himself at the edge of a freshly dug pit, and portrayed himself as a Holocaust victim. In his poetry on the Holocaust, Pervomais'kyi saw himself point-blank through the eyes of the East European Jews at the last moments of their lives. His own voice was reaching out to him from the crematoria and mass graves, appealing to his conscience, and scaring his poetic imagination. By the same token, Il'ia Ehrenburg, a Kyiv-born poet and writer, wrote in a 1944 poem on the Babi Yar massacre: "I hear how from every pit you are calling me."⁸⁷

What was the second-person plural for Ehrenburg became first-person singular for Pervomais'kyi, who introduced lyric propinquity instead of epic distancing. He was calling himself from a pit, as if his guilty conscience and his executed Jewishness were talking to his well-protected Ukrainian self-conscience. Sometimes his Holocaust verse reads as Iliusha Hurevych crying out to Leonid Pervomais'kyi, or as a voiceless Jew addressing his articulate Ukrainian alter ego. To distance himself from the Holocaust was treason: contrary to what he had actually undergone, Pervomais'kyi incorporated the mass murder of Jews into his personal experience. The recurrent Holocaust theme in Pervomais'kyi's prose and poetry suggests that he was reidentifying himself not only as a Ukrainian poet concerned with the Nazi atrocities but also as a Holocaust Jew guilty of survival.

Pervomais'kyi's attitude to the Holocaust is best illuminated in his perception of the poetry and life of Miklós Radnóti (b. Miklós Glatter, 1909–44), a Hungarian poet of Jewish descent. Although in the wake of mass executions of Hungarian Jews, Radnóti converted to Catholicism, he was deported from Budapest to the forced labor camp at Heidenau and shot together with twenty-one other people by a squad of Hungarian police.⁸⁸ When the mass grave was exhumed two years later, a notebook was found on him containing the poems he continued writing until the last hours of the trip. The widow of Nikolai Chukovskii recalled: "After the death of Nikolai Korneevich they published a book of poetry of the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, translated by L[eonid] Martynov, D[avid] Samoilov, and N[ikolai] Chukovskii. I sent it to Pervomais'kyi. He wrote back a letter full of excitement. The tragic fate of Radnóti executed by the retreating Nazis, stirred his imagination, and he dramatically described in the letter the last hours of the poet's life."⁸⁹

Pervomais'kyi wrote back with gratitude and admiration:

Radnóti has two lines that are worthy his ordeal through all the circles of hell, and he articulated them for all those who remained voiceless, who died silently, with the same idea in mind:

And I will be murdered because I am not cruel
 And because I am not a murderer.

If he had written *only these* lines, it would have sufficed for him to be among the purest hearts of humankind, who preferred to die rather than to stoop to falsehood and violence.⁹⁰

Pervomais'kyi's interest in the figure of Radnóti resulted in his implicit identification with the Hungarian poet. Pervomais'kyi translated some of Radnóti's later verses and then incorporated one of their key motifs—that of “either be murderer or be murdered”—into his own poetry and into his own predicament. He inserted it into the Holocaust framework. He argued that in the midst of destruction and mass executions, when the dreadful noise is still heard from the ravines and the smoke lifts human ashes to heaven,

A privilege the poets retain
 Rejecting any other claims:
 To stay with those who are slain,
 And not with those who coldly slay.

Miklós Radnóti's final words fit with Pervomais'kyi ethical credo, as if it were he, Leonid Pervomais'kyi, who had been taken to Heidenau camp on foot and shot. Perhaps Pervomais'kyi knew that Radnóti, like himself, was a Jew who, like Pervomais'kyi, retained his dual identity.

There were probably other reasons why Pervomais'kyi identified with Radnóti, to the extent that he turned Radnóti's intimate soliloquy into an imperative for the members of their common guild. Yet there was an even more crucial reason. Picking up a line from a murdered Hungarian-Jewish poet and making it into his own credo, Pervomais'kyi continued to develop one of his key ideas: the voice of a speechless victim is the voice of the ultimate truth; a poet must decipher, create, or articulate this equation. To understand Pervomais'kyi's appropriation and universalization of Radnóti's ethics of nonviolence, one should compare and contrast his treatment of Radnóti with that of David Samoilov, a Russian poet and translator neglected in the West who referred to the Hungarian poet in his “Fantazia o Radnoti” (Imagining Radnóti). In it, a rank-and-file soldier on the front in World War II comes across a wagon of gypsies somewhere around Oranienbaum. In the wagon is an old and decrepit man, most likely insane, who introduces himself as “the great Hungarian poet, Radnóti Miklós.”⁹¹ Samoilov points out that he only later realized that “Radnóti had died very young in a Serbian camp,” thus *ex post facto* emphasizing the madness of a senile old vagabond. Samoilov reiterates that he remembered accurately how the old man had been shouting out that he had been Radnóti Miklós, yet his surprise and

disbelief distance him significantly from the old gypsy. Paradoxically, this fictitious image of a madman who contrary to the obvious presented himself as a poet who had perished in the Holocaust to some extent parallels Pervomais'kyi's tacit solidarity with Radnóti.

Be that as it may, for Pervomais'kyi the Holocaust in general and the Babi Yar massacre in particular became the key element in redefining his identity. The Babi Yar events still challenge the imagination and present an insurmountable obstacle for anyone who tries to present artistically the bloody massacre of some 35,000 Jews during the last two days of September 1941. Unlike a number of poems by Ukrainian-Jewish literati, such as Abram Katsnel'son, dedicated to the Babi Yar, Pervomais'kyi does not depict the massacre from a safe epic distance and does not curse the Nazis. Perpetrators of the violence have no right to be heard or talked about. Instead, Pervomais'kyi composes the monologue of a father who turns to his son at the very last moment of their lives with his last lullaby:

Stay near me, my son, here, my son
I will close your eyes with my palm
You will see not your death—
Just the blood on my fingers under the sun.⁹²

Here, too, Pervomais'kyi resorts to a bitter self-identification with a victim of violence. On the edge of the grave he establishes his new family ties, thus humanizing the execution. What he does in the poem is reminiscent of the Holocaust episode in Vassili Grossman's *Life and Fate* (which Pervomais'kyi would have had no chance to read), in which Sofia Levinton, a childless woman from a mixed marriage, dies in a gas chamber with the orphaned boy David, pressing his body to hers thus preventing the boy's prolonged suffocation, and as Grossman points, "becoming a mother" at that very moment.⁹³

The discussion of the Babi Yar tragedy continues in Pervomais'kyi's prose, in which he, as before, portrays the encounter of Ukrainians and Jews under the most unusual and unpropitious circumstances: Kyiv on the eve of the Babi Yar massacre. For his "Vulytsia Mel'nykova" (Mel'nykov Street), Pervomais'kyi chose a perspective close to that of Boris Iampol'skii, who in his short story "Ten Lilliputians on One Bed" depicted the relations between ten circus Lilliputians (most probably, Russian Orthodox) and their denationalized Kievan landlord on the eve of the Babi Yar mass execution as the relations between the Jews and the non-Jews during the Holocaust.⁹⁴ Contrary to Iampol'skii, Pervomais'kyi's plot unfolds in a different, if not opposite perspective. On the eve of the war, Mosia, a young Jewish man from Korostyshiv, and Klava, a Ukrainian girl from a village in Sumy District arrive in Kyiv in search of work, find each other at a dance hall,

and fall in love. But “Mel’nykov Street” is not a trivial love story bringing together a former shtetl Jew and a Ukrainian village girl. Klava becomes pregnant and in his story Pervomais’kyi has her labor coincide with the final day of the Kievan Jews. Mosia has already been drafted into the Red Army and left town. And Klava has already seen and understood the meaning of the German orders for the Jews posted on Kyiv’s streets. Frightened by her premonitions, she vainly looks for her beloved curly-haired Mosia amid the Jewish crowd that is slowly moving through the streets toward the Babi Yar. Fear for Mosia’s life and for her own labor pain encircles and strangles her. She arrives at the home of “aunt Nastia,” her landlady, and reveals to her the nationality of the would-be child, giving her landlady sufficient pretext to inform on her and for the Nazis take her. When her birth pangs reach a climax, Klava’s fears crystallize: a Nazi soldier and three policemen in charge of passport control appear at the threshold of her rented apartment.

The appearance of the new baby, Ukrainian-Jewish by origin, proves a moment of truth. Only few hours before the event, landlady Nastia had rebuked Klava for her recklessness, distanced herself from Klava, and not without overt fear, observed Klava’s “Jewish” pregnancy. But when the Nazis are searching the apartment, she pretends Klava is her niece—who is not Jewish but of genuine Russian Orthodox creed and who has in her passport a pristine Ukrainian last name. The moment the baby boy is born and the policemen leave her premises, an ugly and grudging Nastia suddenly becomes an iconic Ukrainian Madonna with a Jewish child. By way of contrast, in Iampol’skii’s “Ten Lilliputians” (which Pervomais’kyi could well have known when writing his own story), the landlord does not know what to do with his lodgers, who are abandoned by their circus entrepreneurs in the wake of the occupation of Kyiv: he doubts they are Russian Orthodox and to be politically correct he hands them over to those in charge of preparing the Babi Yar site for mass murder. Pervomais’kyi offers the opposite decision for his finale: motivated either by a feminine solidarity or by feelings that transcend barriers of nationality and creed or by both, Nastia does not turn the boy over to the Nazis. She even pretends the baby is her own and nicknames him in an unforgettable Ukrainian diminutive whose Yiddish underpinnings are easily recognizable: “They thought we would hand him over. . . . That we would hand them our boychik, our shnotty one [*shmarkachyk*]. But we will not!”⁹⁵ Nastia’s final reply delineates the subversive message of Pervomais’kyi’s story: whatever the real number of righteous gentiles in Kyiv in 1941, the most important lesson one may draw from “Mel’nykov Street” is that marginalized individuals can and should actively oppose violence. Significantly, women are among the first to actively undertake this risky enterprise.

Pervomais'kyi also introduced the Holocaust theme into his much acclaimed novel *Dykyi med* (Wild Honey, 1963), based on historical circumstances preceding Russian preparations for the Kursk tank battle that, according to Soviet historiography, was one of the key events that dramatically altered the course of World War II. Here he brought together—under unusual circumstances—a Jewish sniper, Shreibman, and a female military photographer, Varvara Kniazhych, the representatives of two groups marginalized in popular imagination as useless soldiers. Pervomais'kyi, to be sure, was not able to challenge openly the widespread bias that “Jews fought in Tashkent,” a town far away from the front, yet he places his Jewish soldier in the forward trenches so that the context itself would prove the falsehood of received wisdom. In contrast, Pervomais'kyi portrays Varvara confronting military men who are reluctant to assist her in her mission and who treat her with a semi-concealed condescension, if not with hidden scorn.

Varvara Kniazhych arrives at the front on the eve of the battle secretly commissioned to photograph the Tiger tank (known as *Panzerkampfwagen VI*), a brand new heavy weapon that Hitler planned to use in his 1943 advance and unknown to Soviet military intelligence. The narrative rotates around this photograph, emphasizing Varvara's role as an artist who creates visual images—to some extent Pervomais'kyi's double. While on her mission, Varvara meets two frontline marksmen (nicknamed “the armor-piercers”), Guloian, an Armenian, and Shreibman, a Jew. A former shoe-factory worker in Kyiv, Shreibman brings Varvara to no man's land, provides cover for her while she is taking pictures, and pays with his life for the success of her mission.⁹⁶ For Pervomais'kyi, however, Shreibman is not just an example of a Jew in the front trenches. Pervomais'kyi uses Shreibman to direct his reader's attention to the similarity between the fate of a woman and a Jew at the front. Consider the following abridged dialogue between General Kostets'kyi and Varvara that accompanies the report about the awards given to war heroes:

“Private Shreibman has been killed, comrade General.”

Kostets'kyi replied not to her but to his own thoughts.

“The Order of the [Great] Patriotic War of the First Rank will be dispatched for preservation to Shreibman's family.”

“Shreibman's family is in the occupied territory,” she said, swallowing a new jumble of tears overpowering her.

“ . . . it will be granted to the family of the awardee after the liberation of the occupied territories.”⁹⁷

Varvara knows well what it implies for Jews to remain in the occupied territory. She realizes that no one is capable of defending the posthumous memory of the

Jewish soldier, nor does anyone need to have his memory defended. Shreibman's solitude is absolute. Even the local war journalist does not want to mention Shreibman in his article, leaving him voiceless and also nameless: Shreibman disturbs him, and "he mentioned him among other things, without naming him. 'Anyhow, Shreibman is dead and does not need any glory.'"⁹⁸

Unlike this male journalist, Varvara, a non-Jew and a woman, fully identifies with Shreibman, with his most likely murdered family, and with the victimized Jews. Varvara raises her voice for the voiceless, a task Pervomais'kyi usually took upon himself but in this novel delegates to his female protagonist. A woman in the military, scorned by some officers who grudgingly cooperate with her, Varvara seems to know better than anybody else what it was to be a Jew in the military. And although she manages to suppress the "male" opposition to her mission thanks to its secrecy, this does not imply that she turns a deaf ear to the two non-Russians who helped her to accomplish it.

A female war journalist vis-à-vis the male-dominated army, Varvara recognizes her comrade-in-distress. Shreibman saved her mission and perhaps her life, and Varvara comes to redeem Shreibman, whom the biased military doomed to oblivion and dishonor. Unexpectedly, the anticolonialist ethical principles of both Pervomais'kyi and his Varvara became apparent during the editorial travails of *The Wild Honey*, when the consistent democrat Aleksandr Tvardovskii refused to publish the Russian version of the novel in his much-acclaimed *Novyi Mir* because he could not tolerate a woman as the main character of a war novel! Did Tvardovskii realize that Varvara challenged his imperial-based principles and, consequently, the limits of the ideology of the *shestidesiatniki*, the generation of the thaw of the 1960s? Be that as it may, Pervomais'kyi's close focus on the Holocaust and Jewish themes in the 1940s to 1960s is particularly astonishing, given that the poet himself became a victim of the anti-Jewish persecutions of the late 1940s and for the first time in his life appeared among the humiliated and persecuted with whom he was trying to identify metaphorically throughout his career.

"A Rootless Cosmopolitan"

Once the Soviet army entered Kyiv, Pervomais'kyi came home only to find his prewar archive annihilated, his apartment emptied, his books burnt, and his piano appropriated by his neighbors. Although the Second Rank Stalin Prize he was awarded in 1946 for two books of poetry, *Den' narodzhennia* (A Birthday) and *Zemlia* (The Land), could neither sweeten the bitterness of loss nor compensate for his destroyed archive and library, for the time being the Soviet press

raised him to the pinnacle of glory. Pervomais'kyi had never been so highly praised and so benevolently analyzed before, and he never was again. A number of important critical essays dedicated to his poetry and prose had appeared in 1945; some of them plausibly emphasized Pervomais'kyi's "stoic romanticism," the "philosophic character" of his poetry, and his attention to the "tradition of Russian stanzas and elegies."⁹⁹ And as soon as *Literaturnaia gazeta* announced that Pervomais'kyi, together with such Russian poets as Aleksei Surkov, Pavel Antokol'skii, and Aleksandr Tvardovskii, had been awarded the highest state literary prize, the docile Soviet critics burst into applause.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the Stalin Prize rendered Pervomais'kyi invulnerable to the 1948 Moscow-orchestrated campaign against the allegedly nationalistic writings of the eminent Ukrainian writers Oleksandr Dovzhenko (1894–1956), Maksym Ryl's'kyi (1895–1964), and Iurii Ianovs'kyi (1902–54). In his venomous pronouncements, Oleksandr Korniiichuk (1905–72), then head of the Union of the Ukrainian Soviet Writers, singled out Pervomais'kyi for praise, even while mildly rebuking him for his mistaken treatment of the class struggle in his poetic novel *Molodist' Brata* (*My Brother's Youth*).¹⁰¹ But the benevolence of the authorities was short-lived. Soon Pervomais'kyi realized that a new ordeal was in store for him, perhaps more insidious and threatening than his four-year war experience.

In the late 1940s, Stalin's anti-Jewish campaign shocked Soviet Jews, long considered among the most loyal national minorities in the Soviet Union. Recent views do not treat the campaign as directed against Jews qua Jews. Scholars argue that it targeted one of many Soviet ethnic groups, which after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 suddenly morphed into another "Diaspora nationality."¹⁰² But what might reshape our understanding of political history can hardly alter cultural history, in this case the response of the victims to, and their perception of, the 1948–49 campaign—which swiftly engulfed Pervomais'kyi. Sava Holovanivs'kyi and most of the memoirists writing in the era of Shcherbyts'kyi and Brezhnev wrote vaguely of the "malevolent" situation in which Pervomais'kyi found himself or the "unjustified criticism" directed against the poet.¹⁰³

In fact, the campaign slowly mounted toward a state-sponsored pogrom. In 1948, reporting to the Kremlin a successful implementation of the party declaration with respect to the Russian journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, the Ukrainian party leadership incited Jewish writers against Ukrainians. Sava Holovanivs'kyi allowed himself to be bullied into the campaign against the crème de la crème of Ukrainian poets, whom the regime's sycophants accused of Ukrainian nationalism. In his shameful presentation at a meeting of Belorussian writers in Minsk on December 24, 1948, Holovanivs'kyi made the most vicious accusations

against Maxim Ryl's'kyi, a key figure from the "executed renaissance" who miraculously survived the purges of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the 1930s.¹⁰⁴ The next year Holovaniv's'kyi, Pervomais'kyi, and other Ukrainian-Jewish literati found themselves at the epicenter of the witch hunt against "rootless cosmopolitans," Stalin's euphemism for the Jews. At that point the Kremlin successfully enticed several influential Ukrainian writers to attack the Jewish ones.

To neutralize the Jewish cultural leadership on the eve of his antisemitic campaign, Stalin gave the order to murder Solomon Mikhoels (1890–1948), the first chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and the director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater (GOSSET). Yiddish writers in Ukraine, Pervomais'kyi's neighbors from the Rolit house, had little doubt that the death of Mikhoels was part of a well-conceived scheme. Shortly thereafter the leading officials of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, most of them outstanding Yiddish writers and poets, were arrested and accused of espionage on behalf of various foreign intelligence services. Terror settled into the Soviet Jewish neighborhood for an indefinite period. For those Jews who were not arrested, the right of passage required public repentance for one's guilt for "kowtowing to the West" and "negligence toward the socialist motherland." Unlike most of his colleagues, Pervomais'kyi refused to do so. He flatly denied the accusations against him, stotically endured the attacks, and rejected the opportunity of a "court of honor."

Although the two poets left only vague allusions to the time of persecutions, some revealing details appeared in a secret report, "The response of the Kyiv intelligentsia to the dissolution of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and arrests of Jewish nationalists" that the minister of state security (MGB) Lieutenant General Savchenko submitted to Nikita Khrushchev, then the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Among the variety of suspicious reactions of Kievan writers to the arrest of the Soviet Jewish leadership, as reported by the poet Andrii Malyshko (1912–70), was this one: "The neighbors saw through the window how the poet Pervomais'kyi, having learned about the arrests of Gofshteyn and especially Fefer, grabbed his head with his hands and stroked his head against a table in his room. Then he poured vodka from the bottle and drank entire glasses one by one: the scoundrel that he was, he was trembling for his own life."¹⁰⁵

According to Sergei Parkhomovsky, Malyshko's testimony is unreliable: Pervomais'kyi lived on the fifth floor, his neighbors could not see him through the window in any possible way, and he did not confess to Malyshko over a bottle of brandy.¹⁰⁶ Would Pervomais'kyi have drunk less if only one of them, say, Gofshteyn, had been arrested? Perhaps Malyshko's calumny and its prompt acceptance by the minister of state security demonstrate that the authorities and their

puppets in the Union of Writers perceived Pervomais'kyi as an idiosyncratic "rootless cosmopolitan." In Malyshko's eyes, he was no Ukrainian poet but still Illia Shliomovych Hurevych, a Jewish parasite on the pristine body of Ukrainian belles lettres or a malignant tumor to be cut off, as Iurii Smolych suggested at the writers' plenum, referring to the "cosmopolitans" in general. Thus in 1949 Pervomais'kyi suddenly discovered that he, the author of dozens of books of Ukrainian verse and prose narrative deeply attached to Ukraine, its land, and its culture, was nothing but a Jew, a rootless nomad bereft of any links to the land on which he sojourned. Now he was declared to have no claim over even a small piece of Ukrainian earth. This was perhaps the first time that he realized what it meant to Ukrainian writers of the 1920s to be regarded as nothing but nationalists.

The first attack against Pervomais'kyi came as a result of the servile response of the Ukrainian authorities to the Communist Party decree "On One Group of Theatrical Critics," targeting by and large those literati who were of Jewish origin.¹⁰⁷ Deploying the language of violence created in Moscow, Liubomyr Dmyterko (1911–85), one of the top bureaucrats in the Union of the Ukrainian Soviet Writers and a volunteer stool pigeon, appeared on the tribune of the Second Plenum of the Union of the Ukrainian Soviet Writers with hideous accusations against Ukrainian critics now publicly exposed as Jews and social parasites. Dmyterko's patriotic hammer fell on the heads of such rootless cosmopolitans as Gan (Kagan), Martych (Finkelstein), Zhadanov (Lifshyts), and others. For those who doubted their treacherous dual identity, Dmyterko conveniently provided their real names in brackets following their Ukrainian pen names. Although Dmyterko spared Pervomais'kyi this kind of personal disclosure, he still placed him among other rootless cosmopolitans, such as Abram Gozenpud, a Ukrainian musicologist, also accused of "kowtowing to the West."

Analyzing Pervomais'kyi's presentation "Lesia Ukrainka and Modernity" at the 1946 session of the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Dmyterko emphasized that "like Gozenpud and others, on each and every page of his report Leonid Pervomais'kyi confirms that the only criterion of the value of Lesia Ukrainka is her place in world literature, her links with the world literature. The names of Heine, George Sand, Beecher-Stowe, Desbordes-Valmore, Browning and other male and female foreigners are incessantly blinking in front of our eyes."¹⁰⁸ That is to say, demonstrating Lesia's place in the Western literary canon, Pervomais'kyi, as it were, attempted to introduce harmful concepts into Soviet literature. He allegedly took Lesia out of the context of the fraternal Slavic Soviet literatures and placed her in an alien bourgeois environment. He set universal over class, domestic, and Soviet. And he dared

point to Lesia's dependence on poetic patterns elaborated by Heinrich Heine. However scandalous all this was, Pervomais'kyi deserved no more than a sharp rebuff. Yet it turned out that Pervomais'kyi had committed a serious crime, too.

It is hardly possible to identify Dmyterko's literary secretaries who helped him to indict Pervomais'kyi for pro-Zionist sympathies, a dreadful crime in the wake of the trial against the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, some of whose members had faced similar accusations. Dmyterko did not seem to be particularly familiar with Pervomais'kyi's early writings and hence was scarcely capable of concocting on his own the elaborate and murderous literary analysis with which he appeared at the plenum. Yet what followed in his report was based on an inquisitorial reading of Pervomais'kyi's contemporary wartime poetry as compared with his earlier writings on Jewish themes.

It turned out that in his book *Soldats'ki pisni* (Soldiers' Songs) Pervomais'kyi, then a war correspondent with Soviet troops in Romania, penned a poem depicting a lyric hero "whose memory was covered with snows on his road to distant Sinaia." Dmyterko rightly suggested that Pervomais'kyi's context presupposed the small town in Romania. But the imagery of the poem, he claimed, rejected that simpleminded reading. The poem runs as follows:

What was it, a face or a voice?
 Or a sudden cry from the darkness?
 A cloudy sky like a knife or a wing
 Split, and you appeared.
 How could you come, powerless?
 It's so far, gloomy, and dark.
 Look at soldiers' graves—
 Is mine one among them?
 I am alive, here, behind the snows,
 And the winds blow out my steps,
 Three thousand miles between us,
 And maybe three thousand years.¹⁰⁹

Dmyterko compares the metaphors and imagery of this poem to Pervomais'kyi's story "Bl'oknot blukan'" (A Notebook of Wanderings), in which an old Jewish woman from Priluky leaves Ukraine for Palestine, since nothing but graves connect her to her native land. In this early Pervomais'kyi's story, which Dmyterko does not render in detail, the old lady asks Pervomais'kyi, her fellow traveler, kindly to go some time to the Priluky Jewish cemetery and ask the graves of her relatives to forgive her. "I do not care about graves. I would not do her a favor," concludes Pervomais'kyi.¹¹⁰

Having traced parallels between the "graves" in Pervomais'kyi's story and the "graves" in his wartime poem, Dmyterko moves to conclusions that resonate

as an outward verdict. Pervomais'kyi, he argues, associates the Romanian town of Sinaia with Mount Sinai, "on which, according to the legend, three thousand years ago Moses proclaimed his law." He does not continue the comparison but makes clear—with good reasons—that the unknown voice in Pervomais'kyi's poem is the voice of the old Jewish lady and that Pervomais'kyi finally comes to care about the graves. "Three thousand years" are those separating Moses, the lawgiver, and Pervomais'kyi. Moreover, according to Dmyterko, who again quotes the poem, Pervomais'kyi presents his biblical allusions in the finale of the poem as "the only thing that I had and I have." How could Pervomais'kyi, a Soviet poet, exclaims Dmyterko indignantly, allow himself to write something like that?

The resolution of the plenum firmly placed Pervomais'kyi with other Ukrainian writers and critics of Jewish origin. He was found guilty of "decadent motifs" and of "rootless" and "antipatriotic" cosmopolitanism.¹¹¹ A campaign against him in the press followed, albeit measures by the security organs did not, apparently because Mykola Rudenko (1920–2004), the renowned dissident of the 1970s and in 1949 head of the Communist Party committee within the Ukrainian Writers' Union, refused to submit a "negative" recommendation on him. This was perhaps one of the manifestations of the cunning politics of the authorities, who intended to humiliate but not destroy the poet. Pervomais'kyi found himself in a state of suspense aggravated not only by the disappearance of the Yiddish literati, some of whom were among his friends and whose fate remained unknown, but also by the response of his colleagues in the Union of Writers.

Dmyterko's report at the plenum of the Union of the Ukrainian Writers stirred insidious emotions among the participants. Some praised the public attacks against Pervomais'kyi, Martych, and Holovaniv's'kyi and scolded Ryl's'kyi and Bazhan for their too moderate criticism of those "rootless cosmopolitans." According to information obtained by the MGB, even the most moderate writers admitted after the plenum that they had participated in a frank and useful discussion. Pervomais'kyi immediately grasped the origins of the campaign. The head of the state security apparatus noted that after the plenum the poet was reported to have made it clear that the critique against him was state orchestrated: "Today—myself and Holovasniv's'kyi, tomorrow—others. Things are going smoothly, they are well oiled."¹¹²

What his accusers could not accomplish in a single attack they managed to achieve in a protracted siege. Persecutions against Pervomais'kyi lasted for years, taking the form of articles in the press, accusations at the meetings of the Union

of Writers, anonymous letters, and a controlled wave of state-sponsored popular indignation that exposed his purportedly subversive activities. Pervomais'kyi was depressed and switched to Yiddish when talking to his Jewish interlocutors. L. Drob'iazko recalled how he once met with Bela Kipnis, the wife of the Yiddish writer Itsik Kipnis, near the Rolit building. Bela Kipnis remarked: "Pervomais'kyi is having a hard time. He began talking to me today in Yiddish." The memoirist explained, "When Pervomais'kyi was going through another round of complications with the authorities, he deliberately switched to Yiddish in daily life."¹¹³

Perhaps around that time Volodymyr Sosiura, a friend from his youth and a neighbor, penned an epigram poem in which Pervomais'kyi appeared sad and unwelcoming, as if the pain of "the tragedy of the Jewish people" had been painted on his face.¹¹⁴ Against all odds, Pervomais'kyi continued to pen his satirical epigrams, first and foremost against Dmyterko and his clique, but there were moments when epigrams failed to sustain his ability to resist the violence.¹¹⁵

A couple of months after Stalin's death, Pervomais'kyi made sure that his attitude to the atrocities of the regime and his empathy for the victims was put in black and white. With the country still in turmoil after Stalin's death, the thaw barely begun, and paralyzing fear still the rule, one finds Pervomais'kyi's 1953 poetic experiment suicidal. At the time nobody dared speak against Stalin or doubt his immortal decisions. Against this backdrop, Pervomais'kyi seems to have been one of the very few writers in the Soviet Union publicly dismissing Stalin's authority and celebrating the rehabilitation of the ten Kremlin doctors. To be sure, Pervomais'kyi resorted to Aesopian language and to an unusual genre—children's poetry—yet his words acquired far-reaching, if not rebellious overtones.

In the November 1953 issue of *Literaturna hazeta*, Pervomais'kyi published a couple of children's poems, one of which had the following lines: "What should I do to remain healthy? I must always listen to what the doctors say!"¹¹⁶ Nine months after the "doctors' plot" and Stalin's sudden death, this was a risky statement. If one agrees with this reading of the poem as allegory, one must admit that it implied, among other things, that Stalin died because he did not listen to his doctors, and that doctors deserve nothing but admiration and gratitude. Significantly, Pervomais'kyi singled the doctors out not as Jews but rather as victims of persecution and torture: because the victimized had a chance to familiarize themselves with the regime better than anybody else, they embody the utmost truth about the regime and one should hearken to them particularly, since they

know the political diagnosis. This reading does not seem too improbable in view of Pervomais'kyi's later nonviolent counterattacks against his staunch enemies.

The 1956 Kyiv "Disputation"

It was Pervomais'kyi's dual Ukrainian–Jewish identity that again came under fire in 1956, when Mykola Sheremet (1906–86), a prolific author of some fifty books of pseudo-patriotic Soviet verse bereft of literary value and a representative of dogmatic literary criticism, publicly attacked Pervomais'kyi. The animosity between Pervomais'kyi and Sheremet went back to the times of the Blakytnyi House in Kharkiv, when Sheremet began writing the cheerful party-inspired and ideologically pristine poetry that even his close friends considered graphomania.¹¹⁷ Back then, making fun of Sheremet, Pervomais'kyi crafted a popular aphorism built on the absolute rhyme, unfortunately not conveyable in English translation: "Sheremet—poet?" (Is Sheremet a poet?). It was immediately picked up: those ready to make fun of Sheremet answered the question: "No poet—Sheremet!" (Sheremet isn't a poet!). In addition, in his satirical poem "Smert' liryky" (The Death of Lyrics), published on the front page of the influential *Literaturna hazeta*, Pervomais'kyi mocked Sheremet, among other Ukrainian poets, gathered at the deathbed of the sick Lyric who eventually passed away, the poets' presence and support notwithstanding.¹¹⁸

Sheremet did not hesitate to reply, appearing with his retort "Conversation with Sel'vins'kyi: A Reply to Pervomais'kyi" in the next issue of *Literaturna hazeta*. Instead of dueling Pervomais'kyi face-to-face, he preferred to hide behind the back of the Russian poet Il'ia Sel'vinskii (1899–1968), who, Sheremet argued in an imaginary conversation with the Russian poet, came to Ukraine to meet with Pervomais'kyi but instead came across Sheremet. The latter opened his eyes to Pervomais'kyi's tasteless literary imitations so that by the end of the conversation Sel'vinskii decided to sue Pervomais'kyi for "plagiarism" and "pig-gish" behavior.¹¹⁹ These two clashes did not exhaust the conflict between Pervomais'kyi and Sheremet: there is also some evidence that even in the 1930s Sheremet, the future pillar of socialist realism, intended to cleanse Ukrainian literature of the Jews.¹²⁰

In the 1960s, Sheremet viciously attacked the young generation of literati, once again confirming his reputation as an ossified Stalinist, to borrow Ivan Svitlychnyi's characterization. Now Sheremet cast his charges against Pervomais'kyi in the mold of the antisemitic rhetoric of the late Stalin era. Although the reason for his attack is not known, Pervomais'kyi's rebuff helps to reconstruct the context. Pervomais'kyi, Sheremet argued, was not a genuine Ukrainian. He could

not be a good Ukrainian patriot. Ukrainian was not his native language. Every word he put on paper, he took from the dictionary. He was only a guest in “our Ukraine” and had to be repeatedly reminded that he “ate our Ukrainian bread.” Though Sheremet avoided explicitly antisemitic statements, the thrust of his allegation was transparent: Pervomais’kyi was an alien, a “rootless cosmopolitan” whose words and rhymes sounded Ukrainian but were bereft of Ukrainian substance; he had nothing in common with Ukraine, the Ukrainian people, or Ukrainian literature. He was an accomplished Jewish parasite whom genuine Ukrainians had mistakenly allowed to enjoy the bounty of Ukrainian nature and culture. Pervomais’kyi’s response was immediate. His eighteen-page poem “Khib pana Sheremeta” (Mister Sheremet’s Bread), appearing the same year in two copies only, was considered so explicit that it was never made public in any format while Pervomais’kyi was alive and did not appear in print during the Gorbachev era or even during the first fourteen years of Ukrainian independence.¹²¹

To answer Sheremet, Pervomais’kyi resorted to Heinrich Heine’s satirical metaphors and the alternating four- and three-syllable iambic stanza of his *Germany: A Winter Tale*.¹²² Pervomais’kyi also used Heine’s ironic perception of his Jewishness as a stylistic device. In addition, he drew heavily on Heine’s satirical poetic dialogues, such as the one between Rabbi Judah and Friar Jose, a Jewish rabbi and a Catholic preacher from medieval Barcelona, elaborated in Heine’s “Disputation.”¹²³ “Mister Sheremet’s Bread” was informed by an imaginary dialogue between Sheremet and Pervomais’kyi, an antisemite and a Jew, both of whom claimed their genuine right to a place in Ukrainian literature. Pervomais’kyi put aside the Aesopian allusions and called a spade a spade. His imaginary Sheremet pronounced his verdict: Pervomais’kyi had to be executed, his verse prohibited, and his museum portrait thrown into the water closet, for he had committed a capital crime: he had insolently eaten “Mister Sheremet’s bread:”

The media should have known it
 But nobody has read
 That all my life I have eaten the bread
 Of Mr. Sheremet.

He sent his eloquent request
 Long ago, I pray,
 For he has done his very best
 Always to seize a day.

A guest appeared, was the claim,
 The poet’s mask he had

And ate the bread in the Ukraine,
Of Mr. Sheremet.

A new decree we need, he said,
New one, do not forget,
To execute him for the bread
Of Mr. Sheremet.¹²⁴

Pervomais'kyi did not hesitate to emphasize Sheremet's antisemitic stance. He compared Sheremet to a town fool who had a bell hung around his neck to warn town dwellers of his approach. The imaginary Sheremet replied:

Why does he talk of "fool" and "bell"?
Where's my poetic mead?
Isn't it perhaps because he is—
Perhaps—well, you name it!

Pervomais'kyi bracketed his comment in the next stanza, euphemistically pointing to Sheremet's vociferous yet diplomatically "neutralized" antisemitism.

Quite unexpectedly, I have managed to convey the "hidden rhyme" of Sheremet's attack in the last line, which might read as "Perhaps—well you name it!" or as "Perhaps—he is a Yid!" Yet Pervomais'kyi helps the reader reconstruct Sheremet's sleazy rhetoric:

(This horrible, this nasty word
Is on his tongue tip.
Yet he, a diplomat of sort,
Commits a hidden nip.)

Pervomais'kyi's self-vindication was rooted in the image of "the bread of the fatherland" and his theory of homeland. Motherland, argued Pervomais'kyi, is the land on which one toiled, that was soaked with one's sweat, that accepted one's dead parents, and whose fate one shared. His parents, the poet tells, were born in Ukraine, their sweat permeated the Ukrainian fields, yet they lived from hand to mouth and saw on their table nothing but bread and water. Their land—the Ukraine—and their bread, claims Pervomais'kyi, is what nurtured him. It was *his* bread. He and his parents toiled the Ukrainian land and became Ukrainian peasants, the salt of the Ukrainian land. Pervomais'kyi metaphorically carried the bread of his parents in his soldier's backpack through the four years of World War II. Moving from historical fact to ethical truth, Pervomais'kyi argued that while he was defending his victimized motherland, Sheremet (like Pervomais'kyi, a military correspondent on the front) was in the camp of Nazi invaders: not because he really was there, but because he always identified with the prosecution, the accusers, and the repressive regime. The war was the time when "your, Sheremet's, colleagues came from hell to fight us." Pervomais'kyi, a de-

fender of Ukraine and her legitimate son, earns his Ukrainian bread. Therefore, “don’t you, Sheremet, dare touch my bread!”¹²⁵

Having explicitly associated Sheremet with the Nazis and implicitly with Stalin, Pervomais’kyi turned to another issue raised by his opponent, namely, Pervomais’kyi’s “spurious” Ukrainian language and his “unpatriotic” dual (Ukrainian–Jewish) identity. Paradoxically, Pervomais’kyi did not claim he was an authentic “Ukrainian nightingale.” He frankly acknowledged that he was just a rook, a metaphor one might want to read as “a Yiddish-speaking Jew” or simply an “alien.” But, continues the poet, he “was born a rook in a nightingale’s family.” He thanked God for this wonderful opportunity, for he managed to learn the “nightingale’s language” and to sing the “nightingale’s song” without really transforming his rook’s self. When he sang his song, argued Pervomais’kyi amusingly, even the roses, known for their sensitivity, did not realize that this was just a rook signing a nightingale’s song. Even more important, his song became so popular among nightingales that the rooks, in a long winter night, began translating it to the rooks’ language.¹²⁶

Whatever the immediate empirical reality behind these allegories, it is evident that Pervomais’kyi did not pretend to be “purely a Ukrainian poet,” did not conceal his dual identity, and did not perceive his rook–nightingale symbiosis as detrimental to his poetic reputation. Here Pervomais’kyi offered quite an unusual theory of human identity, language, and nationality. Neither birth nor one’s parents’ culture defined anything. Pervomais’kyi argued that “according to modern science” people inherited the ability to speak, but not a particular language. One could use one’s speaking ability to learn any language—for example, Ukrainian. Therefore, he and Sheremet were in the same boat: neither of them inherited Ukrainian but both *learned* it.¹²⁷ The only way to assess the efficiency of their learning, according to Pervomais’kyi, was to compare his own Ukrainian poetry with Sheremet’s favorite genre, denunciation. Not without well-grounded ambition, Pervomais’kyi seems to claim that a Jew might become not only a Ukrainian poet; a Jew can also become the first among Ukrainian poets without compromising his ancestry. And those who deny this right (and ability) to a Jew should be considered Nazis.

Pervomais’kyi’s poem “The Bread of Mister Sheremet” had no chance of being published either in the 1950s or in the 1960s: the text was too explosive. Yet Pervomais’kyi continued to write epigrams mocking his persecutors, for although personal attacks against him receded, they did not vanish. It would be a stretch to call his genre, including “The Bread of Mr. Sheremet,” a form of non-violent protest, for some of his epigrams were both hilarious and murderous.

In 1962, antisemitic rhetoric was again the talk of the town and again some of

the notorious participants of the antic cosmopolitan campaign of 1949 came to the fore. To find out whether the state planned another anti-Jewish attack, Sava Holovaniv's'kyi wrote to Il'ia Ehrenburg: "I am sending you the excerpt from the newspaper *Literaturna Ukraina* for December 21, 1962. Here they published an interview with A. Malyshko, which, I think, might interest you. This scoundrel [*prokhvost*] celebrates the beginning of a new battle against 'cosmopolitanism,' which has for him a special meaning, and he confirms that they had spoken particularly sharply about this issue during the recent meeting [perhaps at the Communist Party Central Committee Politburo—YPS]. This interview made me anxious, it is a frightening symptom and manifestation of the Kiev echo of what is said in Moscow."¹²⁸ There is little doubt that Pervomais'kyi was aware of this new wave of antisemitism.¹²⁹ Yet one finds almost no reflection in Pervomais'kyi's writings of the new political environment in the country.

In the 1960s, deprived of his right to appear publicly and to publish his poetry in periodicals with large circulations, he secluded himself at his dacha in Irpen, a village near Kyiv. Self-seclusion granted Pervomais'kyi a respite from his colleagues and neighbors, who otherwise would have been looking for an excuse not to greet him in the streets or on the stairs of the Rolit. He turned into a hermit, calling himself "a provincial writer in Irpen exile."¹³⁰ The close friends who paid him visits on Sundays, such as the famous actress Natalia Uzhvii, recalled his darkened face. He spent more time in Irpen than in the capital.

The authorities seemed to have kept Pervomais'kyi in limbo: his writings were not outlawed and not endorsed. His fiftieth jubilee was ignored by the Union of Writers. None of the official festivities usually held on such occasions were arranged, and at the last moment the authorities cancelled Pervomais'kyi's concert at Kyiv Shevchenko University. His friends managed to publish a number of essays in the Ukrainian press and Pervomais'kyi diligently compiled them in a folder, but even these sympathetic essays, perhaps due to careful censorship, presented him as an issue of the past.¹³¹ Pervomais'kyi turned to art criticism and published a number of essays on Ukrainian artists, manifesting his drift toward a theory of visual signs, if not a semiotics of creative writing.¹³² Secluded in his dacha, Pervomais'kyi took care of his sick wife and his orchard. Very few could expect his escape into oblivion would become the most fruitful period of his life.

Heinrich Heine Reinvented

A German classic, a purported atheist, a baptized and assimilated Jew, and an allegedly proto-Marxist well integrated into Soviet culture, Heinrich Heine

moved from the periphery to the fulcrum of Pervomais'kyi's literary predilections.¹³³ For Pervomais'kyi, he became a quintessential Jewish poet engaged with gentile culture. Pervomais'kyi was well aware of the differences between the two of them. Heine was baptized and Pervomais'kyi was not. Heine sought entrée into the high culture of what was considered at that time the most civilized nation in Europe, whereas Pervomais'kyi chose integration into Ukrainian culture, positioned low even in the East European context. Heine was ironic, elusive, and ambiguous about his Jewishness; Pervomais'kyi publicly and privately affirmed his.

Yet the advantages of self-identification with the German-Jewish poet outweighed for Pervomais'kyi the disparities between them. Pervomais'kyi turned to Heine's irony, misunderstood but beatified by Soviet literary officialdom, furnishing himself with an excellent opportunity to remain within the ideological canon while elaborating themes and motifs bordering on the forbidden. Pervomais'kyi viewed Heine's dual identity as similar to his own. He focused on Heine's posthumous fate when under the Third Reich the German poet was outlawed for being Jewish. And he pondered the destiny of Heine's books, which had been destroyed for their subversive democratic content. If not during his life span, then at least in his afterlife Heine was victimized and silenced and hence deserved Pervomais'kyi's sympathy as a victim of violence, not solely as a dual-identity Jew. Among other things, in the 1950s Pervomais'kyi returned to Heine to overcome the spell that Heine had cast on Pervomais'kyi's self-perception.

Perhaps as early as 1927 or 1928, Pervomais'kyi recognized Heine as a major reference. Scarcely nineteen years old, Pervomais'kyi produced a literary self-portrait in which Heine appeared as a parodic version of the Stone Guest or the Bronze Horseman—rusty, clumsy, and vengeful, pursuing and trying to strangle his inept imitators, the alleged interloper and impostor Pervomais'kyi among them, who were robbing Heine of his posthumous glory. From this ironic self-assessment, Pervomais'kyi emerged as Heine's foremost progeny, who deserved a symbolic blessing rather than the capital punishment that the imaginary Heine had in store for him. The following episode, part of his *Romantychni зустріchi* (Romantic Encounters) essay, starts with Pervomais'kyi walking in the street suddenly finding someone's ironclad fingers not very romantically squeezing his throat:

I realized immediately whom I was dealing with.

"Citizen Heine!"—I yelled, chocking. "And to Ivan Senchenko, is it allowed? He has penned his entire 'Travel to Chervonohrad' imitating your 'A Travel to Garz.' Why don't you tell him anything? Perhaps you have not read the *Vaplite* journal? I can share with you, I have a free copy."

The gloomy Heine took his iron hand off my throat.

“And Senchenko, too?”—he murmured. “My God, this is what I am living through! And you, young man, what has brought you to my pathway?”

“I have picked up the weapon that was left behind rusty on a literary path. You must forgive me, citizen Heine!”

Heinrich stood silently wrapping himself into his wide overcoat.

“Why are you silent?” I dared go on. “I don’t think you have forgotten your own words.”

He shuddered.

“Which ones?”

Hardly containing my anxiety I quoted:

The dead won’t rise from the dead
And only the living are alive.

He stretched his hand to me and in a moment disappeared as inadvertently as he emerged.¹³⁴

Turning Heine’s line onto its author, Pervomais’kyi implied that the Ukrainian-Jewish poet was alive and kicking, unlike his illustrious German-Jewish predecessor. And although Pervomais’kyi’s tone was anything but diffident, there was hardly anything more serious in Pervomais’kyi’s journalism than this self-parody: Pervomais’kyi appears as a victimized, almost strangled poet who manages to speak up in his own defense. Above all, this episode indicated that Pervomais’kyi followed Heine’s path, used Heine’s arms, and fought Heine’s battles. Even more astonishingly was that Heine appeared as serious, rigid, and infuriated, whereas Pervomais’kyi himself was the embodiment of Heine-esque romantic irony. The fame of Heine, the perfect example of a Jew acculturated into a gentile culture and one of the most famous nineteenth-century representatives of that culture, tickled Pervomais’kyi’s ambitions and perhaps informed his literary endeavors. It was particularly important that Heine personally endorsed his literary career, and, for a change, Pervomais’kyi’s Ukrainian fellow countryman from Chervonohrad, too. Pervomais’kyi and Senchenko, a Jew and a Ukrainian, became certified Heine offspring. Others, warned Pervomais’kyi, should not even get close to the legacy of the German master.

Pervomais’kyi had always been an avid reader of Heine. In 1930, during his voyage on the Black Sea to Istanbul, he recorded: “I have reread already for the tenth time ‘The Travel Pictures’ of the extraordinary Heine, ‘The Vagabonds’ of Knut Gamsun, and the American poets translated by I. Iu. Kulyk.”¹³⁵ Motifs from Heine were inherently present in Pervomais’kyi’s earliest prose, which at first glance appeared ideologically charged, imbued with Komsomol hubris, and quite far from Heine’s romantic irony. That Pervomais’kyi’s short stories, plays,

and poems about the Communist League teenagers were quite often parodies of the officially endorsed and solemn proletarian realism was overlooked by both contemporary and modern critics. Heine-esque irony was among Pervomais'kyi's favorite stylistic devices. Its consistent application made Pervomais'kyi different from a good many of his Russian and Ukrainian colleagues. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was his Heine-esque irony that helped him successfully transform the Kiplingesque imagery so popular in the Soviet literature of the 1930s and 1940s.

In the 1950s, Heine became not only the point of departure for Pervomais'kyi as poet but also one of his key themes as a translator, editor, literary critic, and publisher.¹³⁶ Pervomais'kyi obstinately fought the red tape of Soviet literary bureaucracy for the publication of a four-volume collection of Ukrainian translations from Heine and argued for new, even better translations to be commissioned. He looked for and found the best literary scholars to be collaborators on the project dedicated to the 175th anniversary of Heine's birth.¹³⁷ He painstakingly edited the translations for this collection.¹³⁸ In the midst of this overwhelming work, he again resorted to Heine's romantic irony to assess his own experience as a Ukrainian poet. His "Koly b ia narodysia v Arhentyni" (If I Had Been Born in Argentina) is perhaps one of Pervomais'kyi's best self-portraits and his most Heine-esque verse. Indeed, he asked himself, what would have happened had he be born in distant Argentina? Would he have depicted the Teuco and Parana rivers, as today he depicted Ukrainian rivers? What would his dreams have been about? Would he have recollected in his old age the icy summits of the Cordilleras? Then he turned to the question of the Ukrainian language, inseparable from his identity:

How would I delve into the depth
Of the syllabic melodies, alien to me,
And how would I survive there without my language?
No, how would the language survive here without me?¹³⁹

One must keep in mind that this switch of perspective is characteristic of those Heine poems that toy with the idea of his dual German-Jewish self-awareness. Here, however, unable for reasons of self-censorship to look at things Ukrainian from the Jewish viewpoint, Pervomais'kyi places himself on the Argentine soil. He asks whether he is really inseparable from the Ukrainian language and the Ukrainian language from his own self. Unfortunately, once Pervomais'kyi's volatile irony framed by a question mark is translated into scholarly prose, it loses both its charm and its delicate reference to Heine.

For Soviet officialdom, Heine was an exemplary revolutionary romantic

whose antibourgeois satire prefigured the Marxist critique of capitalism, but for Pervomais'kyi, Heine came to signify the metaphor of the poet threatened by persecution, death, annihilation, and oblivion. Pervomais'kyi's Heine was a deadly sick poet who demonstrated an astonishing capacity to work and create. Pervomais'kyi's Heine was no *bon vivant* German aristocrat residing in France and living on a pension from his wealthy Jewish uncle. Rather, Pervomais'kyi identified with the sick poet doomed to what the dying Heine dubbed his own "mattress grave" and who against all odds continued to write, composing such masterpieces as *Romancero* (1851).

Pervomais'kyi was not interested in a victorious Heine: on the contrary, he needed Heine the martyr, fighting for his physical survival and cleaving to what Pervomais'kyi considered redemptive writing. Heine appeared in Pervomais'kyi's poetry as a field soldier: mortally wounded and very well aware of his sad posthumous fate, he did not abandon the battlefield. Simultaneously, Pervomais'kyi's Heine came to symbolize the tragic fate of the Jewish people and, what is particularly remarkable, of Heine's books. The following lines of his poem "Nepodolanyi" (Unassailable, 1973 or 1974), addressing the inseparably interwoven fate of Heine and his books, point to such a reading:

They will burn and destroy them—up to the last page,
They will scorch their tears, kill their laughter,
But he will survive the Treblinka chimneys
And the stakes of books in the Berlin desert.¹⁴⁰

The poem juxtaposes three different metaphors, underscoring their affinity: the fate of the Jewish people, murdered in Treblinka; the fate of Heine and of his irony ("laughter"), hated and outlawed in Nazi Germany; and the destiny of Heine's books, which his grateful readers of yesteryear were now throwing into the street fires in sacred racial disgust. Heine, poetry, books, and the Jewish people are victimized, murdered, destroyed, and cast to oblivion—yet they are unassailable merely because Pervomais'ky's poetic verdict cannot be appealed. Identifying with the persecuted, silenced, and murdered—Jews and poets and books—Pervomais'kyi turns into their voice, proving their immortality. If there is a final hope, Pervomais'kyi seems to say, it lies in the poet's ability to identify with the victims and make their voices heard. One is advised to think that his work on the edition of Heine in the last years of his own life (when he was also dreadfully sick) should be interpreted in the same context.

Rethinking Heine helped Pervomais'kyi entirely revisit Heine's romantic irony. Whereas Heine designed his ironic situations by unexpectedly introducing distances between his alter ego and his characters, Pervomais'kyi eliminated

them. Heine construed his romantic universe by making it spin around the poet's alter ego, and Pervomais'kyi crafted the other-centered self-abnegated universe. Heine rarely let his characters escape his sharp comments; Pervomais'kyi let his characters speak for themselves. Pervomais'kyi certainly knew Heine's adage ("God will forgive me. That is his job"), which implied among many other things Heine's concern about personal redemption. But for Pervomais'kyi the key issue was not how God feels about him but rather how he, the poet, feels about those striving for redemption or memorialization. Giving this issue a personal spin, Pervomais'kyi penned a verse on a Jewish lad standing on the edge of the ravine at the moment of execution and crying out to the poet. Again, as in many other cases, the nearby cemetery, the ravine, the slope seem to refer to the Babi Yar massacre, which never stopped challenging Pervomais'kyi's poetic imagination:

I stood in the crowd at the cemetery
Nude, among grave mounds and gravestones
Recollecting lofty strivings,
The world without pain and without blood.

And when I fall down, dead, from the slope,
Into the dreadful clay of bloody bodies
I believed that against all odds
You will come to revive me from the dead.¹⁴¹

The poem employs the paradigmatic Heine-esque duplication of the poet's alter ego, yet it turns Heine-esque irony upside down. The "you" is simultaneously the reader, the listener, and the poet. And the "I" is both the victim and the poet. Although Pervomais'kyi seems to identify with both "you" and "I," he is "you," the distanced reader, listener, or author of the Ukrainian verse, while he is "I" as the massacred Babi Yar Jewish victim. Pervomais'kyi is no egocentric poet satirizing or bemoaning his life circumstances or his despotic environment: he identifies both with the poet's awareness of his unpaid debt before his people and with his people treating the poet with bitterness and hope. Rather than discovering himself through the Other, Pervomais'kyi discovered the Other as the extension of himself.

Reincarnations of the Bookbindery Shop

Pervomais'kyi's emerged from what can be seen as his Irpen internal exile, not only with a four-volume collection of Heine in Ukrainian, but also with three of his own poetry collections, *Uroky poezii* (The Lessons of Poetry, 1968), *Drevo*

piznannia (The Tree of Knowledge, 1971), and *Vchora i zavtra* (Yesterday and Tomorrow, 1974, posthumous). Here his new themes gained momentum. Pervomais'kyi's late poetry struck his contemporaries like a thunderbolt: it was by far the best poetry he ever wrote, it proved Pervomais'kyi's remarkable ability to improve qualitatively, and it seemed that his socialist romanticism and empiricism had unexpectedly turned into a poetically articulated study of semiotics, that is, of the function of verbal and visual signs.

The late Pervomais'kyi is a poet concerned with the phenomenology of poetry. The parameters and attributes of poetry became objects of his intense poetic reflection. Pervomais'kyi turned poetic signs, symbols, and metaphors of art and literature into living beings whose physical, if not biological, substance subjected them to the rules of nature and enabled them to live and die. "Life" came to signify for the poet the "text," draft, original, or simply unwritten. Pervomais'kyi had walked a long way from his understanding of life as "the collective farm in Kherson Province" to his perception of "life" as "a noninvented novel" or even as a "draft" that cannot be rewritten.¹⁴² The live "letters" and the trustworthy "paper" of his youth—those "cultural" metaphors from his book-binding shop blotted out from the reprints of his works—resurfaced, now becoming key metaphors in Pervomais'kyi's poetic arsenal.

His new worldview changed his imagery. The attributes of the book, which in the 1920s Pervomais'kyi had depicted from the viewpoint of the binder, came to be replaced with the attributes of creative writing perceived by the poet and articulated by means of poetry. Poetic words reemerged as living beings and the dry cracks of the typewriter turned into their blood pulse. Pervomais'kyi argued, "In words there is blood. They live, the words." Likewise, rhyme, line, rhythm, and letters turned into Pervomais'kyi's new personages. "The poem starts not with a sound, / Although it must sound." "The soul of poetry is not its rhyme. / Its invisible substance burns between the lines." In his "Mezha ie v kozhnomu staranni" (There Is a Barrier in Every Endeavor, 1971), Pervomais'kyi spelled out his attempt to overcome the barrier between empirical reality and poetry, asking a Pasternakian question that epitomized his reflection on the phenomenon of poetry: "What if creativity is only a desire to cross a barrier?"¹⁴³

Pervomais'kyi replaced traditional imagery with the metaphors of creativity even in such a canonic genre as the fairy tale. He did not tell a story about a poor girl and a prince looking for her; rather, he told a tale about a tale that ran away from the poet and went wandering through the fields and forests. The poet's search for his beloved tale, a runaway piece of art, became a piece of art on its own.¹⁴⁴ Life acquired sense as soon as it was capable of becoming poetry. Poetry

transcended life and turned into life's sole teleological purpose. At the same time, nature entered the poetic realm as an immanent cultural experience. Poetry tended not only to comprehend the world of nature but also to validate it aesthetically. Life provided poetry with imagery, and poetry furnished life with meaning. What was a poet's grief, says Pervomais'kyi sadly observing early snows, "will become a verse, a poem." Since poetry became coterminous with life, there could be no bad but only dead poetry. The poem "Mertva knyha" (A Dead Book, 1971), for instance, ironically equated reading such poetry with an imagined burial of what was once a decent poet.¹⁴⁵

Yet Pervomais'kyi's new aesthetics had very little to do with hermetic self-seclusion, reductionism, postsymbolism, or escapism. Words put on paper were not only redeeming or immortalizing; they not only provided escape, allowing the poet to get away from empirical reality and hide himself in the literary replica of his Irpen-based orchard. Poetic words were dangerous, explosive, and murderous. A poet looking for words risked his life. Composing poetry could be life threatening and Pervomais'kyi resorted to war metaphors to convey this understanding. Matching the poetic- and philosophically-minded soldier pondering a mortar shell in his "The Sapper and Death," there appeared a poet in the poem "As Over a Minefield" (1973 or 1974), in which the poet's job is found to be as dangerous as that of the sapper:

As if over a minefield
You walk at night on the edge of a line
And in the middle of the word—an acute pain,
And the hand becomes paralyzed and stops.
Inspired by a premonition and pain
And by your faith in the healing power of words
You are running the line, as if crossing a minefield
So that its fire would speedily consume you.¹⁴⁶

Pervomais'kyi turned to metaphors of art and culture because he viewed culture and art as doomed, shuffled, murdered, and posthumously neglected or mistreated. Because his beautiful Ukrainian landscape lyrics were attacked for their lack of an ideological framework, the landscape poetry, as well as Ukrainian nature, joined the ranks of the victims that require empathy and mercy. His own experience, as well as the experience of his closest friends and colleagues, only too well supported his new worldview. If the regime mistreated him, then in full accordance with his poetic principles and his bitter irony, he, Leonid Pervomais'kyi, the victimized Jew and much-criticized Ukrainian poet, deserved compassion. He seemed to be no better than his characters, such as Heine: like anybody else he was

prone to suffering, dreadful sickness, and death. Pervomais'kyi, a poet on the eve of physical extinction, emerged as his own new alter ego, with his idiosyncratic premonitions of senile ineptness, death, and oblivion.

Pervomais'kyi poignantly assumed that if the poet is mortal, then mortal is his ability poetically to convey thoughts and feelings. Pervomais'kyi confessed his vanishing ability to capture verbal signs:

If only the words would obey me
As the grass obeys the wind. . . .¹⁴⁷

As he grew old and his poetic capacities betrayed him, he realized that the Faustian desire to still the fluidity of empirical reality by verbal means was no longer feasible. Bitterness overwhelmed him: "Come back, my doves, oh if only I could retain you, if you could remain with me here, on paper!"¹⁴⁸

Pervomais'kyi's reflections on *ars poetica*, anything but "hermetic," reveal his new attitude toward poetic sign and poetic writing. Pervomais'kyi reimagines poetry as born from pain, grief, and distress. Human suffering becomes the main prerequisite for the emerging poetical discourse. Phonetics, rhythm, prosody are vital but secondary. As if replicating Mandelshtam's "Silentium" ("It has not been born yet. It is music and a word"), Pervomais'kyi views silence as an intrinsic element of poetry. Yet while Mandelshtam's silence is the dumbness of the elements, the primordial myth, a nonverbal music, and the utmost beauty, for Pervomais'kyi it is the result of oppression, victimization, and violence. Mandelshtam worships silence, aesthetically transforming it into the ultimate goal of verbal art. He seeks silence as "the crystal clear note which is inherently pristine." Pervomais'kyi treats silence as dumbness; it envelops grief and conceals traces of violence; it is an imposed characteristic that has no reason to be worshipped.

Pervomais'kyi links silence to the birth pangs of art and perceives poetic art as an attempt to overcome silence. Poetry is a product of, and a remedy against, silence. As such, poetry is not necessarily liberation, although it does relieve pain. Poetry that is not born from silence and distress does not deserve our trust. The veracity of poetry—and its validity—is measured by the magnitude of personal suffering, not by the nexus of sounds:

A poem starts not with a sound,
Although it must sound.
A poem starts with your silence,
When you can no more keep silent.

It starts not with a capital letter,
But with an enormous grief.
Then one can believe in it,
And only then you believe it.¹⁴⁹

Pervomais'kyi seems to argue that poetry is genuine when it originates from a surmounted grief, an overcome pain, or a shared suffering. Poetry (a feminine word in Ukrainian) herself is a victimized woman learning to speak and to express herself. As soon as it is one's intent, desire, or striving, something sought for but not yet achieved, it is coterminous with truth and therefore, trustworthy.

Pervomais'kyi became an intellectual poet, a poet-philosopher, and a poetic thinker, but not a mentor. The poet for him was never a guru; he was only a disciple, constantly learning and doubting, and always on the move. The poet, therefore, merited his lofty name as long as he was seeking new forms and meanings. Poetry became a strict teacher who did not forgive the poet's errors just as the *métier* of the sapper did not forgive his mistakes. In a letter to Leonid Vysheslavs'kyi, Pervomais'kyi noticed that his "poetic lessons" entailed only what he himself learned from poetry, not what he wanted to teach others.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, from one of his last verses, he himself emerges as an obedient and faithful disciple of poetry, who was continuously learning from it, as if from life:

For drinking and eating I've lost the knack.
 As if I never lived I am way off track.
 A failure, or maybe my time's overdue.
 My lines
 Are like those
 Kids at school
 Write askew.
 Yes, I've lost the knack—but I will learn once more. . . .¹⁵¹

Learning to live once again, whatever the person's age and status, formed what Pervomais'kyi called "the lessons of poetry." His was not only the readiness to self-improve but also an outcry for compassion: it seemed that a decrepit poet needed a lined notebook to begin learning how to write cursive script! It was no less ironic that Pervomais'kyi complained of the slippery reality and vanishing poetic capacity articulating his concepts in classic verse.

Pervomais'kyi inhabited his poetry with the figures of the victimized literati of various epochs and nations in their distress, on the brink of despair, on their deathbed, in prison, or facing execution. He introduced images of the agonized François Villon, the poverty-stricken Du Fu, the deceased Mikhail Svetlov, and the excommunicated Spinoza. One of these characters was Cervantes, not exactly in his capacity as the author of the famous novel. Pervomais'kyi needed a historical Cervantes, not a literary one. Cervantes appeared in Pervomais'kyi's poem as Cervantes the soldier, who, after the battle of Lepanto, was imprisoned by pirates and kept in Algerian captivity for five years (1575–80). There, in Algeria's *bagnos* (prison-houses), the historical Cervantes became the aide to other

soldiers and slaves, predominantly illiterate, who needed a scribe capable of writing letters to those they hoped could ransom them.

Pervomais'kyi portrayed Cervantes the prisoner, a suffering and abandoned creature, also waiting for somebody who could raise his voice in his favor and put an end to his captivity. In his poem "Servantes v Alzhyri" (Cervantes in Algeria, 1968), Pervomais'kyi emphasizes the redeeming role of creative writing—capable of liberating the serfs, emancipating the oppressed, and articulating the sufferings of the voiceless. However meager the result of the letters, petitions, and pleas written by Cervantes, he nevertheless succeeded in redeeming his fellow prisoners, although in an unusual manner:

You will not deceive them. Altogether and one by one
 You will ransom them for a treasure you possess,
 So that their sufferings, and pain, and your sympathy
 Would come alive for us on a yellowed page.¹⁵²

Cervantes, according to and like Pervomais'kyi, identifies with the sufferings of the captives and redeems them through writing. He crafts his *Don Quixote*, a text-redeemer, through which he reaches out to the victims of injustice. An old yellowish book page acquires powerful divine potential, becomes the Messiah, and raises people from the dead. What Pervomais'kyi's early characters rejected in *The Beginning of Life* and *The Shetetl Ladeniu*, in the late Pervomais'kyi reemerged with a new mission: immortalizing the voices of the voiceless, the abandoned, and the doomed. The only difference was that now poetry and poet and verbal signs and letters and books took the place of the victimized shtetl Jews trying to speak up and immortalize themselves in speech.

Conclusion

To understand Pervomais'kyi's role in fostering the rise of Ukrainian-Jewish cultural self-identification, one may want to assess the consistency with which he incorporated Jewish issues in each and every genre of his writings.¹⁵³ Pervomais'kyi's attempts to create a corpus of Ukrainian translations from Yiddish should also be viewed within the same context.¹⁵⁴ That the attacks against Pervomais'kyi by Ukrainian literary officialdom ("pogrom," to use the expression of Moisei Fishbein) coincided with a new wave of repressions against Ukrainian national-minded writers is further vivid testimony of Pervomais'kyi's thoroughly amalgamated Jewish-Ukrainian identity.¹⁵⁵ Hence it comes as no surprise that Moisei Fishbein, whose poetry is heavily charged with Ukrainian-Jewish symbolism, not only epitomizes the Ukrainian-Jewish tradition but also claims Pervomais'kyi's legacy.¹⁵⁶

Becoming the voice of the speechless and making the dead be heard was Pervomais'kyi's utmost humanistic value. He considered his mission fulfilled if he could help the victims of violence find their voice through his medium. He equated the desire to win with the will to power, finding it ethically unacceptable, since it implied violence toward, or oppression of, somebody else. This explains Pervomais'kyi's rejection of ideology, political or religious. In one of his last poems, "Zniatiiie so Khresta" (Taking from the Cross), published posthumously, Pervomais'kyi reimagined himself as Jesus being taken from the cross. He would have considered it pathetic to identify with Jesus solely as a martyred Jew or a Christian offering; instead, he identified with Jesus as a suffering, dying, and hence mortal human being whose voice was lost and last will unknown. Pervomais'kyi, the dying Jesus, did not need churches or temples-on-the-blood, those unnecessary testimonies to his ex post facto historical or moral victory. Nor did he seek ascension and resuscitation, another superfluous manifestation of his posthumous triumph. He sought only to capture the voice of a dying victim. The rest was falsehood.

Pull over here a big rock:
Let my earthly flesh rot
And turn forever into earth,
So that God does not revive me.¹⁵⁷

The revival is not so much the resuscitation as the victim's voice speaking through the poet. Poetry, Pervomais'kyi's substitute for religion, is compassion without comfort, mercy without promise, and sympathy without faith. Throughout his life, Pervomais'kyi sought and found voiceless victims—alive and dead, imaginary and real, male and female—and helped them speak.

A Messiah from Czernowitz

The Language and Faith of Moisei Fishbein

“Ukraine is God-given and God-chosen. And it will survive, for God wants it to survive. I do not know why I, a Jew, was given this knowledge. But I know.”¹ This aphoristic and ambitious statement belongs to Moisei Fishbein, who views himself as a biblical prophet sent to Ukraine on a mission. Moisei—or Moses—Fishbein occupies a unique place in Ukrainian belles lettres. A Ukrainian poet, he insists on his Ukrainian identity, yet he lights candles on Hanukah; congratulates friends on Passover; says mourning *yizkor* in remembrance of his deceased parents; and introduces Jewish imagery into his Ukrainian verse, prose, and journalism. Juxtaposing elements of Ukrainian and Jewish culture, Fishbein imagines Ukraine as a country that God has destined for redemption. His concept of the Ukrainian language cements this belief. Fishbein views it as “humiliated, raped, and sacred.” Though it has been humiliated, colonized, and suppressed throughout modern history, Fishbein claims that a revived Ukrainian language will come to perform a key role in Ukraine’s national revival and move toward Europe. Mind Fishbein’s affirmative, imperative, and prophetic “will survive.” Fishbein makes Ukraine’s future indisputable, as if carved in stone, for it is knowledge that has been “given” to him, as he says elsewhere, “from above.”² And he views Ukraine’s lofty vocation as a function of its sacred language.

Fishbein’s sanctification of Ukrainian replicates the attitude to national languages adopted by the harbingers of other European national movements. The linguistic revival of national groups seeking independence has been a key phenomenon of modernity. In most cases, such revivals started out as cultural resistance to second-class citizenship or to forced assimilation in imperial contexts. The Fenian-minded Irish turned to Gaelic against English, Italians to Italian

against French, the Poles and Lithuanians to Polish and Lithuanian against Russian, the Zionists publicized Hebrew at the expense of other Diaspora languages, and Serb and Czech nationalists used their vernacular as a political tool against the bureaucratically imposed German. Language was a central instrumental in advancing national independence in the course of anti-imperial fights on cultural, political, and sometimes military fronts. To be sure, the Irish and Czech were not fighting all alone. There were many ethnic aliens, individual Jews included, who joined the rising national trends of variegated political orientation.

Yet Moisei Fishbein is unique even among them, particularly since he has tirelessly and emphatically pointed out his uniqueness. Noting Fishbein's paradigmatic image as a Jewish poet writing in a gentile language, the Israeli writer Israel Axenfeld told him: "You are not *a* Jew, you are *the* Jew."³ By the same token it would not be wrong to call Fishbein "the Ukrainian." Indeed, he claims to be more Ukrainian with his Israeli passport than most Ukrainians are with their Ukrainian passports. He views his role in the Ukrainian cultural renaissance as that of a prophet or even a messiah. He claims to be in the forefront of the nationally minded Ukrainians. Yet to use Benjamin Nathans's conceptualization, he acculturates into Ukrainian but does not assimilate to it.⁴ While moving ahead of his contemporary Ukrainian revivalists, Fishbein remains a conscientious Jew. He maintains his loyalty to the Ukrainian and to the Jewish cause in his poetry, as well as in his oral presentations, journalism, and daily life. His Ukrainian-Jewish identity—the existence of which he disputes—is his literary theme and calling. And like the messianic Jew who he is not, Fishbein claims that his calling is divinely inspired.

To deal with messianic issues is a challenge, the more so to deal with a person who presents himself as a messianic figure. Imagine interviewing Moses crossing the Red Sea or Jeremiah sitting amid the ruins of the Jerusalem Temple. Fishbein speaks in aphorisms, just as a troubled Hebrew prophet would. Yet he avoids personal leadership, instead pretending to assume the role of an elusive prophet, to use the words of Steven Zipperstein.⁵ To be sure, Fishbein does not merely speak, he preaches. His oral presentations, journalism, and interviews are monologues. When he speaks, he tries to control not only the minor biographic details that he is willing to share but also the way in which his interlocutors interpret them. He preaches even when he is discussing the obscene language of a passersby in the provincial town of his youth. He never returns to details of his life once they are sketched in prose or mentioned in an interview. Nobody can challenge him or make him change his word. Thus the angle he offers in his memoirs may never be altered: what he does not remember does not exist.

Given the scarcity of information in his autobiographical prose, we know as

little about the elusive Fishbein—who can be reached by cell phone or the Internet any time of the day—as about the obscure Kernerenko, the enigmatic Troianker, or the reticent Pervomais’kyi. Furthermore, Fishbein’s silence is as eloquent as his talk. At different periods, he has resided in Central, Western, and Eastern Europe; the Middle East; and the Far East, yet there are many episodes of his life that he is reluctant to speak about and for which there is little evidence. Critical reviews dedicated to Fishbein are of no avail, since they focus predominantly on his verse and not on how his person is related to his verse and identity. Although there is consensus that Fishbein is an outstanding poet, there is also tacit agreement that he is far from being an easygoing person.

Telling Fishbein’s story is further complicated by circumstances best characterized as “poet in exile.” Although he dreamed of Kyiv, or at least of Ukraine, Fishbein wrote his Ukrainian poetry not only in Kyiv and Chernivtsi, but also in Siberia, Germany, and Israel. Resettling in Kyiv in 2003, he found himself a first-generation Ukrainian *retourné* in a Russian-speaking urban environment. As a Jew he is not entirely at home in his Ukrainian milieu, and as a Ukrainian he is at odds with Jews in Ukraine, who are predominantly Russian-speaking. Doomed to solitude, Fishbein seeks interlocutors, yet when his interlocutors engage him in conversation, Fishbein teaches them some Ukrainian phraseology; corrects their Ukrainian syntax and banishes Galician, Polish, or Russian elements from their vocabulary; and makes sure his interlocutors hate his enemies, love his friends, appreciate his solitude, and share his unreserved support of Ukraine no matter who is in power and what the contemporary situation in the country. Interviews with Fishbein, as with any other postmodern literary figure, should be treated as literary texts on their own, in need of deciphering and commentary. Therefore Fishbein’s life trajectory can be traced only cursorily, and some key episodes reconstructed only hypothetically.

The Birth of a Messiah

Fishbein was born in 1946 in Chernivtsi, a city in Bukovina, western Ukraine afflicted by postwar trauma, despair, and famine. Fishbein’s early memoirs paint this epoch in black-and-white. In his early poem “Povoiennyi khlib” (Postwar Bread), Fishbein recalls the dry and succinct newspaper ads placed by displaced relatives and survivors looking for one another.⁶ For the hungry Moisei, a loaf of black postwar bread placed on top of an unfolded classified-ads newspaper signified miracle and promise.

Poetically reconstructing his childhood, Fishbein portrayed little Moisei as meticulously picking crumbs of scattered bread and collecting them in his

hand—the same way his family was gathering relatives scattered throughout the country. Despite the apparent gloom of his early childhood, Fishbein sanctifies its time and place. This is Fishbein’s autobiographical voice:

That small town with its postwar starvation, its primus and paraffin stoves, its incessant lines of people waiting to buy bread, charcoal, railway tickets, kerosene, New Year’s trees, wood, anything—that small town, which had no room for Jews, Ukrainians, or Moldavians, and yet had room for them all—that small town with its eternal “Early Sunday Morning” show in the Musical Drama Theater, with its astonishing walls, which one could paint as thick as one desired but on which the old Latin inscriptions would still be seen—that small town with the dusty grain of its suburbs, with horses in the streets, with the old faces in the basement windows—that small town of the not-yet-destroyed multifamily apartments, the corridors of which blended and forever preserved the smells of weddings and funerals, diapers and borscht; blended and forever preserved the greetings “Bitter!” and “No, you are an asshole!” and “Retard!” and “Yid!” and “Why have you abandoned us!”—that bygone small town of my nighttime dreams is the divine heritage of my childhood.⁷

On a tour through his Chernivtsi past, Fishbein reproduces minuscule details that emerge as idiosyncratic “signs of the era,” quotidian symbols, and recognizable markers of a bygone era: the Soviet Union of the postwar 1950s. Deeply embedded into their sociocultural context, these details are deliberately ambiguous. For example, the Russian “Bitter!” is not only a reference to the bitter postwar realities but also a wedding feast exclamation that invites the bride and groom to display their affection publicly, and the insult “Yid!” among other things implies that, the Holocaust notwithstanding, Jews were still around in postwar Chernivtsi. And around they were indeed.

Chernivtsi was (and still is) an unusual Ukrainian conduit into East Central and Central European culture. Before 1918 the city was Habsburg Czernowitz, from 1918 to 1939, Romanian Cernaui. When the USSR annexed Bukovina in June 1940, the city still retained some of its Habsburg character. It was situated in what had been an Austro-Hungarian backwater but had an imperial multiethnic constituency population that practiced interethnic tolerance. “Four languages coexist together, caressing the air,” wrote Rose Ausländer (1901–88), the locally born and raised Jewish-German poet, depicting her native town; elsewhere she dubbed Czernowitz “the land of the four-language songs.”⁸ Georg Drozdowski (1899–1987), a Czernowitz-born German writer, called his hometown “a replica of Austria.”⁹ In the 1940s, local Jews used to ask: “Have you ever been to Vienna? No? So you may want to know that Chernivtsi is a spitting image of Vienna!”¹⁰

This statement was true as far as the local Jewish culture was concerned.

Launched by Joseph II in the 1780s, the modernization of Austrian-Jewish society left profound traces on the face of the town. Chernivtsi hosted a modern Hebrew school, Safah-Ivriah, where Paul Célan (Paul/Pessach Antschel, 1920–70) received his Hebrew education.¹¹ In 1908, on the initiative of Benno Straucher, the then-head of the Jewish community and a member of the Austrian parliament, Czernowitz Jews established the first secular Jewish community center in Eastern Europe, the Jewish House, whose formidable Viennese-style headquarters in the town's central square were far more impressive than the Polish or Romanian ones. In 1873–77, the modernized town Jews sponsored one of the first East European oriental-style temples—a Reform synagogue arrogantly dominating the center of town.¹² Later urban folklore reflected vain attempts by the Soviets to obliterate local Jewish visibility: in 1947 the Communists failed to blow up the temple and grudgingly transformed it into a movie theater, which witty townspeople dubbed the “cinemagogue” (Rus.: *kinogoga*). The Austro-Hungarian past shaped local urban memory. Even in the 1940s, local Jews used the pre-Soviet and pre-Romanian names of the local streets: in the Fishbeins' environment, they said Synagogstrasse and Hauptstrasse instead of Barbusse Street or Stalin Avenue.

Vestiges of traditional Judaism enveloped Fishbein's childhood. Unlike many other towns in Ukraine devastated during World War II, Chernivtsi preserved some of its prewar Jewish community. The occupying Romanian troops were relatively less brutal to local Jews than the Nazis. Deportations and mass executions wiped out most but not the entire Jewish population. As a result, the postwar Chernivtsi Jewish community hosted refugees from elsewhere, helped smuggle some of them across the border to Romania, established a slaughterhouse and a number of underground prayer groups, and enjoyed a cozy synagogue, which the Soviet authorities did not manage to shut down. Residential buildings in the late 1940s along what had been the prewar Synagogstrasse, where the town's huge and numerous seventeenth- and eighteenth-century synagogues were located, boasted quasi-Sephardic Jewish ornaments and Hebrew inscriptions on their façades.

Chernivtsi, in its Czernowitz incarnation, was home to a number of key figures in the history of modern Judaism and Jewish culture. Not far from the railway station was the Sadagora (Sadyhora, Sadgora) Palace of the legendary tsaddik Israel of Ruzhin (Israel Friedman, 1797–1850), who led the lifestyle of a monarch and was one of the first Hasidic leaders to ponder the mystical meanings of progress and modernity. Martin Buber visited the place and wrote in his memoirs: “The Rabbi's palace with its theatrical pomp put me off. . . . But when I saw how the Rabbi marches through the rows of his followers, I felt: ‘the leader,’

and when I saw Hasidim dancing with the torah, I felt ‘the community.’”¹³ Paul Célán, whose mother was born in Czernowitz’s old Jewish suburb of Sadagora, in the only poem where he mentions his native town, ironically calls himself “Paul Célán . . . from Sadagora near Czernowitz.”¹⁴ Rose Ausländer repeatedly referred to the image of Sadagora as the epitome of the East European Jewish tradition, if not of Judaism per se.¹⁵ Fishbein, born two years after Célán had left his home town for Paris, addressed Sadagora in the same vein: for him it symbolized his golden childhood, the impossibility of return, and unattainable freedom.¹⁶

A town of many cultures, Chernivtsi spoke to Fishbein in many languages. It was perhaps the last town in Soviet Ukraine in which Yiddish was often heard in small stores or at the marketplace and where Yiddish culture retained its institutionalized character. Between 1945 and 1950, the town hosted the GOSSET Theater, formerly of Kyiv and one of the two last state-sponsored Yiddish theaters in the country. Its spacious hall in a constructivist building on Schiller Street was always packed. Here the cast met with many Yiddish literati, including Perets Markish, who visited the town in 1946. The 1949 campaign against “rootless cosmopolitans,” which started with insinuations against theater critics of Jewish origin and was followed by the murder of Solomon Mikhoels, the dissolution of the Moscow GOSSET Theater, and the arrest of Yiddish writers, led to the closure of the Chernivtsi Yiddish theater.

But even after the theater was shut down in 1950, enterprising Jewish actors created the so-called Jewish small forms theater, disguised as the Estradon Ensemble, which performed Yiddish songs and Russian one-act plays in Yiddish and was in great demand among local Jews. And the Chernivtsi Jewish club’s drama groups, concerts, and performances in Russian and Yiddish managed to survive the persecution of Jewish culture throughout the second half of the century. Yiddish literature was also firmly engraved into the annals of the town’s Jewish community. A few local Jews remembered the future Yiddish poet Itzik Manger (1901–69) selling Yiddish and German newspapers in the mid-1910s.¹⁷ In the 1950s among Chernivtsi Jewish intellectuals were those who studied with Eliezer Shteynbarg (1880–1932), the classic Yiddish fable-writer who lived, died, and was buried in Chernivtsi. Josef Burg (b. 1912), in 2008 the oldest surviving Yiddish poet and writer in the former Soviet Union, also lived there.¹⁸ The vice director of the Yiddish theater recalled the late 1940s as a Yiddish literary renaissance featuring jubilee shows dedicated to East European Yiddish classics.

Coming here from Poland, Moldavia, Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine, the Chernivtsi Jews established Yiddish and Russian, not Ukrainian, as their conver-

sational languages. Avrum (Avraam) Fishbein, Moisei's father, came from Romania: he knew Yiddish, German, Hebrew, and some Romanian, but in Chernivtsi he spoke predominantly Yiddish, and only after the war, while working in the army warehouse, did he manage to learn some Russian. Fishbein recalled that his father was afraid to lose his job and therefore never attended synagogue (the security organs closely supervised its congregation), yet before the High Holidays a man with a heavy beard, dressed in high military boots and a nonmilitary cloth cap, came to their apartment and was expediently taken to the kitchen, where he received some brandy and kugel—a modest payment for the *kadish* (mourning prayer) he was commissioned to recite for Avrum Fishbein's deceased parents. To conceal their arrangement, the Fishbeins talked to the man only in Yiddish.¹⁹

And there was the Ukrainian language. Suppressed by the all-powerful Russian elsewhere in Ukraine, especially in the country's heavily industrialized eastern and administrative central area, it flourished in Chernivtsi, on the periphery of the Soviet empire, at least among the conscientious city intelligentsia and its first-generation town dwellers, yesterday's Bukovina peasants. After World War II, the town maintained a high standard of spoken Ukrainian, with its own peculiar Polish, Romanian, and Hungarian elements that had been banished from the official Russified, Soviet-style Ukrainian common to urban centers like Kyiv. The actors of the local Ukrainian Drama Theater, in solidarity with the suppressed Yiddish, kept their Jewish repertoire: Ukrainian versions of Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye, the Milkman*, Karl Gutzkow's *Uriel Acosta*, and *The King and the Gangster* after Isaac Babel appeared regularly on its stage.²⁰ Sara Fishbein, Moisei's mother (her first Ukrainian husband died in the war), taught Ukrainian language and literature at a school. At home she spoke Yiddish to her husband; Russian to her children; and the fusion *surzhyk*, the mixture of Russian and Ukrainian, to Fishbein's grandmother.²¹ Fishbein learned Russian at his Russian-language school, picked up some Yiddish at home, and, guided by his father, studied Hebrew from textbooks that had most likely been used before the war at the Hebrew school.

Although Ukrainian was taught at school as a second language, Fishbein picked up most of his Ukrainian from his classmates, in the streets of the town, and, significantly, in the Ukrainian theater. Though not an autobiography as such, Fishbein's unfinished novel "Apri-i-il!" reflects the multilingual environment of Chernivtsi street life in the 1950s. In the following episode, the Russian-speaking Vovchara, an augmentative for Vladimir, pokes fun at the Ukrainian-speaking Ios'ka, diminutive of Joseph. The "Leader" is Josef Stalin, and Bandera is Stepan Bandera (1909–59), leader of the wartime Ukrainian national

resistance, some of whose adherents fought both the Bolsheviks and the Nazis; “the cult” is the “cult of personality,” the Soviet euphemism for Stalin’s deviations from socialist legality, and western Ukraine appears in association with Bandera: “Ios’ka was born on April 1, 1953. He was named after the Leader. It was his father’s April Fool’s joke. Ios’ka tries to explain this to Vovchara. ‘A victim of the cult!’ Vovchara laughs. ‘Don’t you know how many Iosifs there are in western Ukraine?’ Ios’ka looks for a way out. ‘Bandera!’ laughs Vovka. ‘A Yid-Bandera!’”²² As is clear from this episode, Fishbein retroactively reinvents himself as a Ukrainian Jew, not a Russian one. Given that as a child he seems to have been little exposed to a Ukrainian-speaking environment, his later self-discovery as a Ukrainian intellectual and Ukrainian poet seems to be a puzzle.

In the late 1950s, Fishbein was a Chernivtsi Jewish teenager who spoke Russian and dreamed of an acting career on the Russian-language stage. Moisei was fascinated with the theater. It made his head go round. It uplifted him and his speech. Impressed by this dedicated young man, the director of the Chernivtsi amateur theater at the Palace of Pioneers, Halyna Menzheres, accepted him to her troupe. Moisei typically played the role of the scoundrel. In the heroic *Pesnia o chernomortsakh* (Song of the Black Sea Sailors, Boris Lavrenev’s heroic play of 1934), he starred as a Nazi; he also played the sheriff in *Skovannye odnoi tsep’iu* (Chained Together; the Soviet version of Stanley Kramer’s *The Defiant Ones* from 1958). Later he switched to the Creative Youth Theater, under the direction of the talented and philosemitic Valentina Bezpiliotova.²³ Instead of going to high school, he chose an evening school so he could work at the Kobylians’ka Chernivtsi District Musical Drama Theater. Yet at the theater they let him on stage only for crowd scenes. Any further promotion required an artistic degree.

Rigorously and meticulously, Fishbein prepared himself for an acting career. But although he was ready to overcome obstacles, suffer humiliations as a Jew, undergo painful experiences in a highly competitive artistic milieu, he was not able to outwit his mother Sara. She took pains to dissuade her son from an artistic career. She contacted a local theater star, the People’s Actor (*narodnyi artyst*) Iurii Kozakivs’kyi, and begged him to convince her son that he had no chance of becoming a professional actor. Well, thought the young Moisei, it is still possible to become a “scene reader,” a popular artistic occupation in the Soviet Union. To prevent this from happening, his mother asked a visiting celebrity to demonstrate to Moisei that his enthusiasm regarding his reciting talents was baseless.

Once the theatrical illusions of their son dissipated, Moisei’s parents convinced him to become an engineer, considered the safest profession for a Jew in the USSR: it was modern, stable, relatively lucrative, nonideological, and non-verbal. And yet for Moisei, it was an ordeal to gain admission to a Soviet higher

educational institution, particularly with Ukraine's unannounced but effective *numerus clausus* and its Jew-free departments. On his tour through the Chernivtsi of his youth, Fishbein walks into the railway station and depicts local Jewish teenagers: "from here they left for colleges in Chita, Saransk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk—over there, into the backwoods, running away from the percentage norm [for Jews in local colleges]." ²⁴ Russian provinces, among other things, proved more tolerant. Fishbein enrolled at Novosibirsk University in the Department of Economic Cybernetics and moved to Akademgorodok ("the town of academics"), the headquarters of the Siberian technocratic intelligentsia near Novosibirsk. ²⁵

"The sun rises behind Siberia," goes a well-known Ukrainian song. Fishbein, an unsuccessful actor and now an unwilling student of cybernetics, found himself in Siberia on his first but not last exile from his homeland, some three thousand miles from his native town. The Russian-speaking environment, the depressing distances, and the subject of his studies sharpened his identity crisis. But the sun did rise for him over Novosibirsk. Unhappy with his private and academic circumstances, he discovered something he could partially identify with: the poetry of Aleksandr Galich (1918–77), a subversive Russian bard, poet, dissident, and a baptized Jew. ²⁶ At the same time, Moisei turned to Ukrainian poets, including the young, rebellious, and innovative Ivan Drach (b. 1936). ²⁷ Through the local student society, he organized readings by Galich and Drach, bringing both to the Novosibirsk University campus. Keeping himself busy with organizing logistics for these presentations helped Fishbein to feel obliquely connected with the humanities, but only for the time being.

Fishbein's rare visits home brought some, but not permanent, relief. He recalls how on one New Year's Eve he was sitting in front of a cheap reproduction of a Carpathian landscape he had cut out of the literary journal *Dnipro* (The Dnieper). Alone in the room, Moisei was sitting and, as he put it, "praying for Ukraine." He reiterated: "Yes, that is what it was. I was looking at the picture praying for Ukraine." The crisis he was going through seemed insurmountable. To overcome it, Fishbein made a bold decision: he switched departments. Fishbein trained himself for the tests, passed them, abandoned math, and transferred to the humanities. Given the notoriously inflexible system of Soviet universities, this was a next-to-impossible enterprise. But Fishbein managed, for he knew that the humanities, particularly philology, would give him more options to find himself and become who he had to be: a Ukrainian poet.

Fishbein has often been discussed as a Ukrainian poet but never as a person who had other linguistic choices. The choice of language is a delicate and subtle matter; the outcome is obvious, but the process of choosing is murky. At approx-

imately the same time that Fishbein switched from math to philology, the twenty-year-old Kyiv poet Leonid Kyseliov (Kiselev, 1946–68), already the author of some 130 poems, switched from Russian to Ukrainian poetry. By the mid-1960s, Kyseliov had gained recognition for his anti-imperial poems belittling Russian tsars and had stirred a commotion among intellectuals in Russia and Ukraine. In Kyiv, hardly anyone among Ukrainian-reading intellectuals was unfamiliar with his acclaimed poem culminating in the two proverbial lines: “Everything in the world is just a song / In the Ukrainian language.”²⁸ Following his own discovery, the twenty-one-year-old Kyseliov switched to Ukrainian and began writing Ukrainian poetry half a year before leukemia took hold of him.

We can speculate at length about the implications of Kyseliov’s linguistic choice but can hardly look into the reasons behind it. Kyseliov grew up in a bilingual family and could switch between Ukrainian or Russian with ease. A Canadian scholar of his poetry links Kyseliov’s choice to an issue of some interest in Fishbein’s context: “At the end of our quest for the national roots of the poet, it turns out that Leonid’s mother is Jewish. Albeit in a writer’s biography this is not the most important moment, in Kyseliov’s case this detail is important and might shed more light on the mystery of his poetic transformation—the switch from Russian to Ukrainian poetry.”²⁹ But Kyseliov did not address Jewish issues in his poetry and never presented himself as a Ukrainian Jew. No one can guess which topics he might have addressed had he lived past the age of twenty-two. And yet Kyseliov is an obvious parallel to Fishbein: they were both born in 1946, both were Jewish according to the letter of Jewish law, and both began writing at approximately the same time.

It seems that Kyseliov’s verse, his love of apocryphal plots, his sharp anti-imperialist orientation, his symbolism, and perhaps his language choice exerted an impact on Fishbein: Kyseliov’s Ukrainian poetry appeared in the *Dnipro* literary journal, the only Ukrainian periodical Fishbein recalls having read in Novosibirsk. Ivan Dziuba’s reflections on Kyseliov’s choice of language might well apply to Fishbein: “Kyseliov was one of the first to realize that in order to stand firm on civil and political grounds, one should understand the needs and rights of the Ukrainian people, define one’s attitude to the Ukrainian renaissance and renewal—not only literary but also political.”³⁰ But Fishbein’s turn to Ukrainian seemed less logical. At the time, Ukrainian was not the language he spoke. Unlike in Kyseliov’s case, it was not the language of Fishbein’s immediate student environment. Neither was Ukrainian a manifestation of his Jewish self or an indispensable element of his identity. Unlike Kyseliov, Fishbein had hardly been exposed to the timid Ukrainian revival of the late 1950s up to early 1960.

But what made Fishbein think, as Kyseliov had, that everything in the world—at least in his poetic world—was just a song in the Ukrainian language?

For Fishbein, Ukrainian had never been incumbent or imposed (as the Hebrew his father made him study), had not been inculcated at school (as Russian), had not been the secret language of parochial communication (as Yiddish), and was never associated with omnipresence, power, or authority. In most contexts, it was an oral language and there was nothing dominating about it. When Fishbein mentions Ukrainian in his poetry, he always genders it using the diminutive of the feminine *mova* (tongue; *moveniatko*, little tongue). It was kind, languid, charming, and feminine. Indeed, Ukrainian was the language in which his mother taught—it was Fishbein's *mameloshn* ("mother tongue" in Yiddish). When Sara Fishbein sang, she did so in Ukrainian. This was the language of the Bukovina countryside, the Chernivtsi suburbs, and the Carpathian landscapes that Fishbein adored. It was not the language spoken across the profoundly Russified Ukraine, but Fishbein in Novosibirsk treated it as a synecdoche: it stood for the entirety of Ukraine.

Paradoxically, Ukrainian presented a good balance of the particular and the universal, for it embraced, not rejected, his Jewish self. Those Jews with whom Fishbein eagerly identified appeared in front of him on the stage of the Chernivtsi Ukrainian Musical Drama Theater. Velychko and Bezpoliotova, as Acosta and his mother Esther, respectively, in the Ukrainian version of *Uriel Acosta* by Karl Gutzkow (1811–78), made a profound and long-lasting impact on him.³¹ Fishbein perhaps spoke to Chernivtsi Jews in Russian, but the great Jews of the national past, such as Benya Krik, Acosta, and Tevye, spoke to him in Ukrainian. It was in Ukrainian that Fishbein heard about Spain, Amsterdam, and Odessa, and the modern Jews of the Pale of Settlement. The dual identity that was apparently impossible for Fishbein to have in Russian or Yiddish turned out to be feasible in Ukrainian. Moreover, it was already part of Fishbein's personal experience. Indeed, Ukrainian solved many other questions: it linked Moisei Fishbein to his native Chernivtsi, his Bukovina, his beloved Ukraine, his much-sought-for family, and to the theater, the enthusiasm of his youth. This choice accommodated both his Slavic and Jewish self. Ukrainian helped reveal but did not suppress his Jewishness. By speaking Ukrainian he recompensed himself for the unrealized career at the Ukrainian Drama Theater.

Fishbein's turn to Ukrainian helped him mobilize various elements of his past and present. Far removed from the Ukrainian language and culture in Siberia, Fishbein began writing Ukrainian verse. One of his earliest Ukrainian compositions was a translation from Yiddish of a poem by Meir Charatz (1912–93). The choice had been made: Moisei Fishbein reemerged as a "Yid-Bandera,"

a Ukrainian poet with articulate Jewish and Ukrainian concerns. Shortly thereafter, Fishbein began to seek a way to return to Ukraine from Siberia.

Moisei's Revelation

Fishbein reemerged as a Ukrainian poet in a Russian-dominated metropolis when it was neither propitious nor advantageous for a Jew to do so. The advantages were few; the disadvantages, multiple and obvious. Fishbein started to write in Ukrainian when the Ukrainian authorities began launching brutal reprisals against Ukrainian-minded figures active in journalism, cinematography, literature, music, and art and in the national-democratic and human rights movement. The revival had disclosed the anticolonialist aspirations of the nationally oriented Ukrainian intelligentsia, but the attempts to suppress it underscored Ukraine's colonial status all too well.³² Fishbein called the early 1970s repressions a "total pogrom against Ukrainian" in which the "denationalized species smashed Ukrainian culture."³³ Significantly, Fishbein preferred the milieu of the persecuted Ukrainians and the culture of colonial Ukraine. His preference manifested his firm anti-imperial orientation. To Fishbein's good fortune, this was not a one-sided relationship. He began his career as a Ukrainian poet just as the harbingers of Ukrainian revivalism were "discovering" the Jews, a significant Other whose experience they began actively incorporating into contemporary Ukrainian discourse.

Dialogue with the Jews, yet another victimized group, became one of the key features of the Ukrainian renaissance of the 1960s. Perhaps the best example was Ivan Dziuba (b. 1931), the liberal-minded and nationally oriented Ukrainian literary critic and thinker. His much acclaimed treatise *Internatsionalizm chy Rusyfikatsiia?* (Internationalism or Russification?) turned Lenin against the Communist Party's policies toward ethnic minorities.³⁴ Dziuba canonized the new Ukrainian stance on Jewish issues in a speech commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the mass murder at the Babi Yar (September 29, 1967), which later generations of intellectuals considered a blueprint for any further Ukrainian-Jewish discourse.³⁵ Among the more radical Ukrainian dissidents, Sviatoslav Karavans'kyi (b. 1920), a Ukrainian nationalist, poet, translator, and "the patriarch of Ukrainian lexicography," articulated a similar stance toward the Jews, denouncing the Soviet Union's political violence against national minorities, including the anti-Jewish college admissions policies of which Fishbein himself had been a victim.³⁶ Likewise, Leonid Pliushch (b. 1939), another Ukrainian dissident, journeyed from "international antisemitism" to close friendship with Zionist human rights activists in Kyiv. The public commemoration of

the Babi Yar tragedy—for which the authorities not infrequently penalized the participants—became part of his personal contribution to the Ukrainian-Jewish encounter.³⁷

In some cases the cooperation between assimilated Jews and Ukrainian nationalists resulted in the national reawakening of the former. Thus, for example, Iosyp (Joseph) Zisels (b. 1946), who was active in the human rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s, claimed that the prominent Ukrainian dissident Mykhailo Horyn’ “had a serious impact on the rise of my national self-perception.”³⁸ Indeed, the Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement went far beyond dissident circles. A number of contemporary Ukrainian literati introduced in their prose sympathetic images of Ukrainian Jews no less victimized by the regime than the Ukrainians.

Soviet authorities quickly realized that there was nothing more detrimental to the perpetuation of the Ukrainian colonial status quo than the dialogue between the two ethnic groups. Indeed, in the early 1970s, a “total” anti-Ukrainian pogrom, to use Fishbein’s characterization, targeted first and foremost national-minded figures, among them the painter Alla Hors’ka (1929–70), the movie director Sergei Paradzhanov (1924–90), the poet Vasyl’ Stus (1938–85), the critic Ivan Svitlychnyi (1929–92), the writer Mykola Rudenko (1920–2004), and dozens of intellectuals and rank-and-file Ukrainians.³⁹ But among the persecuted, those who defended representatives of other ethnic minorities, Jews above all, were well represented. Dziuba was formally arrested and sentenced for his anti-Soviet activities (the sentence was changed following Dziuba’s public repentance). Karavans’kyi was arrested, prosecuted, and sent to a correction colony. Pliushch was declared insane and put in a KGB-controlled psychiatric clinic in Dnipropetrovsk.

Suppressed elsewhere, the Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue moved to the prisons, where the Ukrainian and Jewish inmates, circumscribed by barbed wire, started to talk to one another. Jewish dissidents from throughout the USSR, such as Mikhail Kheifets, Arie Vudka, Semen Hluzman, and Iosyp Zisels, met with Ukrainian dissidents, such as Viacheslav Chornovil, Mykhailo Horyn’, Zynovii Antoniuk, Myroslav Marynovych, Ievhen Sverstiuk, and Vasyl’ Stus. They established brand new forms of Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement that shaped not only the Ukrainian dissident movement of the 1970s but also new trends in Ukrainian politics in the 1990s.⁴⁰ Their rapprochement gave birth of a new genre of Gulag writing: the Ukrainian essay on Jewish issues and the Jewish memoir on Ukrainian personalities.⁴¹ Later Fishbein contributed to popularizing their writings and making their voices better heard in the West, and some of them became Fishbein’s readers and admirers.

Fishbein's travails from the late 1960s to the early 1970s make sense in the context of the encounter between national-minded Jewish and Ukrainian figures, although he entered into the "legal" liberal, democratic opposition rather than the dissident one. Fishbein's early poems proved to the Kyiv literati that he was a mature Ukrainian poet. Several Ukrainians decided to give him a hand. First, young poets—such as Ivan Drach, the future leader of the Ukrainian People's Rukh of the 1990s, and Vitalii Korotych, the future spokesperson of perestroika—helped Fishbein to transfer from Novosibirsk to the Department of Philology at Odessa University. Then Mykola Bazhan (1904–83), a well-connected and influential Ukrainian literary celebrity (in the 1940s he was the vice chairman of the Council of Ministers of Ukraine), arranged for Fishbein's transfer to the Kyiv Pedagogical Institute.⁴²

In Odessa, he studied in the evening department and worked during the day in a suburban library; in Kyiv, too, Fishbein had to work to make ends meet. But it was a blessing, for he was finally embraced by the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Kyiv. Bazhan, whom Fishbein called "the Patriarch," found him an editing position for the multivolume *Ukrains'ka radians'ka entsyklopediia* (Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia) and offered him paid work as a literary secretary. Using his influence, Bazhan created for Fishbein a supportive network, passed his poems and an oral endorsement to the literary monthly *Vitchyzna*, recommended him to the Union of Writers of Ukraine, and facilitated the publication of his first poetry collection.

Fishbein found himself among those literati for whom the East European Jewish heritage was an integral part of their Ukrainian cultural identity. In the early 1970s, through Bazhan's mediation, Fishbein became friends with Mykola Lukash (1919–88), who reinvented in Ukrainian the best works of Western classic writers from Cervantes to Rilke and whom Fishbein nicknamed in his memoirs "Don Quixote."⁴³ Lukash welcomed Fishbein and magnanimously shared with him his Ukrainian linguistic endeavors. Fishbein acquired from Lukash a predilection for eighteenth-century poetic vocabulary and paronymous puns, which he later transformed into one of the key devices of his innovative rhyme-making. An analysis of Fishbein's prosody shows that he prefers Lukashean, paronymous and homophonic rhymes, which highlight phonetic similarity and semantic difference. When Fishbein later left Ukraine, Lukash, who knew Yiddish and Hebrew, wrote in his honor the following rhyme based on his favorite homophones: "Shcho zh ty koish / I kudy ty yidesh, / Hetsi-goyish, / polovyna yidysh?" (What are you doing / and where are you going, / half a goy, / half a Yid?).⁴⁴

Thanks to Bazhan's happy intercession, Fishbein also met Leonid Pervo-

mais'kyi. Fishbein was unaware of Pervomais'kyi's early Jewish prose and disliked Pervomais'kyi's early work, which was permeated with the enthusiasm of a neophyte communist. Rather, Fishbein revered the author of the "wise and transparent" books that Pervomais'kyi penned in the later years of his life (*The Lessons of Poetry*, *The Tree of Knowledge*, and *Yesterday and Tomorrow*). Also, Fishbein knew several of Pervomais'kyi's unpublished works—for example, the play "The History Teacher, or A Retired Soldier on One Leg"—perhaps a sign of the close relations and trust between the two poets in an environment of growing fear and suspicion.

Pervomais'kyi's poetry, particularly the messianic themes of his late verse, had a significant impact on Fishbein's imagery. Fishbein recalled much later his first visit with Pervomais'kyi:

Pervomais'kyi was listening to me with his eyes closed. He was reclining on the sofa, leaning on an elbow and with his head on his palm (his favorite position). His face was furrowed with wrinkles; he had bags under his eyes, also wrinkled. He smoked a lot. Perhaps those two daily boxes of Stolychni cigarettes caused his sudden and untimely death, if death can ever be timely. That was the first night I heard about the new generation of Ukrainian poets, about modern Ukrainian poetry. That night he fascinated me with his erudition, with his subtle sense of poetry, art, and music. I saw before me a wise, yet tired, dreadfully tired man: it was the tiredness of many years, not of one day. He gave me his *The Tree of Knowledge* as a gift; he signed it "To Moisei Fishbein for his long journey in poetry." (Who among us knew at the time that this journey would be long, above all, geographically?) When I was about to leave, he suggested that I translate Heine's poems for a four-volume edition he was editing (several poems I translated soon appeared in the first volume that Leonid Solomonovych edited). Later I often visited him, in Kyiv on Kotsiubyns'kyi Street, and at his dacha in Irpen. During the last year of his life he often repeated one and the same sentence to me: "You do not know anything yet, young man, you do not know." What did he imply? The situation in the country? His upcoming death, the approach of which he probably felt? Now one can only speculate.⁴⁵

Among other things, Pervomais'kyi implied the fate of the Ukrainian-Jewish literary figure in a colonial environment and under a totalitarian regime. Pervomais'kyi already knew what Fishbein did not yet know: to be a Ukrainian-Jewish poet was a risky matter.

Fishbein proved to be well equipped to take that risk. Not only did he parallel Pervomais'kyi ethnically and linguistically, but he also shared Pervomais'kyi's ethical principle of solidarity with the voiceless victims of violence. Fishbein appropriated and nationalized Pervomais'kyi's ethical dichotomy "victim-redemption." Fishbein's take on it was cultural and linguistic: not merely the

language of poetry (as Pervomais'kyi thought) but primarily the Ukrainian language was a victim. Therefore, reflected Fishbein, merely writing in Ukrainian acquired redeeming connotations associated with the “white” of immortality, metaphysics, and the eternal. This is, perhaps, what he thought in December 1973, standing in the crowd at the Baikove cemetery near Pervomais'kyi's freshly dug grave and impassively recording the empty and senseless speeches of the bureaucrats from the Union of Writers. The *Literaturna Ukraina* newspaper found his own poetic eulogy to Pervomais'kyi—eloquently entitled “Poeziia” (Poetry),—in which he pondered the opposition of history and poetry, too suggestive to publish.⁴⁶

Fishbein's encounter with the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Kyiv was intense yet short-lived. He had hardly spent two years in Kyiv when, in February 1973, four months after the regular November draft and half a year before the regular spring one, he was unexpectedly drafted into the army and sent to the Far East. He was assigned to serve as a rank-and-file soldier in a technical construction battalion near Vladivostok. Though not a combat position, it was still in a Soviet army environment intolerant of those who were not ethnic Russians.

Moisei built bridges and did not complain of his exile far from Ukraine, yet his officers' contempt for non-Russians embittered him. That his immediate supervisor was of Ukrainian origin was particularly insulting. He could not grasp the disdain of native Ukrainians toward Ukrainian language and culture. This is Fishbein pondering his army travails:

People without a language, uprooted people. My warrant officer, Slys', was ashamed of being Ukrainian. When his son was born, he announced publicly that he was sending his child to a Russian-language school. During the relocation of our battalion to the Far East, on a train stricken with Krasnoiarsk frost, I congratulated him on Shevchenko's birthday. He dropped a filthy curse and mentioned that his wife's or his godfather's birthday meant more for him than Shevchenko's. He was steadily forgetting his Ukrainian and had not learned Russian. He called Ukrainians *khokhly* [the derogatory for Ukrainian—YPS] and non-Slavs *churki* [“lumps;” derogatory for Central Asian peoples—YPS]. Getting drunk, he stopped by my cubbyhole: “You think you are a Ukrainian poet? You've got a Jewish mug! Screw you!”⁴⁷

This was one of the first but not the last episode in which Fishbein suffered for his Ukrainian convictions and was victimized by those who wanted to pass for Russian. Not infrequently, Private Fishbein viewed himself as a poet who was destined—albeit in a more modest way—to repeat the fate of Taras Shevchenko, who was drafted, or better to say, exiled into the Russian army, a crucible of Nicholas I's comprehensive and compound Russification. Unlike Shev-

chenko, who was forbidden to write in Ukrainian while a private on the deserted Kos-Aral peninsula near the Caspian Sea, Fishbein could write. Therefore, perhaps, he found it crucial to address Shevchenko's experience.

Fishbein did so in the poem "Tarasovi sny" (The Dreams of Taras), dedicated to Shevchenko's night dreams. Those dreams that Shevchenko saw but could not record, Fishbein put on paper. These shared dreams drew the two poets together against the destructive power that sentenced both to exile. Fishbein did not entirely identify with Shevchenko: the differences between them were far too obvious. But the dreams, Shevchenko's homeless orphans, found shelter in Fishbein's verse. "The Dreams of Taras" entailed no reference to Shevchenko's army service, but the reference to the alien land (*chuzhyna*) is sufficient to reconstruct the parallel he was tracing:

Where the boundless Letha streams its black waters
Where lies the Milky Way without milk—
The dreams wander, the stepsons of the centuries,
The homeless orphans of the Poet.
They wander. There is the Milky Way.
There is a foreign land. And the endless black night.
They are somewhere here. When I go to sleep
They stand over my head.⁴⁸

To emphasize the hidden parallels, Fishbein makes a significant note: "1973. The Far East. The Army." And the parallel was striking indeed: a Jewish poet, writing in Ukrainian somewhere near Vladivostok, dreamed the dreams of the Ukrainian classic, Taras Shevchenko. Yet the parallels between them should not be exaggerated. After all Fishbein was lucky: the only means of support for his elderly parents, he was demobilized in the fall of the same year. Another exile from Ukraine ended, and he again found himself among friends and colleagues. Even more important, his first book was finally published after several years of effort.

Fishbein's first book, *Iambove kolo* (The Iambic Circle), appeared four years after his poems were published in the Ukrainian press. His five *Vitchezna* poems had been introduced as the "debut" of a poet from Chernivtsi. They established Fishbein as a hermetic poet who, unlike other poets of his generation, adhered to the rigid metric traditions of the Ukrainian Neoclassicists, such as the early Bazhan or the late Pervomais'kyi. Two of the five poems demonstrated his engagement with the homophonic rhymes so characteristic of Mykola Lukash (i.e., *pro zori/prozori*; about stars/transparent) but not of his "serious" contemporaries. Fishbein's patriotic themes also distanced him from the official patriots who praised the greatness of Soviet Ukraine: he spoke about the "oneness" of

the feminine-gendered Ukraine to which he had finally returned—a dangerous hint at his “exile” in the interior of Russia. His Ukrainian references went far beyond the officially endorsed “love” of Ukraine. His intimate patriotism bordered on an explicit nationalism and a rejection of the Communist Party’s vision of Russian-Ukrainian friendship. Finally, one poem—the only one included in Fishbein’s later collections—makes the difference between Fishbein and his contemporaries clear vis-à-vis their engagement with postmodernism.⁴⁹ Fishbein emphasized the dark, tragic, and destructive side of the imagination, whereas Ukrainian poets of the 1960s generation pointed out its creative power.

Publication in *Vitchyzna* had required Bazhan’s intercession, and the combined efforts of several people were needed to extricate *The Iambic Circle* from the editor’s drawer and force it through the censor’s red tape. The mid-1970s were the least propitious moment for this kind of publishing endeavor: the ideological hunting dogs were thirsty for the fresh blood of dissident-minded poets, especially after what was considered a coup in Ukrainian politics—the inauguration of the Russofile Shcherbyts’kyi as first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party—and the arrests of many Ukrainian national-minded literati in 1972–73. Fishbein’s book was accepted for publication and shelved. Drach convinced Fishbein to add a “locomotive” (Rus.: *parovoz* or Ukr.: *potiah*), Soviet literary argot for an ideologically pristine text celebrating Communist Party leaders, the founders of the USSR, or the peace-making role of the USSR. “Locomotives” demonstrated an author’s political correctness and firmly procommunist stance to the censors and the Communist Party curators. They “dragged forward” other texts that the authorities found ideologically, thematically, or formally questionable. Fishbein wrote three “locomotives,” including a classically constructed sonnet about the Komsomol, but this did not help. Bazhan wrote a “locomotive” preface that underscored Fishbein’s commendable service in the armed forces and his even more commendable internationalism. This helped. Finally the Molod’ (Youth) Publishing House published 2,500 copies of Fishbein’s book of twenty-two poems and five translations.⁵⁰

Leaving aside the opening poems, such as “Ide Komsomol” (The Komsomol Is Coming), “My buduvaly mist” (We Were Building a Bridge), and “Malen’ka Mariana” (Little Mariana), which are obvious “locomotive” poems, a common theme runs through the collection: the metaphysics of nonbeing. “Povernennia” (The Return), “Hopak voiennoi nochi” (The *Hopack* Dance of the War Night), “Povoennyi khlib” (Postwar Bread), “Syny zasynaiut” (Sons Are Falling Asleep), and “Ty moia tetyva” (You Are My Bowstring) focus on the fate of war victims and survivors and integrate their experience into a metaphysical discourse. Other Ukrainian poets were also preoccupied with aspects of

nonbeing, but Fishbein's metaphysical take on it was unusual. Perhaps unaware of the famous postwar question—is poetry possible after the Holocaust?—he grapples with this problem and answers it positively. Dominated by the theme of death, “Torknutys zapovitnoi mety” (Touching the Utmost Hope), “Zymove prypushchennia” (A Winter Supposition), “Zrechennia Churlionisa” (Čiurlionis's Denial), and “Ni, ia nikoly ne zasnu” (No, I Will Never Fall Asleep) all question the meaning of creativity on the brink of death. He ponders the ability of art to redeem and revive and admits its failure.

Yet Fishbein's poetic form contradicts his poetic claims. Consider, for example, the fourth fragment of his long poem “Povernennia” (The Return), dedicated to a Buchenwald survivor. The poet portrays the young Hungarian violinist Vlaso Nadelstikher, who had brought his violin to Buchenwald. Nadelstikher's music cannot revive his beloved from the dead: poignantly, he performs only for her ashes. Art was powerless and useless against the crematoria, a fact that the violinist—a mad musician (*bozhevil'nyi muzykant*)—fails to grasp.⁵¹ Yet it was exactly his madness, his ability to perform on the brink of total annihilation, that Fishbein immortalizes. While art might be futile, the human capacity to produce it overcomes death and destruction and is destined to immortality. Fishbein shapes his vision into classic constructed lines, providing them with a rigid five-syllable iambic meter and the absolute rhymes of a classical sonnet. The faultless form of his verse negates the pessimistic coda of the poem: art is mortal, as are human beings, but human talent is not.

Fishbein's poetic reflections created a sharp rift between him and his contemporaries. Like other lyrical poets of the 1960s, Fishbein discussed impressions and experiences—for example, a child observing ants crawling over his body or a poet making a snowflake melt in his palm—yet he did this *sub specie aeternitatis*. His emphasis was not on a sudden gloomy or happy impression, but rather on a cosmological, divine, and intransient meaning. While his contemporaries discussed the planetary repercussions of human experience, Fishbein observed from a metaphysical distance. What they placed in space, he integrated into time. What they placed against the backdrop of cosmic universality, he saw from universal eternity.⁵² The last minutes of Jews before they disappeared in the ovens of the Holocaust he viewed as the last day of Pompeii.

An obsession with the eternal and mythological informed Fishbein's further itinerary, prefiguring what could be seen as his “lyrical theology” of the 1990s and 2000s. Viewed as a coherent text, *The Iambic Circle* reflects modifications of his poetic worldview. Fishbein's focus moves beyond black-and-white to a subtler perception of the world. The poem “Sad” (A Garden), with its multicolored palette of the Ukrainian fall, concludes a sequence of poems dominated by de-

pressingly dark images and a white winter backdrop. Fishbein's later collections follow a similar structure and internal dynamic but with greater subtlety and complexity. As far as Fishbein's first collection is concerned, Bazhan had every reason to claim that it was astonishingly mature. *The Iambic Circle* textually, thematically, and structurally represented what Fishbein was about to become.

How did Fishbein feel about himself in the mid-1970s, after he had revealed himself to Ukrainian audiences as a Ukrainian poet with explicitly Jewish concerns? On the surface, the circumstances seemed favorable: his first book had been published; a number of sympathetic reviews had appeared in the Kyiv and Chernivtsi press; his translations of Heine had been included in a volume of Heine's poetry; the literary monthly *Vsesvit* had published his translations of some twentieth-century poets; he had worked two years for Mykola Bazhan as his literary secretary; Dmytro Pavlychko, then chief editor of *Vsesvit*, and Bazhan had both written strong recommendations for Fishbein to the Union of Writers; in 1976, after ten years of transfers, he had finally obtained his university diploma.

But the times had changed dramatically. By the mid-1970s, most of the nationally active Ukrainian intellectuals had been either silenced or sentenced. The security services had eliminated the dissidents and now sought full control over the liberal-minded intelligentsia. A KGB official approached Fishbein and suggested that he should become an informer, given his excellent standing and good reputation among Ukrainian writers. This was a serious proposal that could have secured his position and bolstered his career, not to mention the privileges and tangible commodities involved. Fishbein rejected the offer. In such cases the security organs were known to offer two options to nonconformist intellectuals: spend time in a correction colony or emigrate. Fishbein chose the latter option and left for Israel. At that time, emigration signified what Byron had called "still forever fare thee well": leaving the country for good.

Exile or *Galut*

What was a blessing for him as a Jew—leaving the Diaspora and moving to the Holy Land—turned out to be a curse for him as a Ukrainian poet: leaving his native land and going into exile. His familiarity with the Hebrew language and the Judaic tradition did not sweeten his bitter émigré experience. He was of no interest to the Israeli reading audience. There were no Ukrainian-language newspapers or other Ukrainian media in the country. Hundreds of thousands of new immigrants from Ukraine were by and large Russophones. Even those who knew or spoke Ukrainian had no chance to practice it, given the absence of an orga-

nized Ukrainian-speaking community and social infrastructure (for example, Sunday schools). Moreover, Israeli fascination with Russian culture continued despite the state-sponsored antisemitism in the USSR. Russian propaganda successfully enticed one ethnicity against the other: from the 1940s on it had effectively convinced the population of Ukraine, Jewish veterans of World War II included, that all Ukrainian nationalists were vociferously antisemitic and that those who insisted on speaking Ukrainian were nationalists. The Israeli establishment strongly supported this vision.

It comes as no surprise that Russian-speaking Jews from Soviet Ukraine considered any manifestation of sympathy toward Ukraine and Ukrainians a personal insult and aggressively resisted the attempts of a small circle of Israeli Ukrainophiles to establish public forums for a dialogue with the Ukrainian Diaspora. Indeed, state-sponsored antisemitism in Ukraine was a result of the regime's attempts to check the revivalist tendencies in the country, but this triggered a negative reaction in the Israeli establishment and the Israeli Russian-language press to things Ukrainian. This aversion was so intense and multifaceted, albeit baseless, that Israel repeatedly denied (and continues to deny) the title of righteous gentile to the Metropolitan Andrii Sheptyts'kyi (1865–1944), the head of the Ukrainian Uniate Church, who personally saved dozens of Jews during World War II.⁵³ Fishbein was well aware of the causes and consequences of the widespread Ukrainian-Jewish antipathy and repeatedly identified those who he considered to be behind it.⁵⁴ Yet given the Moscow orientation of Israel's Russian media, he could hardly combat the anti-Ukrainian bias.

To add insult to injury, pundits from the Slavic Department at the Hebrew University, with their traditional Russocentric vision of Slavic studies, never established contact with Fishbein.⁵⁵ With all his literary and linguistic talent, Fishbein could not find work as a tutor or freelance editor. The position of janitor or night watchman—so familiar to blue-collar Russian immigrants in Israel under the name of *shmirah*—was his lot. He boasted in private correspondence of being promoted at a certain point to the position of caretaker at Binyanei ha-Ummah, the convention center in Jerusalem. Fishbein's linguistic solitude in Israel seems to have been as desperate as it had been in Novosibirsk. The only difference was that now he knew he was a Ukrainian poet involuntarily in exile. In a private conversation he claimed not to have written or published anything during his ten years in Israel. Some critics have observed that the absence of a Ukrainian-speaking environment contributed to his almost ten-year-long silence.

Fishbein's random interlocutors belonged to the circle of Iakiv Suslens'kyi, a former prisoner of Zion from Moldavia who had spent some time in a Soviet correction colony, where he had befriended national-minded Ukrainian inmates.

Released from prison, Suslens'kyi made *aliyah* and began buttressing the dialogue between Jews and Ukrainians in the Diaspora. In 1984, on the eve of radical changes in the USSR, he began publishing a homemade journal, *Diialohy*, devoted to Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement and launched a campaign to improve Jewish-Ukrainian relations. Here, in his house in Ramot (Jerusalem), several Israeli sympathizers of the dialogue joined Suslens'kyi as members of the editorial board and regular contributors to *Diialohy*. But even those Israelis who wrote Ukrainian and sought contacts with the Ukrainian Diaspora routinely spoke Russian.

Several years before the journal crystallized as a feasible project, Fishbein, through Suslens'kyi's mediation, met and became friends with Mikhail Kheifets, one of the newcomers to the group. Kheifets (b. 1934) had been a literary critic and historian in Leningrad but was sentenced to seven years in a correction colony for having written a preface to a samizdat edition of Joseph Brodsky's poetry. In the colony Kheifets became acquainted with several Ukrainian dissidents, among them Zorian Popadiuk, Mykola Rudenko, Viacheslav Chornovil, and Vasyl' Stus. Under their impact Kheifets, who until then had been a thoroughly assimilated Jew, adopted a more pronounced Jewish identity, began to study Ukrainian, and wrote his memoirs, which he managed to smuggle out to the West. Kheifets became a keen observer, confidential interlocutor, and the only informal contemporary literary critic of Vasyl' Stus (1937–85), a Ukrainian poet of superb talent and tragic fate whose ranking in the pantheon of Ukrainian martyrs was, according to the post-1991 scholars, just behind Shevchenko.⁵⁶

During their first meeting in Jerusalem, Fishbein realized that Kheifets had spent time with Stus and urged him to write his memoirs. "Look at this black Jerusalem night," Fishbein recalls of their conversation. "The black Jerusalem sky dotted with stars. What time is it now? At present Stus is sleeping on his wooden bed over there in the Mordova barrack."⁵⁷ Kheifets allowed himself to be persuaded and penned a heartbreaking essay, which Fishbein translated for *Suchasnist'*, a Ukrainian-language journal of literature and politics then based in Munich. Kheifets' essay on Stus, translated by Fishbein into Ukrainian, was later included in his *Ukrains'ki Siliuety* (Ukrainian Silhouettes) and became an important contribution to Ukrainian literature.⁵⁸ In turn, for Fishbein, working on the memoir was not only a continuation of his encounter with Mikhail Kheifets, it was a virtual encounter with those Ukrainian-minded intellectuals whose fate he could have shared in the late 1970s when the KGB declared open season on Ukrainian human rights activists and national-minded thinkers.

Probably due to his submissions to *Suchasnist'*, which still retains a preeminent place on the Ukrainian literary landscape, Fishbein was invited to work at

the Ukrainian Division of Radio Liberty in Munich.⁵⁹ The job provided a small yet vibrant Ukrainian-speaking environment, was closer to Ukraine, and the Free Ukrainian University was nearby. Yet this was still what they call in Hebrew *galut*, exile, with its simulacra of the Ukrainian cultural milieu. Here Fishbein befriended Ukrainian and Jewish émigrés, refusniks, dissidents, and former Gulag prisoners who, like Izrail Kleiner and Mikhail Kheifets and their fellow Ukrainian inmates, started talking to one another as a way to overcome their inherited biases. Before his reawakening as a Ukrainian poet in the late 1980s, Fishbein wrote three poetic texts commissioned by his Ukrainian colleagues. For example, he penned an “experimental” fixed-rhyme poem for Ihor Kachurovs’kyi, a colleague at Radio Liberty, a renowned Ukrainian philologist, and the first to-date Ukrainian scholar who rediscovered Hryts’ko Kernerenko (see chapter 1). Kachurovs’kyi used Fishbein’s poetic experiment in his essay on poetic creativity. For another of Kachurovs’kyi’s articles, Fishbein translated a poem by the Russian symbolist Maksimilian Voloshin (commissioned by Iurii Sheveliov for *Suchasnist’*). Fishbein also translated one of Ze’ev Jabotinsky’s poems at the request of Izrail Kleiner, a friend from Jerusalem and a former Radio Liberty and Voice of America Ukraine correspondent. These three texts, according to Fishbein, constituted the only verse he put on paper during his Israeli and German exile in 1979–89. A new period in his biography began in the late 1980s, when, as Fishbein dubbed it, things began to clear up (*rozvydniuvatys’*) in Ukraine.

The Redeemer

Moisei Fishbein appeared on the Ukrainian cultural horizon in the 1970s and has not gone unnoticed since. Recommending Fishbein for membership to the Union of Writers of Ukraine, Mykola Bazhan—known for his balanced assessments—emphasized Fishbein’s “amazing mastery for a beginner.”⁶⁰ When the copy of *Vitchyzna* containing Fishbein’s debut arrived at his correction colony, Ivan Svitlychnyi (the father of the Ukrainian dissident movement and a poet and a literary critic) celebrated Fishbein’s “fresh and exquisite” contribution to Ukrainian belles lettres.⁶¹ In his preface to Fishbein’s 1984 collection (containing mostly poems written but not published in Ukraine), Iurii Sheveliov, a respected Diaspora literary critic, dubbed Fishbein a “post-Neoclassicist,” praised him for avoiding Ukrainian poetic sentimentalism, stressed his “philosophy of the ineffable,” and remarked that his poetry was worth reading and rereading because of the uniqueness of his voice.⁶² Reviewing Fishbein’s first publication in the West, one critic praised Fishbein’s “lucid Ukrainian style,”

argued that the poet has “achieved an original vision and voice,” and suggested that his poetry be translated into English and other Western languages.⁶³

After Ukraine finally achieved formal independence in 1991, Maksym Strikha, a Ukrainian intellectual, public figure, scientist, and the author of a Ukrainian translation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, claimed in a review of *Apokryph* (1996) that Fishbein’s poems would provide more entries in an anthology of Ukrainian verse than contributions by any other contemporary Ukrainian poet. He compared Fishbein to José-Maria de Heredia (1842–1905), author of refined French sonnets, and maintained that Fishbein’s poetry “displays the entire gamut of Ukrainian linguistic virtuosity.”⁶⁴ Among Fishbein’s admirers was Vadym Skuratovs’kyi, one of the key modern Ukrainian thinkers and the author of a number of important publications on Jewish issues.⁶⁵ He praised Fishbein’s “perfect Ukrainian acoustics” and noted that in Fishbein’s poetry “for the first time in history, Judaism speaks Ukrainian.”⁶⁶ In the 1990s, Fishbein became particularly popular in his hometown, proud of its many contributions to European literature. Petro Rykhlo, a scholar of German Literature and prolific translator from Chernivtsi, called Fishbein “a masterful stylist” and a poet “of a very high rank.”⁶⁷ Viktor Yushchenko, in 2004 one of the two candidates for the Ukrainian presidency, took Fishbein with him on a preelection tour of Ukraine, using him as a mouthpiece for his program of national revival and tolerance.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Fishbein also achieved popularity as a wit: Ukrainian news agencies often quoted his ironic sayings and short epigrams criticizing the regime. At the grassroots level, Fishbein made inroads into a new medium. In 2004, members of the popular online Live Journal discussion group competed for the best translation of Fishbein’s verse into English and Russian. Online sources addressed him as “brilliant,” “very Ukrainian,” “ethnic Bukovinian,” “a fighter against bureaucrats,” and even “the people’s voice.” Entries about him appeared in Western encyclopedias, and in Ukraine he has been the subject of a master of arts thesis.⁶⁸ To be sure, Fishbein’s critics have been well aware of his Jewish identity, yet this has not diminished their enthusiasm. The author of an article on Chernivtsi regarded the city as the birthplace of three wonderful poets: Rose Ausländer, Paul Célan, and Moisei Fishbein.⁶⁹ What has made Ukrainian poets, critics, journalists, and connoisseurs of literature praise the author of scarcely one hundred poems so highly?

First and foremost, it has been Fishbein’s stance on the Ukrainian national revival—a stance that could, with some caution, be dubbed messianic. Jewish messianism had produced, in the distant and recent past, various examples of national leadership. The name Moses, of course, is not uncommon for Jewish intellectual and public leaders: Moses took the Jews out of Egypt; Moses Mai-

monides argued for the synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Judaism; Moshe ibn Ezra introduced Arabic meter and imagery into Jewish poetry; Moshe de Leon penned the major Kabbalistic opus *Sefer ha-Zohar* (Book of Splendor); and Moses Mendelssohn proved that Judaism was compatible with the European Enlightenment and gave his blessing to Jewish integration into European society. Moses (that is, Moisei) Fishbein is by no means unaware of his illustrious predecessors and he emulates them in many ways. Messianism is his quintessential feature. It is a key part of his literary endeavors, his daily practice, and his self-parodies. He named his collection of aphoristic sayings *Vid Moiseia* (Of Moses), ironically implying a new “Gospel of Moses.”⁷⁰ He telephones someone and declares, velvety: “Tse—Moisei!” (This is Moses!). He jokes in the satirical poem “Messiah Loves Moses” by pointing to the phonetic similarity between the accusative form of his own Ukrainianized name (*Musía*, acc. of *Musii* = Moisei) and the Ukrainian for Messiah (*Mesía*).⁷¹ He takes his messianism seriously and expects others to do the same. But Fishbein should be set apart even among Jewish messianic figures.

Some messiahs claimed that Jews in the Diaspora should dissolve themselves into Roman, Hellenistic, Russian, or German civilization. Others argued that Jews should leave the Diaspora for good and reestablish their own civilization in the Land of Israel. Fishbein claims dual citizenship: one, Israeli, and the other, a metaphorical “citizenship of the Ukrainian language.” Fishbein’s claim that he is an Israeli citizen residing permanently in the realm of the Ukrainian language has a point. There were Jewish messiahs who argued that their mission was to redeem the Jews; after all even Jesus declared that he had come to the sheep of the Israeli flock. There were other messianic figures of Jewish origin who claimed they had come to redeem all of humankind. Until Fishbein, there were no Jewish messiahs who sought to redeem a semi-forgotten language or a despised culture or a colonial or postcolonial gentile nation. Moisei Fishbein is the first. His redeeming effort targets a nation that has been as mistreated and victimized as the Jews, yet is not Jewish; a nation that is an inseparable part of humanity, yet not all of humanity; a nation that Jews have regarded through the centuries as inherently antisemitic and a nation that is argued to have treated Jews for centuries as enemy aliens. To this nation, the Ukrainians, a Jewish Moses has come to proclaim: I have come to redeem your language, your culture, your European reputation, and your national dignity. Fishbein is fulfilling a salvific mission to Ukrainians as a self-conscious Jew and because he is a self-conscious Jew.

Fishbein sees himself not as a regular Ukrainian-Jewish poet but as a Jewish messiah sent to Ukraine. Neither Kernerenko nor Kulyk, neither Troianker nor Pervomais’kyi dared make such a claim or would have found it absurd. The fol-

lowing epigraph introduces Fishbein's 1996 collection of poems: "I was sent to Ukraine from Above. Ukraine will exist eternally because I wish it to do so. The Ukrainian language was given to me from Above. It will exist eternally because I wish it to do so. I write poetry only when it is given to me from Above." Fishbein presents his relationship with the Ukrainian language as divinely inspired. His Ukrainian is a grace that the authority "above" has bestowed upon him. He is nothing but an instrument in the redemptive scenario of the Almighty. As he uses it the Ukrainian language becomes instrumental in contacting God. Fishbein borrows from the sanctity of the Judaic Holy Tongue, sanctifies the Ukrainian language, and places the sanctified Ukrainian in the gravitational center of his Jewish-Ukrainian symbolism. A language that had served only as a means of communication comes now, together with its medium, poetry, to perform a redeeming function. The poet exalts and saves the language; the language exalts the voice of the poet, who attaches a divine function to it; and both the poet and the language partake of the redemptive effort targeting a fallen culture and an oppressed country. Speaking and writing Ukrainian is a salvific endeavor, a political statement, and an anticolonialist gesture.

Although Fishbein's messianic fervor is less palpable in his poetry than in his public appearances, it is still apparent. In a poem from 1993, he addresses the Ukrainian language as victimized, mistreated, and abused, yet pristine and immaculate in its sanctity. Fishbein brings to the humiliated Ukrainian mercy and comfort. He offers her shelter, and his own agency:

Untouched and raped, abused
And unblemished like the countryside—
Imperceptible and untouched in rye—
Melody, the words came into my dream.
The winter darkness rolls
And their souls are drenched with mist.
Lean on me, my petty tongue, my Speech,
Unblemished, raped, and sacred.⁷²

Fishbein's stance on the Ukrainian language is best addressed as "linguistic messianism." Its pathos has shaped Fishbein's journalism, talks, interviews, poetry, prose, and conversation.

For Fishbein, the language bears responsibility for the entire Ukrainian cultural tradition. "I know Russian, and English, and German, as well as Hebrew and some Slavic languages, but I do not allow myself to speak Russian because the survival of Ukrainian, and consequently, of Ukrainian culture, the Ukrainian spirit, and of Ukraine itself, is at stake," he says. Fishbein seems to be paraphrasing Hillel, the famous Talmudic guru, albeit in a very different context: if I do

not redeem Ukrainian from Russification, who will? Indeed, who dares publicly to denounce the profound Russification of the Ukrainian language (whereas almost everybody in Ukraine takes it for granted and hardly anybody corrects the grammatical mistakes of their interlocutors)? Fishbein does. He corrects his Ukrainian-speaking interlocutors, sometimes to their dismay. This “linguistic mission” is part of his lofty calling as a bearer of the Ukrainian language; it is also part of his self-perception as a Jew coming to purify and redeem. For Fishbein, the fusion Russian-Ukrainian *surzhyk*—characteristic of the heads of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the MPs, various public figures and cabinet ministers, wealthy and influential tycoons, television stars—betrays a vexing reality: from the linguistic viewpoint, its users are denationalized individuals representing the profound assimilation of Ukraine’s cultural elite. But there is good news, too: Moisei Fishbein, a Jew and an Israeli, is coming to teach these assimilated Ukrainians some proper Ukrainian. This is one of the meanings of his invitation to “Lean on me, my petty tongue, my Speech.”

As a messianic figure, Fishbein needed a prophet to enunciate his coming and his revelation, a prophet capable of demonstrating the continuity between Fishbein and his illustrious predecessors, justifying his messianic pretensions, and prefiguring his advent. There were very few figures capable of assuming this role. Fishbein chose another classic Ukrainian writer—significantly, not Shevchenko, but Lesia Ukrainka (Larysa Petrivna Kosach-Kvitka, 1871–1913), whom, because of her consistent philosemitism, both Pervomais’kyi and Fishbein associated with the entirety of Ukraine, its people, its language, and its culture.

In the poem “Krym: Osin” (The Crimea: Autumn), Fishbein addresses Lesia Ukrainka with a friendly patronymic and charming vocative—“Laryso Petrivno”—and, revealing his hidden agenda, unexpectedly replaces Lesia with a different addressee:

I am seeking your voice—perhaps I will hear its flight,
The echo will resonate in the seaside. So I found one day—
Laryso Petrivno, Lesiu, my Ukrainian—Ukraine,
The country that flew to an unconceivable height.

In the autumn wind I am looking for your prophetic word,
In the cold autumn Crimea I am looking for you, Miriam.⁷³

Fishbein finds a prophetic word (*slovo prorоче*) endorsing and justifying his mission—and this word is articulated by the Ukrainian national poetess. Yet for him, as for any Ukrainian poet of stature, a dialogue with Lesia Ukrainka is necessary but not sufficient. The imaginary Lesia proves Fishbein’s credentials as a

Ukrainian poet but not as an individual of messianic caliber, which would require support from a text tantamount to Scripture. Therefore Fishbein addresses Lesia Ukrainka as Miriam, the biblical wife of Moses, a prophetess. Only Moisei Fishbein and Lesia Ukrainka—Moses and Miriam, a national leader and a national prophetess—are privileged to redeem the Ukrainian language. Lesia Ukrainka thus obliquely testifies to Fishbein's indisputable right to claim a Ukrainian literary heritage; as the biblical Miriam, she hints at Fishbein's messianic mission. The quality of Fishbein's verse and his worldview makes this claim probable.

Fishbein sanctifies the Ukrainian language. He treats it as a two-way conductor between himself and the Almighty. Fishbein "hears" the call from on high in Ukrainian—and in the same Ukrainian he returns his pleas, petitions, supplications, and dirges to his sublime addressee. If poets from Taras Shevchenko and Panteleimon Kulish to Oxana Zabuzhko cast biblical psalms in Ukrainian, Fishbein crafts psalms of his own, psalms regrettably absent from the Bible. He "nationalizes" or "Ukrainizes" Hebrew biblical poetry. The Ukrainian tradition, he seems to argue, now has acquired its original psalmody—Fishbein's poetry: let modern Hebrew poets recast it in their Hebrew, this revived biblical tongue! To be sure, Fishbein recreates a corresponding genre in Ukrainian, as if Ukrainian is and has ever been the genuine biblical medium. Thematically and metaphorically, there is hardly anything in the Prophets or Scriptures similar to Fishbein's imagery. He composes the apocryphal psalm as if crafted by a person dying in the Auschwitz crematorium ("Tenebrae: Psalm"). He complains to God of the theological emptiness of the postcatastrophe world ("Hospody, porozhnio v nashii hospodi"; Lord, it is empty in our household). He asks the Almighty to judge him—"Onde, Otche, ondechky. Sudy" (Here, Lord, over here. Judge us!). He imagines God as the God of the vine, as She ("pozanebesna moia okhorono," my supracelestial guardian, and "storozha vysoka," lofty protector; both cases are vocatives of the Ukrainian feminine singular), and beseeches Her for a "swallow" of the "juice" of life. In "Pomizh roviv, kanaliv ta kanav" (Between Ravines, Canals, and Pits) he presents apocryphal Gospel depicting a crucified God, "our God," who fails to resuscitate.

Ukrainian becomes not only the language of yet another biblical apocrypha (this is, I suppose, the source of the title of his 1996 collection): it also turns into the language of Judaic liturgy. Whereas C elan only briefly mentions the Judaic mourning prayers, such as *yizkor* and *kadish*, in his poems, Fishbein crafts the Ukrainian for them. This is how his "Kol Nidrei"—the first prayer of the Day of Atonement—comes into being. Ukrainian is another sacred liturgical language, suggests Fishbein. On the eve of his emigration from Ukraine in 1978, he dedi-

cated a poem crowned by “there is still the silence of prayer on my lips” to Mykola Lukash.⁷⁴ And on the eve of the 2005 Jewish High Holidays he recreated in his dazzling Ukrainian the Day of Atonement *vidui*, a penitential prayer whose recitation manifests the purification of personal and collective sins. Fishbein demonstrates that Ukrainian perfectly fits the most sublime Judaic liturgy. After all, who can reassure us that the Yom Kippur atonement works better in Hebrew than in Ukrainian?

Before purifying Jews with a prayer in Ukrainian, Fishbein, a high priest in the temple of Ukrainian culture, atones for the collective contamination of the Ukrainian language and calls on the Ukrainian people for its purification. At the Congress of Ukrainian Intellectuals (Konhres ukrains’koi intelihentsii) in 1995, he emerged as an ardent advocate of linguistic purity. For him, “purity” does not mean cleansing the language of dialecticisms. In fact, Fishbein argues for the incorporation of Ukrainian localisms, dialect vocabulary, archaisms, and neologisms into colloquial speech. But the syntax and phraseology should be Ukrainian and the vowels—as against spoken Russian, never reduced in Ukrainian—should be properly vocalized. Let Russians suppress their vowels; Ukrainians must treat them with respect. Fishbein insists on the deliberate disassociation of Ukrainian language from Russian, and especially from Russian pop culture. Fishbein also insisted that Ukrainian cultural elites should make every effort to improve their knowledge of the Ukrainian language, which he sees as a guarantor—if not *the* guarantor—of statehood and independence. His linguistic extremism, which rests on a vision of the universe and history as language-centered, does not seem strange if one takes into account that Fishbein paid dearly for his Ukrainian. His personal journey considerably enhanced his sense of exclusion: the fact that his only true and faithful Ukrainian interlocutor in Israel was Borys Hrynchenko’s dictionary of Ukrainian usage from 1907 to 1909, tells volumes about his linguistic solitude. Yet it raised rather than diminished his self-awareness as a Ukrainian poet.

Unlike many Ukrainian émigrés, Fishbein managed to take the Ukrainian language with him and preserve it, against the odds, in his journey through the Soviet army, in which Ukrainian was regarded as the medium of Ukrainian ultranationalism; through the Israeli purgatory, where immigrants preferred Russian to any language, including Hebrew; and through the deceptive German paradise, where—beyond the limited circle of the Free Ukrainian University’s unchanging group of very senior Ukrainians and the two-three people at the Ukrainian division of Radio Liberty in Munich—the Ukrainian language was no more than a second-world curiosity. If Fishbein had managed to preserve the

language throughout his peregrinations, the people of Ukraine had all the more reason to do so.

The Ukrainian upheavals of the late 1980s and early 1990s, pregnant with the upcoming Ukrainian independence and cultural reorientation, broadened the spectrum of Fishbein's linguistic messianism yet brought him little relief. On one hand, the new political leaders, the heads of the Ukrainian Popular Rukh among them, emphasized their adherence to the revival of the Ukrainian language and culture, in fact, the very concept of the "Ukrainian" perestroika. On the other hand, the former bureaucracy all too opportunistically adapted to the new national revival, undermining the integrity of post-Soviet Ukrainian national slogans. Those Communist Party leaders who had harshly suppressed the Ukrainian national revival in the Shcherbyts'kyi era felt the winds changing and proclaimed themselves the champions of the Ukrainian national movement. Yesterday's watchdogs of proletarian internationalism declared their wholehearted support for Ukrainian national strivings.

Fishbein felt nothing but disgust watching those corrupt bureaucrats assume the role of leaders of the institutionalized national revival. His response was immediate. To convey it, he resorted to bitter sarcasm and to his idiosyncratic messianic imagery. Since Ukrainian history, from the perspective of his poetry, unfolded according to a mysterious redemptive scenario, it was logical to ponder yesterday's persecutors of the national revival as "Judas" and the national revivalists as "Jesus." Jesus and Judas presented an excellent opportunity to look at the New Testament's messianic plot through a Ukrainian prism. Fishbein reimaged Jesus as a Ukrainian who suffered on the cross for his wish to redeem the nation. And Judas assumed the role of the defector of the national movement who, under new circumstances, was the first to sing hosanna to the Ukrainian Jesus. The old traitors of the messianic cause turned into its apostles as soon as it became politically expedient to do so.

To all those phony converts and their denationalized followers who in the 1970s had sold their Ukrainian souls only to rediscover them suddenly in the 1990s, Fishbein addresses his 1991 "Apocrypha":

Sweetness is the seasoning of sorrow,
Comforting is the shadow of the Cross.
A sweet word of grief is a caress,
A tickle in a beggar's mouth—from where
You come and who you are, all have forgotten now,
Since His, "Forgive, they know not what they do."
Cities are stifled in their violence,

A thousand-throated mob howls in the street,
 While you, their leader, Judas Iscariot,
 Raise your voice and glorify dead Christ.⁷⁵

Judas could and should not be preaching Christianity: if this were to happen, added Fishbein in his aphoristic epigraph to his poem, “the land where Judas preaches Christ” would never be happy. Fishbein, outraged by the cynicism of self-proclaimed Ukrainian patriots, lashes out at them with religious allegories full of venom.

Among late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century politicians the consensus was that Ukraine’s national survival required the cooperation of new national-minded leaders and former dissidents of various political orientations, including former Communist apparatchiks and socialist populists, but Fishbein could neither agree with nor understand that necessity. Although Jesus in accordance with his own teaching would have forgiven Judas, Moisei Fishbein is not ready to forgive those who betrayed the national cause. He is too Jewish to endorse alliances with unrepentant Soviet Ukrainian collaborators. And his Jesus is too Ukrainian, human, and mortal to afford postmortem mercy to those who betrayed him, particularly because the miracle does not happen and he—*u nas* (among us, in our environment), emphasizes Fishbein—is not resurrected.⁷⁶ The mortality of his Messiah is seen not only in Fishbein’s treatment of Jesus but also in the sober assessment of his own linguistic messianism. Fishbein cannot change things on his own: he needs volunteers eager to help him to bear his Ukrainian cross. Perhaps, therefore, Fishbein expresses his readiness to embrace anyone in Kyiv—Ukraine’s regretfully Russified capital—who dares speak Ukrainian publicly.⁷⁷

Kyiv and Jerusalem

Fishbein’s Jewish-Ukrainian identity includes elements of both cultures but is not merely the sum of its parts. In the case of Fishbein, the Jewish and the Ukrainian help explain one another by revealing the similarities and discrepancies between the two cultures. Once Fishbein’s Jewish and Ukrainian references are deciphered in their corresponding cultural and poetic context, it becomes clear that they not only are juxtaposed but also resist hybridization. They inform a complex poetic persona, more subtle and contradictory than the mere combination of “the Jewish” and “the Ukrainian.”

Two examples illuminate this point. In the programmatic poems “I vzhe vusta sudomoiu zvelo” (A Mouth Contorted in Pain, 1989) and “Shche teploho velykodnia pora” (It Is Still a Warm Easter Day, 1996) at the beginning of the

Apokryf collection, Fishbein resorts to the paradigmatic parallel between Kyiv and Jerusalem made by writers, poets, and thinkers from the Russian Mikhail Bulgakov to the Ukrainian Roman Rakhmannyi.⁷⁸ But he views Jerusalem as a Jewish town, not Christian, and he presents Kyiv through its peculiar Ukrainian landscape, not through its East Orthodox (therefore, imperial) historical sights:

. . . A mouth contorted in pain,
And an immortal soul has taken on
The scorched hills of Jerusalem
And Kyiv's burned over greenery.
O droplet, glimmer, bumblebee,
Little pearl, destiny, you half-invisible
Intangible rhyme of my existence,
Its sting, red-hot and sweet—
Bless these things, to be my own—
Fog falling over the Wailing Wall
And spring falling over the Dnieper.
Bless these things, to stay my own
As long as I walk in the world,
As long as I can still remember.⁷⁹

At the first glance, Fishbein seems to compare the Land of Israel to Ukraine, the Jordan to the Dnieper, and the Western Wall in Jerusalem to the steep slopes running down to the banks of the Ukrainian river. He brings together Israeli and Ukrainian symbolic realms, a novelty on its own. He spiritually encompasses both the “scorched hills” of Jerusalem and the “burned over greenery” of Kyiv. Their combination is the poet’s “destiny” and the “intangible rhyme of his existence”; he unequivocally wants us to see them as complementary and indispensable.

Yet Fishbein avoids mechanical synthesis: Ukraine does not become a promised land, and Kyiv does not assume the place of Jerusalem. The poet absorbs Kyiv and Jerusalem alike but preserves their integrity.⁸⁰ Thus Fishbein’s Word unites Jewish and Ukrainian realms: Israel and Ukraine form a new whole in which geographical and cultural spheres function as poetic rhymes—similar but different. A closer look provides a clue to Fishbein’s dual poetic identity: that in his universe the Ukrainian and the Jewish are similar only on a superficial level but are dramatically incongruent in substance.

The juxtaposition of two national shrines—the legendary Dnieper hills and the millennia-old Western Wall—entails something more than the cross-fertilization of multicultural elements. Phonetic structures point to the implicit disjunction, if not diametrical opposition, of Jerusalem and Kyiv. The beginnings and the ends of the simile emphasize the difference rather than similarity be-

tween the two images: *rozpecheni* (scorched, referring to Jerusalem hills) contrast with *zelo* (greenery, referring to Kyiv hills): o/é in the first case, and e/ó in the second. Kyiv phonetically opposes Jerusalem, ie/y (*Jerusalyma*), and reverses the sequence of y/ye (*Kyieva*). Without providing any national or ethnic imagery underscoring the difference between Ukrainian Kyiv and Jewish Jerusalem, Fishbein still manages phonetically to underscore their intrinsic dissimilarity. In the next stanza he parallels the Jewish Wailing Wall and the Ukrainian River, perhaps capitalized to match the symbolic importance of the Wall, but at the same time he disassociates their absolute rhyme (*Stinoiu / Rikoiu*) by placing one word at the end of a line, the another in the middle of the next. The Ukrainian and the Israeli images rhyme, he seems to say, but only indirectly. It is not so much the cultural references as the poetic form itself that signals the similarities and differences of the two metaphors.

Prefiguring the culminating juxtaposition, Fishbein transforms spatial parallels into temporal ones: *iuha* (fog) connotes the wet and rainy Israeli *winter*, whereas Ukraine is associated with the *spring* falling over the Dnieper. Ultimately, Jewish/Israeli and Ukrainian/Kyiv imagery blend into the poet's personal reflections. Although the first line of the last stanza (Bless these things, to stay my own) appropriates and personalizes Kyiv and Jerusalem, the last two lines universalize them by replacing the personalized verbal form and the personal pronoun ("I" or "me") with the infinitive (lost in the English version) and the impersonal verb ("there are"): literally, "live memoirs" or "as long as there are worldly memories" or "as long as people remember."⁸¹ Jerusalem and Kyiv coexist for Moisei Fishbein as long as he is physically and spiritually alive—but they also coexist universally and for as long as humanity remembers. Living/earthly memories—*spohady zemni*—transform Fishbein's personal experiences into a universal cultural category. Kyiv and Jerusalem, Israel and Ukraine, Ukrainians and Jews will remain two parts of one and the same supranational metaphor so long as Ukrainian and Jewish culture—or civilization—exists.

Fishbein was not the first to trace the parallels between the Ukrainian and the Jewish/Biblical/Israeli realms: Czernowitz-born Rose Ausländer did so long before Fishbein did. In "Ohne Wein und Brot" (Without Bread and Wine) she portrays desperate Bukovina Jews despoiled of even the hope for redemption: the Wailing Wall, a collector of tears, is their only patrimony.⁸² Ausländer juxtaposes Zion and Austrian Bukovina by recalling her mother's songs and dreams ("Meine Nachtigal"; My Nightingale). Perhaps Fishbein, a connoisseur of Ausländer's poetry, appreciated that her Czernowitz, portrayed in German, reminded him of the Ukrainian Kyiv: both were towns on the hills (Gestufte Stadt, Hügelstadt), both watered the willow growing on the banks (Weiden

entlang dem Pruth). Perhaps Fishbein borrowed and revisited Ausländer's comparison of the Jewish people and bumblebees.⁸³ Apparently he also reworked Ausländer's river/eternity metaphor expanding it into a more recognizable Ukrainian and simultaneously more universal realm.⁸⁴

More important, Fishbein seems to have come across Ausländer's poem about her father, who left the ghettoized Sadagora for the secular Czernowitz: here Ausländer brought together Ukrainian and Jewish realms in a manner echoed in Fishbein. Ausländer crafts a dense Judaic imagery: in her poetry the "trees of the holy letters spread their roots from Sadagora to Czernowitz."⁸⁵ She views the time of Torah learning as the space in which Ukraine and the Holy Land become one: when her father learned Jewish texts, "the Jordan flowed into the Prut."⁸⁶ Apparently borrowing from Ausländer (as did Célan), Fishbein revisits Ausländer's reference to the past times, to *damals*—the "then." Whereas for Ausländer the unity of Bukovina and Israel is possible only in the distant and irretrievable pre-Holocaust past, for Fishbein this impossible juxtaposition is still possible here and now.

Kyiv and Jerusalem are bound together as the realms of redemption. In "Shche teploho Velykodnia pora" (It Is Still a Warm Easter Day), a messianic image appears: a capitalized He, most likely an unnamed Jesus, God, or humanized divinity, comes from the other side of the Jordan to genuflect near the Dnieper banks. The first stanza contains a deliberately ambiguous reference to a feminine image ("her") that this He views at a distance from beyond the Jordan. This unnamed "she" first appears as a reference to a warm Easter day (*pora*; Ukrainian feminine; literally, the season), but toward the last stanza it acquires a different—or additional—meaning: Ukraine. The Redeemer comes from the other side of the Jordan to reveal himself to Ukraine through the "touch of the dove's wing." He comes to pray for Ukraine and to redeem her. The redemptive theme is underscored by the juxtaposition of the two meanings of "her," Ukraine and season, one of which (Easter) is imbued with salvific connotations.

Transforming the *country* into a sacred *time*, Fishbein reiterates his faith in Ukraine's redemptive vocation. Yet his parallelisms become even subtler. After Fishbein has pointed to Him—"here He is, genuflecting near the Dnieper"—a second important parallel appears. Ukraine merges with Easter and the Ukrainian poet, with He, the mysterious Redeemer. The Redeemer perceives Ukraine as "murdered, not killed, not bewailed," very much like Fishbein perceives Ukraine elsewhere. The Redeemer promises to reveal himself through the touch of the dove's wing—and Fishbein calls his own words "the doves" ("Slova moi"; My Words). Just as the Redeemer comes from the other side of Jordan, elsewhere Fishbein, too, visualizes his return to Ukraine as a redemptive exodus. Fi-

nally, the Redeemer and Fishbein both exemplify Logos, the immortal Word, which oscillates between the two cities: prophetic in the case of Jesus, poetic in the case of Fishbein. Without this important parallel, Fishbein's image would have remained trivial, since Jesus has connoted political and cultural redemption in many postcolonial cultures. But by making Jesus part of his own poetic alter ego, Fishbein permeates the redemptive scenario with personal, intimate, and intimately Jewish connotations. "He" in the poem signifies not only Jesus. It signifies the poet, Moisei Fishbein, no less a redeemer, who—as if replicating his student prayers in Novosibirsk—now comes to the Ukrainian Holy Land to genuflect at the hills of the Dnieper, to thank God for the opportunity to come back from exile, and to pray for Ukraine's salvation.

Ultimately, Fishbein construes a utopian realm that obliterates the differences between Ukraine and Israel, the Dnieper and the Jordan, Kyiv and Jerusalem. He backdates this realm to the times of his childhood, when, the poet argues, "we were immortal." Back then the world seems a dazzling myth in which Chernivtsi and Ravenna become neighbors, making geography obsolete, and the "black" imagery has no chance to interfere with the divinely "white" realms of lofty dream and eternal bliss. This is Fishbein:

Jerusalem glittered in the crystal,
The River flowed from God's palm,
And our City glimmered on the throne
And the star confessed to a bumblebee.⁸⁷

Here the proximity of Kyiv and Jerusalem becomes possible among other things since the Heavens meet the Earth—or, as Fishbein, argues, a cold distant star comes to talk intimately with a warm fuzzy bumblebee. In the utopian future, Fishbein seems to argue, Ukraine would become a country where diverse cultures and languages, as Ausländer put it, "coexist caressing the air." This utopia comes to life due to a new spin that occurred in Fishbein's poetry in the 1990s.

From Heaven to Earth

Fishbein arrived at his messianic identity by striving to revive and reinvent the universe after catastrophe (embodied historically by the Holocaust and poetically in the poetry of Paul C elan). Echoes of the "black milk of daybreak" from C elan's *Todesfuge*—a metaphor C elan borrowed from Rose Ausl ander—pervade Fishbein's early poetry.⁸⁸ For C elan, the "black milk" is poisonous: drinking it opens up the day when Nazis (who "play with snakes" and "write home to Germany") make Jews perform a danse macabre on the edge of their mass graves.

Recalling how he watched hours and hours of World War II black-and-white

newsreels depicting mass murders, concentration camps, and human bones, Fishbein calls himself and his generation “chorno-biloi khroniky dity” (the children of black-and-white newsreels), as if replicating C elan’s “black milk” for a post-Holocaust world. For Fishbein, “black” is associated with the “prachorna pit’ma prastolit’” (pitch-black darkness of prehistory),⁸⁹ with the absolute cosmic past, with historical catastrophes, destructive power, and implacable death. The Holocaust and devastation reign in Fishbein’s poetic universe, echoing C elan’s imagery of total annihilation as, for example, in “Pohar, 1995” (Ruin, 1995):

And the black raven was sitting on the black
And there were neither homes nor orchards.

In “Poezia” (Poetry), dedicated to the memory of Leonid Pervomais’kyi, Fishbein uses variations on “black” (“gray,” “overcast,” “cloudy,” “darkness”) to produce the image of history as destruction:

From distant and cloudy realms—
wildly—toward me—
. . . a dark overcast races . . .
it ruins and crashes . . .⁹⁰

Great catastrophes obliterate humanity and humanism. The poet is left with no escape and no hope, as is the case in the poem “A tam pustelia” (And There Is a Desert):

And there is a desert. The black day of Pompeii.
The last day of Pompeii. Black smoke.
And burnt ruins under your eyes,
And black ashes from under your hand,
Like a black bird.⁹¹

In Fishbein, the impossibility of resurrection leads to hopelessness. Just as the raven in “Ruin” is unable to bring orchards and homes back from the dead (“Could you really revive them, poor creature?”), so the poet is unable to resuscitate his dearest one:

You are performing, insane musician,
For the ashes of your beloved.

Fishbein also pursues this theme in “Babi Yar.” The cranes flying over the infamous ravine leave no hope for redemption either: Fishbein never refers to their promising white color, instead depicting them as “black shadows flying in heavy silence.”

The human presence is almost unnoticeable in Fishbein’s early universe: devastation reigns. The individual human conscience records the surrounding

ruin and wreckage with a borderline despair, from which the poet, another Jonah or Job, cries to God. Yet God seems to be an unimaginable luxury in Fishbein's universe. His only affirmative description appears much later. In Fishbein's 2002 poem there appears a quotation from the Christian prayer, "Pater Noster qui es in coelis." Fishbein takes the verb and elliptically drops the noun (the final "who art" in the following poem is a reference to "qui es") as though casting doubt on the objectivity of the divine. There is no Lord in heaven and no landlord in the house. Hence the emphasis on the ontological emptiness of the universe:

Oh Lord, it is empty in our household,
 Oh Lord, it is chilly and wet, and downstairs
 The voice of a vanished master is drenched.
 Behind the doors the heaven is murky.
 Oh Lord, it is empty, give me strength!
 Doors are wrecked and the padlock rusty.
 Wind is dashing haze, which looks
 Like an anonymous voice, a barren specie,
 Behind the doors the glow wanes,
 Behind the mist the autumn darkness reigns.
 Over there, in the corner, the grain smolders.
 It is empty, oh Lord, who art.⁹²

Here too the influence of (and disagreement with) C elan is evident. In *Tenebrae* C elan suggests that it is God who should pray and seek refuge "since we [the dead ones] are coming." At the same time, in his "Psalm" C elan pronounces "Blessed art thou, No One," denying the divine the ability to intercede in the historical process and perhaps even the right to exist. C elan assimilates the all-powerful divinity and the intimidating and destructive *nothing* (Lat.: *nihil*) of existentialism.⁹³ Measured against C elan's theological void, Fishbein's final "who art" might not seem so desperate. It is clear, however, that even when God appears at the very end of the poem, he is not a redeemer but a mere figure of speech. Fishbein becomes a mourner, the poem a *kadish* (prayer for the dead), and God, the deceased. Nothing remains of divine authority but a couple of words: a signifier without a signified, to use de Saussure's parlance.

Fishbein changes the sequence of his poems from one collection to the next. He moves the poems he wrote in Chernivtsi in the 1960s and 1970s to the end of his collection, and he places the more recent poems at the beginning. Reading through the entire collection is akin to traveling through time: the reader, who has already accepted the poet's messianic call, accompanies him to the time when this call began to crystallize. Back then, the poet contemplated, and sang praises to, the black-and-white world that surrounded him.⁹⁴ But the times of the black milk have passed, the black-and-white newsreel has ended, and Fish-

bein makes an enormous effort to separate the black from the white, allowing them to dominate his poetic universe but assigning a separate function to each.

Fishbein has apparently picked up this theme exactly where Pervomais'kyi left off. Whereas his illustrious predecessor bemoaned the doves flying away from him, unable to stay, like words, on paper, Fishbein claims that the words, like doves, come back to him. He domesticates them, feeding them from his hand.⁹⁵ Pervomais'kyi presents Jesus praying for the death of a private human being and denying his own resuscitation, whereas Fishbein bewails the absence of national redemption: "our God does not resuscitate." Expressing a desire to forsake the hermeneutic world and go beyond the realm of words, Fishbein acknowledges the artificial character of pure poetry:

I will sit down in front of a white page.
I see in it, I feel in it
That torrent, a murmur, the smell and thunder.
I want the garden, not the scenery.⁹⁶

Fishbein takes a decisive step outside this realm by identifying in "Myt" (A Moment) with someone who contemplates the "white" beauty of early winter:

The snows began to fall. As if to a birthday,
Nobody has gotten used to snow.
Evening motorbikes with their engines muffled
Were losing their daily rage.
Meek and calm whiteness
Solemnly covered the motorbikes.
Every word sounded like prayer.
A face looking out the window
Was the face of a saint, white purity
Returned to evening ground. . . .⁹⁷

But the poet cannot remain in his "white" realm: it is incumbent on him to return words—these particles of eternity—to the Earth. Only the poetic Word (embodied in a bird, a light beam or a bumblebee) mediates between the two realms of Fishbein's universe. This mediation is not only a sublime call but also a painful personal experience. In a poem from 1968, Fishbein seeks to connect past and present and is struck by the "electric current" of memory.⁹⁸ Yet, by connecting memory and history, the Above and the Beneath, art and life, Fishbein—like Pervomais'kyi in his late poetry—transforms his mediating experience into what Jorge Luis Borges called "an aesthetic event."

Whatever course history may take, Fishbein argues, it cannot annihilate the sublime poetic realm of "whiteness" (an allusion to eternity, immaculate, divine, miraculous, and nurturing). In his 2005 poems, he addresses "whiteness" either

directly as the “bila prokholoda plashchanytsi” (the white coolness of the shroud, meaning the Shroud of Turin) or indirectly as the “snihy—to horni visti/nedotorkanykh vysot” (snows—the sublime news from the untouchable heights).⁹⁹ For Fishbein, white entails something more important than eternity. It is the embodiment of the poetic Word, the salt of the earth. To emphasize this image, in “The *Chumaks* in Search for Salt,” Fishbein is reincarnated as a seventeenth-century *chumak*, a Ukrainian peasant who journeys to the Crimea for salt. He compares salt to words: “the salt is the words that I will sow into the night.”¹⁰⁰ The expression “the white ones” refers to the redeeming “salt” of the Gospels (“you are the salt of the earth,” Matthew 5:13) and helps to lighten the thick darkness of the universe. In the above-mentioned poem devoted to Pervomais’kyi, the racing “dark overcast” acquires the features of an implacable nomadic horseman who, in the middle of destruction, suddenly realizes that

Impeccable and unyielding
The whiteness stretches throughout.

Although historical or natural calamity cannot entirely smash the realm of poetry, this does not mean that darkness in the postdestruction world is eliminated once and for all. On the contrary, calamity creates an indispensable framework for an emerging new light.

Even in 2002, ten years after the proclamation of independence, Fishbein’s Ukraine is only a bunch of familiar, friendly faces glimmering in the chiaroscuro of a destroyed paradise, not an overwhelmingly optimistic symphony of colors:

. . . what are those ruins? . . . perhaps they are close.
. . . what desert is that? — . . . it’s the Arabian desert.
. . . aren’t they Druzes?—in the canteen’s corner?
They are friends, and the rest of the forsaken troops.
—out there, in the corner—ruined contentment?
—destroyed paradise . . . abandoned nirvana?
—over there, in a corner, there is my Ukraine—
The faces of Larysa, Oles’, and Ivan.¹⁰¹

The faces glittering in the darkness of Fishbein’s Ukraine entail the promise of change, which becomes possible only as a result of Fishbein’s return to Ukraine from exile—at first sporadic, and later permanent. The return also brings hope for the revival of the divine presence in the world.

Fishbein’s source of creativity lies between the white snows and the black desert, on the border of which stands his father’s house. Moving into the past and to Ukraine is a “long way, a troublesome recollection.” But it is there where light and God might reappear:

This long journey. This troublesome recollection.
And there, among the ruins, I see the light
Of Your hand, and I am coming to You.¹⁰²

Fishbein's "coming" to Ukraine was painful and lengthy indeed. In 1999 on the brink of desperation, Fishbein sent a macabre farewell letter from Germany to Ukraine, most likely addressed to Taras Shevchenko and to Ukrainians in general:

Right now we are emigrants.
(We live as if in caravans.)
And we will dream until the end
With Chernivtsi, if not with the Dnieper.
That's it. The end. So long, Taráse.
So long to all.
Germanchin.
. . . strasse.¹⁰³

I transliterated the Ukrainian vocative of the Ukrainian name to preserve the full rhyme between Shevchenko's first name and the German for "street"—a rhyme that reveals the irreconcilable opposition of the two phonetically similar words. What can be more distant for Fishbein than the symbol of Ukraine and a trivial German street name? And yet, in the context of Chernivtsi established in the previous line (again returning to Bukovina-dreamers and the German-language poets Rose Ausländer and Paul Célan), this rapprochement does not seem entirely impossible.

Fishbein's mood changed dramatically once he returned from exile. Suddenly his universe, hitherto austere, rigid, and stoic, either red-hot or frozen-cold, bursts with warmth. Words descend from sublime realms directly to Fishbein. The borrowed metaphors become obsolete: Fishbein regains his ability to produce words and metaphors. And the diminutive of "return" (*vertanniachko*) imbues his homecoming with warmth and intimacy:

This spring, so sudden and bold,
The lilacs' torrent, the lily's warmth,
The Easter harmony. Erase
The alien words from Paris, Vienna, and Vilna,
When it descends into your aorta a redeeming
"Thunder . . . the Dnieper . . . a return . . . the winds."¹⁰⁴

Once Fishbein descends from the heights of messianism to the thick of Ukrainian reality, his distilled black-and-white silence explodes with a thousand voices, dozens of colors, and the burgeoning pulse of life. Colors and noises re-

place silence and darkness. A snowflake turns into a dazzling warm spring rain-drop. Sublime celestial imagery gives way to the sudden symbolism of the trivial. His “white” broadens into a more subtle palette and acquires new meanings. His quintessential philosophical symbolism yields to the empirical, and his distanced worldview shifts to an almost physical immersion in contemporary reality.

Descending from the sublime, Fishbein encounters history. The peripheral motif of the polyphonic Ukrainian street clustered in the chapter “Ab-Surd-camera” in his 1996 *Apocrypha* collection moves to center of his 2001 *Rozporosheni timi* (Scattered Shadows). As if discovering the picturesque and polyphonic universe of Ivan Kulyk, who sought to unite the prosodic experiments of Vladimir Maiakovsky with the mythological imagery of Walt Whitman, Fishbein seems to have recreated his literary genealogy. Apparently the white realm of Fishbein’s “eternity” remains untarnished. In his poem “Koly my nevmy-rushchymy buly” (When We Were Immortal), the metaphor of immortality is linked to an imaginary space “beyond the March snows” and to “cold” utopian realms. The framework remains almost unchanged: in his “Changing Trains, 1948,” Fishbein continues to present the postwar upheavals in somber colors.¹⁰⁵

But a rediscovered history finds its way into Fishbein’s poetry via auditory and visual signs, such as political slogans, buzzwords and catchphrases of the remote past, and Soviet musical pop culture, as well as other easily recognizable elements of daily life in the Soviet and even Austro-Hungarian eras. In poems entitled “1901,” “Vlaskor, 1934,” “Musician, 1942,” “1948,” “1949,” “1953,” “1954,” and “Exile,” Fishbein creates a catalogue of the twentieth century that reflects the historical perspective of a rank-and-file denationalized Soviet citizen, in most cases an outcast or blue-collar worker. These figures emerge through the genres of Soviet mass culture, whose elements Fishbein masterfully imitates. Fishbein introduces imaginary outcasts, gangsters, harlots, petty bourgeoisie, rank-and-file communists, collective farm workers, pitiful orphans, worn-out women, and self-important fathers—and yet they do not transform his poetry into a trivial catalogue of a vanished world. Fishbein listens, and he invites his reader to listen and reflect upon the vanished voices that emerge from the gramophone recording. Listening to them, Fishbein aspires to help redeem the victims of history and to help add meaning to their apparently meaningless lives.

And yet, Fishbein fails to elevate them to the “darkness surrounded by snows.” Regaining its sounds, history loses its metaphysical colors. The only way to imbue sounds with metaphysical significance is to wrap them in the metaphors of memory and culture. Dreams, antiquated gramophones, or scattered memories operate as metaphysical devices. Engaged with the past, Fishbein turns to the Jewish *longue durée*. He translated from Russian into Ukrainian

Fridrikh Gorenshstein's play *Berdichev*, which portrays the lowly life of several generations of Soviet Jews who exemplify the worst version of national amnesia and whose multilingual fusion "culture" is reduced to Yiddish and Ukrainian and Russian curses. Indeed, his ability to re-create history leads Fishbein far beyond the Holocaust or the Soviet era. He moves back in search of a prehistorical utopia, back to a time and place where "the Austro-Hungarian hunchbacked girl is feeling the faces of old Chernivtsi" and the "female admirers of Dr. Freud are swinging on the swings between the mansions."¹⁰⁶

The encounter with twentieth-century history neutralizes Fishbein's bitter irony, replacing it with humor and satire. Most of his poems from the twenty-first century are hardly imaginable beyond the prison and street slang that shaped them. To be translated into English, they require not only a talented English-language poet but also someone proficient in the stylistic layers of modern Slavic languages. Similar qualities are required to convey in English the most recent genre of Fishbein's creative activity: aphorisms.¹⁰⁷ They manifest Fishbein's ever-increasing engagement with the everyday political reality of today's Ukraine. Coined in accordance with Mykola Lukash's poetic precepts, Fishbein's aphorisms reveal unexpected meanings in routinely used word combinations, abbreviations, and colloquialisms.

Fishbein perceives society in all the complexity of its political, social, and linguistic realities by means of homophonic puns, sometimes changing one vowel or one consonant in a common expression to produce an exploding novelty. Fishbein calls for a clear political position on any matter: "First Aid warning: do not awaken the conscience for sleep cures." He satirizes the collaborators by using the ambiguity of a noun: "A chance: do you want to live in tranquility next to a cannibal? Become a beast." He pokes fun at cowards and hypocrites: "Rescue Service warns: if you do not dive deep into the truth, you have a better chance of remaining on the surface." He scorns pseudo-patriots: "For sale: Motherland. Best offer." Finally, he adds to his philosophical vademecum some indispensable Ukrainian-Jewish condiments, equating Ukrainian and Jewish national symbols: "Geometry: the sum of two tridents equals a six-cornered star."¹⁰⁸ Aphorism suits Fishbein. He came to redeem and to teach. But he also came to discover for himself the literal, not metaphysical, significance of Ukrainian history.

Fishbein's Orange Redemption

In the German exile that he diminutively and derogatorily dubbed *Germanchin Strasse*, Fishbein realized that sooner or later he would return. His poetic itiner-

ary—from the austere postcatastrophic world through hermetic visions to motley street scenes of the burgeoning capital of the independent Ukraine he visited from time to time—informed this choice. The return did not occur overnight, however. In the late 1980s, Fishbein put all his savings into philanthropic enterprises: he brought disposable syringes, then a luxury in Soviet Ukraine for Chornobyl' (Chernobyl) children awaiting treatment. Later he sponsored and brought to Israel a group of Ukrainian children exposed to radiation. At the same time he began regularly visiting Ukraine, where he reemerged as one of the leading Ukrainian intellectuals and as a tireless advocate of the Ukrainian national revival.¹⁰⁹ The journal *Suchasnist'* awarded him the prestigious Vasyl' Stus Prize and the Ukrainian Centre of International PEN elected him a member. In the 1990s he resided in Germany (he lost his job when Radio Liberty moved its operations to Prague), although he spent more and more time in Ukraine, finally resettling there in 2003, for good. He arrived in time: in 2004, Ukraine and the Ukrainian people underwent a major upheaval that demonstrated the country's desire to overcome its colonial legacy.

Fishbein never expected to find Ukraine burning with anti-imperial fervor. What started in late October 2004 as a popular protest against fraudulent elections turned into an event of enormous magnitude, inscribed into the annals of Ukrainian revivalism as the "Orange Revolution." The political upheaval, centered in Kyiv's Independence Square, internationally known as the Maidan, had a profound impact on Fishbein. First, despite the readiness of Kremlin- and government-supported Viktor Yanukovych, a twice-convicted criminal and the mastermind of the electoral fraud, to use force against public protesters, there were no clashes between protesters and riot police, no mob violence, no executed tyrants, no arrested opposition leaders—events typical of revolutionary upheavals. Second, while mass protests were part of the national democratic revolutions that triggered the collapse of communist regimes in such countries as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, popular appeals to legal institutions—such as those in Ukraine in November 2004—were not.

The Ukrainian opposition not only resorted to peaceful civil protest, but it also sought to use the institutions that guarantee the legality of the country's political undertakings. Fishbein was among those who picketed the Ukrainian parliament, known as the Rada, when on November 27, 2004, the Rada emerged as a "third power" not beholden to the government or the opposition—that is, one committed to a sober approach to the country's political crisis. Its decisions, legal and revolutionary at the same time, eventually led the Supreme Court of Ukraine to annul the results of elections. This decision brought down new runoff elections on December 26, 2004, and brought to the presidency the popular

democratic and pro-Western leader Viktor Yushchenko, who in late fall 2004 had been supported by 500,000 to 1,200,000 people in the streets of Kyiv, by an ever-growing majority of the country's population, and by Fishbein.

Third, and perhaps most significant for Fishbein, this was the first outright anticolonialist event in modern Ukrainian history. Starting in the early 2000s, Fishbein had begun to monitor for colleagues and friends (high-ranking diplomatic and political figures among them) the growing imperial ambitions of Putin's Russia. Having successfully suppressed the media in his own country, Putin turned to a more aggressive policy toward the former Soviet republics, above all, Georgia and Ukraine. Although the Ukrainian people had voted for the country's independence in 1991, Ukraine has remained an important focus of Russian geopolitical strategy. The collapse of communism and of the Soviet empire shocked many in Russia. The demise of the USSR was a major blow to Russia's pretensions and the chauvinistic sensibilities shared by such opposing figures as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Mikhail Khodorkovskii. The loss of Ukraine was especially painful. If Ukraine were to follow Belarus's lead in returning to Russia's embrace, Russia would again be the first among the Slavic people. It would gladly see Ukraine as its new neocolonial addendum.¹¹⁰ Putin's advisors and analysts worked hard—and very clumsily—to return Ukraine, this runaway serf to the embrace of the former imperial metropolis. Once hundreds of thousands of Kievans took to the streets, Kremlin media puppets and political analysts launched a vociferous anti-Ukrainian campaign accusing the West of designing and sponsoring the Orange Revolution, claiming Ukraine was nothing but a Russian territory, and denying the Ukrainian people the right to decide their own fate.

The Orange Revolution dragged Fishbein into an epic event that epitomized his hopes, embodied his dreams, and brought to the fore political leaders with whom he identified. What he had preached for years became the talk of the town—at least for the last two months of 2004. The Kyiv of late fall 2004 overwhelmed Fishbein: the mass media widely publicized his public presentations making some of his claims particularly popular.¹¹¹ In addition to various poems he penned at that time, Fishbein also boldly put on paper various Ukrainian “nursery rhymes” that made sharp accusations others hardly uttered sotto voce. Later, already in the midst of the unfolding revolutionary events, one of Fishbein's “nursery rhymes” against the corrupt government became so popular that it was quoted at a public presentations staged at the Maidan on Friday, November 26, addressing the corrupt president, Leonid Kuchma: “Hey, chy ploshcha, chy maidan, / Zbyrai, Kuchma, chemodan!” (Hey, Square or Plaza, Kuchma get your suitcase packed!).

Yet while rejoicing in the popular enthusiasm, Fishbein did not allow himself to forget that many Ukrainian Jews, misled by Soviet-style propaganda and integrated into the Russian-language metropolitan culture, supported the pro-Russian and incumbent candidate. Jews were as split geographically, socially, and culturally as other national minorities residing in Ukraine, and as Ukrainians themselves, but their visibility among those who supported the opponents of the Orange Revolution, made Fishbein bitter and distressed. He bemoaned the fact that many Russian and Ukrainian Jews chose to support the other side: for Fishbein it was tantamount to the triumph of Moscow-orchestrated anti-Ukrainian propaganda and the sign of the moral failure of an anti-imperial rebellion.

Fishbein's conduct contradicted his tone. He knew what to do. As if he had been called upon to save the reputation of Ukrainian Jews, Fishbein did not hesitate for a moment to emphasize the Israeli, if not the Ukrainian Jewish, voice among those who joined the democratic opposition in Ukraine. Invited to address the protesters in the Maidan, he recalled the next day: "I spoke to half a million people in the Maidan. I said that the 'gang' is trying to entice the Crimean Tatars against Ukrainians, Ukrainians against Russians, the Jews against Ukrainians. They operate according to an old hideous formula, 'divide and rule.' But they failed. They were not able to split the nation. We are one, Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, and Jews. I also said a couple of sentences in Hebrew: *Le-tiferet medinat ukraina* (Long live Ukraine!) and *le-tiferet Viktor Yushchenko* (Long live Viktor Yushchenko!). I wanted this language to be heard as the language of those who support the revolution."¹¹² After the event he pointed to an Israeli flag that was hanging together with other national banners in Maidan Square. "This is very important," he said, reiterating his allegiance to a Ukrainian-Jewish national alliance.

The events of that night had a triple significance for Fishbein. He proved that he was at once a genuine "Yid-Bandera," a self-conscious Jew and Israeli, and a champion of the Ukrainian cause who linguistically—through his paradigmatic Ukrainian and elevated Hebrew—underscored his cultural identity. Perhaps he saved the reputation of those Ukrainian Jews who supported pro-Russian policies; the people in Maidan Square remembered *him*, a Ukrainian Jew coming to cheer them in the Jewish national language, and not those Jews of the previous regime, for whom the Ukrainian cause was irrelevant. As he had done in his poetry, Fishbein brought together Israeli and Ukrainian realities. Ultimately, he reemerged in the fulcrum of the revolution, firmly arguing his anti-colonialist position: Ukrainians would not let anybody else decide their destiny for them. To be sure, Fishbein had never had this wide of an audience before—

and never had he had such a large number of enthusiastic supporters and sympathizers.

Conclusion

Fishbein enriched the Ukrainian literary tradition in various ways. He contributed to the genre of philosophical lyrics represented in Ukraine by only a handful of significant but scattered texts of the Neoclassical school (for example, Zerov, the early Bazhan, the late Pervomais'kyi, Stus). To reintroduce philosophical lyrics into Ukrainian poetry, he developed themes that had been touched upon in Ukrainian philosophical verse while drawing heavily on the Austro-German and Russian-Jewish poetic traditions. He permeated Ukrainian philosophical lyrics with historical, metaphysical, religious, existentialist, liturgical, and theological motifs.

Whatever Fishbein touched poetically he transformed into metaphysics. He drew from Aleksandr Tvardovskii's "Ia ubit podo Rzhevom" (I Was Killed Near Rzhev, 1945–46), portraying how national memory epitomizes the soldier's death, and transubstantiated it into a reflection on the imminent resurrection of the human soul.¹¹³ He turned to the Ukraine-born Russian poet Arsenii Tarkovskii (1907–89), well known for his Neoplatonic motifs, and transformed his erotic images into philosophical ones.¹¹⁴ As if gathering Ukrainian exiles "lost" to other cultures, he brought back to Ukrainian culture the legacy of those Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Austrian, Romanian, and Hungarian poets whose experience or imagery is directly linked to the Ukrainian past and present. Fishbein elaborated Pervomais'kyi's metapoetic language, "nationalizing" it and transforming it into the image of the Ukrainian language per se.¹¹⁵ Last but not least, Moisei Fishbein's messianism seems, among other things, to be a response to Pavlo Tychyna 1919 prophecy: "Vozdvyhne Vkraina svoioho Moiseia!" (Ukraine will establish its own Moses!).¹¹⁶

Fishbein's journey brings us to a number of unexpected conclusions. His work exemplifies the direct dependence of Ukrainian-Jewish identity on an active Ukrainian national self-awareness and on anti-imperial convictions. To be a Jewish literary figure in Ukraine implies, at least for Fishbein, strong support for the Ukrainian national revival. Jewish issues remain crucial, although they are no longer limited to issues of the Holocaust, antisemitism, or the Pale of Settlement. Allegiance to an independent Ukraine parallels allegiance to Israel. To be Jewish and not identify with Israel is tantamount to being Ukrainian and indifferent to the fate of Ukraine. This dual identity enhances Fishbein's Ukrainian

and Jewish self-awareness. He is thus an important figure in the succession of Ukrainian literati of Jewish descent who demonstrate the normality of modern Ukrainian-Jewish identity.

Constructing a new identity using Ukrainian and Israeli models is both challenging and tempting. Fishbein emphasized that for a Ukrainian-Jewish writer the only possible entrance into Ukrainian literature is through integration into the nationally oriented Ukrainian strata. If a literary figure is not willing to acknowledge the Ukrainian share in twentieth-century martyrdom and its painful postcolonial ramifications—what is he or she doing in Ukrainian discourse? Although for Ukrainians as a whole the language might not be the first and foremost manifestation of their national impulse Fishbein assumes a more pro-Ukrainian stance on the language issue. For Fishbein, the Ukrainian language is no longer a trivial medium of communication. On the contrary, it is at the center of his poetic and human experience and the object of intense intellectual reflection.

According to Fishbein, to be a Jewish poet in Ukraine is to invest one's efforts in the Ukrainian linguistic revival and to address constantly the painful issue of the purity of the Ukrainian language. Whoever he or she is, a Ukrainian poet of Jewish descent should teach, chastise, instruct, and inspire the elites, enriching Ukrainian culture with the tradition of Judaic prophecy and leadership. Fishbein's itinerary demonstrates that there is no other way for a Jew to construct a self-identity in a postcolonial country other than to elevate—if not redeem—the colonial culture. For many, the price to be paid for that personal investment might seem exorbitant. But Fishbein paid it magnanimously.

Epilogue

In the 1990s, Ukrainian intellectuals made an effort to recover the roots of the Ukrainian anticolonialist tradition, turning to authors whose work has been suppressed or stripped of its message. As part of this process, critics began reinserting Ukrainian-Jewish figures into the Ukrainian cultural context—not only to demonstrate the tolerance of the new society and the openness of its culture but also to signal the rejection of the imperial/colonialist model. Kernerenko, a Ukrainian journalist argued, returned as a legitimate “son of Ukraine.” Troianker reemerged as a harbinger of poetic feminism, futurism, and eroticism. The posthumous publication of several previously forbidden Per-vomais’kyi writings for the first time in fifty years revealed his Jewish concerns and sympathies. Fishbein was accepted both as a Jew and as a Ukrainian poet by virtually every significant Ukrainian literary critic. Kulyk, with his unorthodox yet unpopular Marxism, still awaits a student capable of demonstrating his life-long anticolonialist enthusiasm.

While Ukrainian intellectuals expressed concern for the newly surfaced xenophobic tendencies in their society and celebrated those ethnic non-Ukrainians who contributed to Ukrainian culture, Jewish intellectuals began arguing for the need to study Ukrainian, to support Ukrainian national-minded leadership, and to resist Russian assimilation. Some understood the ability of Ukrainians to integrate, acculturate, and accommodate representatives of various ethnic minorities as a key factor in buttressing national cultural survival. Ivan Dziuba saw the Ukrainian language as a catalyst of this process and Jewish contributions as a highly commendable example. He wrote: “Many things depend on whether the Ukrainian Word becomes a divine Gift, a spiritual Motherland for those of other ethnicities [*inonatsionaliv*], as the Russian Word became for Boris Pasternak,

Osip Mandelshtam, Anna Akhmatova. . . . Certainly, we also can name some names—from Marko Vovchok to Iurii Klen, and from Leonid Pervomais’kyi to Moisei Fishbein. But who will be the next? Who—in the twenty-first century?”¹

To help answer Dziuba’s question, students of Ukrainian and Jewish history should delve into the colonial past to find the anti-imperial harbingers of what today is Ukraine. This book is only the first step in that direction, yet it might become a springboard for new research in the field of East European Jewish studies. This discussion of five Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent points out the need to closely analyze the image of the Jew in Ukrainian and the image of Ukraine in Jewish literature. In view of the implicit anti-imperial trend among many Russian-Jewish literati, the scholarly discussion of Ukrainian themes in the works of Nikolai Minskii, Semen Frug, Kornei Chukovskii, Vassili Grossman, and others is a must for a future scholar of East European Jewish culture. This kind of research should be contingent on research into Ukrainian themes in the works of European literati—from Karl Emil Franzos, who portrayed the Ukrainian-Jewish encounter in German, to Piotr Rawicz, who did it in French.

A study of the recurrent use of the Ukrainian language and images in works by such Yiddish writers as Mendele Moykher Sforim could help us reconsider the perception of Ukraine and Ukrainians among East European Yiddish-speaking Jews. The study of a dialogue between Ukrainians and Jews in the prose and poetry of such Soviet Yiddish writers as Itsik Fefer, Leyb Kvitko, Ezra Fininberg, and Dovid Bergelson, only at the first and very superficial glance champions of the Soviet empire, would also be instrumental in crafting the image of the anticolonialist Jew sympathetic with the rise of a “minor” ethnicity. Therefore the discussion of Jabotinsky’s sympathies toward Ukrainian strivings for independence must be followed up by a study of Solomon Goldelman and Arnold Margolin, two outstanding Jewish politicians who contributed to the formation of Ukrainian statehood. There is also a need to look at those Jews who entirely assimilated into Ukrainian culture, creating, as the Ukrainian-Jewish composer Ihor Shamo did, such masterpieces as “Iak tebe ne liubyty, Kyieve mii” (I Cannot But Love You, My Kyiv), a song that has long been an anthem of the Ukrainian capital. The milieu of the national-minded Ukrainian and Jewish intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s, both in Ukraine and in the Gulag, deserve thorough study, too. I believe this research into the wide array of the anti-imperial choices of, and anticolonialist identities among, East European Jews would help scholars create a more complex portrayal of the Jewish modernization.

Compared to their Russian-Jewish counterparts, who were much more successful in addressing Jewish themes, poets from Kernerenko to Fishbein provide the impression of a Ukrainian literati of Jewish descent who randomly referred

to things Jewish. Hence, the dilemma: are we dealing in this case with a consistent tendency to create a Ukrainian-Jewish literary tradition? Or do the texts discussed in this study merely demonstrate some heterogeneous efforts of Ukrainian writers (who happen to be of Jewish descent) to cover Jewish themes in the framework of what has come to be known either as the Russian all-embracing humanism or the Soviet-style internationalism? The historical context, much different in the case of Ukraine, suggests that the Russian-Jewish (or Polish-Jewish) frame of reference can be applied to Ukrainian literary endeavors only partially and with a considerable stretch.

To assess properly the contribution of Ukrainian-Jewish poets, one may want to create a new frame of reference to explain the particularities of pre-1991 Ukrainian cultural development. Colonial Ukrainian culture, with its intense striving for autonomy if not independence, found itself under fiercer scrutiny than its metropolitan Russian counterpart. The area of the “legally allowed” was much narrower for a Ukrainian writer than for a Russian one. National endeavors within Russian national perceptions were censored, whereas such endeavors within Ukrainian national feelings were expurgated. The regime would frown on certain Jewish motifs in Russian-Jewish literature but would immediately stifle recognizable Jewish hints in the texts of Ukrainian-Jewish writers. Ukrainian writers were more often allowed to refer to Jewish themes than were Jews writing in Ukrainian. A Russian Jew had to maintain a low profile but could survive. Ukrainian Jews were not blessed with this chance.

From a methodological viewpoint, Ukrainian-Jewish identities are illuminating in many ways. They challenge the “insurmountability of cultural differences,” in other words, the “differentialist racism” threatening interethnic and cross-cultural dialogue.² Looking for ways to recover suppressed Ukrainian voices and help emancipate Ukrainian culture, Ukrainian-Jewish poets discovered what Neil Lazarus called the “indispensability of national consciousness to the decolonizing project.”³ In a sense, Ukrainian anticolonialist-minded Jews were far ahead of their many Ukrainian contemporaries who were unable to see through the layers of imposed colonial meanings and values.

The principal characters of my story realized that for a Ukrainian Jew it is inconceivable to be liberal- or democratic-minded and at the same time reject or neglect the national strivings of the Ukrainians. This is true of Kulyk’s challenge to cultural parochialism, Troianker’s somatic path to emancipation, and Pervomais’kyi’s quest for universal ethical values, not to mention Fishbein’s articulate position on this issue. It is equally important that formulating their Jewish concerns Ukrainian-Jewish literati resorted to Ukrainian “tropes and frames,” as Natalie Zemon Davis put it.⁴ A new, symbiotic coexistence between the Ukrai-

nian and the Jewish made it next to impossible to differentiate between “Jewish” and “Ukrainian” literary ingredients in their texts, although this book has demonstrated that historical and cultural contextualization can help identify their “ethnic” origins. Should we consider them in their entirety, what emerged from the literary texts composed by Ukrainian-Jewish literati is a new cultural hybrid, the Ukrainian-Jewish tradition. Remarkably, this hybrid has turned out to be productive: the tradition reenacted itself in each of the periods of Ukraine’s historical development.

The Ukrainian-Jewish texts discussed in this book should be placed in their anticolonialist meaning-making context, even if their anticolonialist message is implicit. Positive Jewish images in Ukrainian literature are different from Russian-Jewish or German-Jewish ones; they can be viewed as an attempt to reconsider and extend Ukrainian cultural boundaries created over centuries of Polish and Russian colonial domination. Likewise, the Ukrainian images that the Jewish literati created signal that the Ukrainian-Jewish writers resisted the cultural borders imposed on Ukrainian discourse. Moving from the Ukrainian to the Jewish realm and back, the Ukrainian-Jewish figures presented a challenge to the monopoly of the metropolitan colonizer on cultural traffic. They radically modified the imposed narrative patterns—and that modification allowed them to leave their corresponding cultural clusters and interact with one another, demolishing the walls of imperial power and imperial culture.

Ukrainian-Jewish writers demonstrated that they could unite adjacent but previously separate realms—activity that ultimately tear down the walls of the empire. Therefore, from the postcolonial perspective, the Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement demonstrated that “border crossings do not occur only across the dominant/dominated dichotomy, but that, equally, there is traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups and that these journeys are not always mediated through the dominant culture(s).”⁵ The Ukrainian-Jewish encounters also indicate that there are no “inherently colonial” ethnic groups or cultures or languages. Such language as Ukrainian can be the language and culture of emancipation—and not only of colonial subordination—and Diaspora nationalities such as Jews may relinquish the proverbial colonialist proclivities of Diaspora groups and join the colonial ethnicity in its quest for nationhood and independence.

Ultimately, the discussion of the Ukrainian-Jewish poets questions the ubiquitous exclusion of Jews and Jewish themes from postcolonial studies. The most arduous Marxist defenders of the colonized outcaste ethnicities and communities are remarkably reticent about Jews and Jewish themes—as if the Holocaust had never taken place; as if Israel had never fought for independence against the

British Mandate; and as if Antonio Gramsci, the spiritual father of colonial studies, had never discussed Jews in an emancipating and nation-building context.⁶ But even a minor case of Ukrainian-Jewish synthesis underscores significant issues in the Jewish position vis-à-vis the colonial and imperial. Having integrated their Jewish concerns into a Ukrainian discourse at a time when even a single Jewish motif was considered ideologically unacceptable, Ukrainian-Jewish poets proved that the anti-imperial choice started with the study of the language and culture of a colonized people and that for the Jewish cultural elites to be anti-imperial signified being modern.

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Notes

Introduction

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4. Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870–1918* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 21.

5. Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1979); and especially the discussion of the rise of the “state Jews” (Juifs d’État) in Pierre Birnbaum, *Destinées Juifs: De la Révolution française à Carpentras* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1995), 49–69.

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7. Joe Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginning of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 103.

8. See Kinga Frojimovics, *Ha-Zeramim ha-datiyim be-Yahadut Hungaryah: ortodoksya, neologyah ve-status kvo ante: ben ha-shanim 1868/1896–1950* (Ramat Gan: Universitat Bar Ilan, 2002); Ezra Mendelson, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); idem., *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Antony Polonsky and Michael Riff, “Poles, Czechoslovaks and the ‘Jewish Question,’ 1914–1921: A Comparative Study,” in *Germany in the Age of Total War*, ed. Volker Berghann and Martin Kitchen (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 63–101; Sarunas Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania, 1918–1925* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2003); Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Zarys dziejów Żydów w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1990).

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10. Spector, *Prague Territories*, 217.

11. Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: ElecBook, 2001), 225.

12. On Biadulia’s role in the creation of Belorussian-Jewish identity, see Zmitrok Biadulia, *Zhydy na Belarusi: bytavyia shtrykhi* (Minsk: A. Ia. Grinblat, 1918) and Ia. Sadowski, K. Tsvirka, ed., *Uspaminy pra Zmitraka Biaduliu* (Minsk: Mastatskaia literatura, 1988), 3–28.

13. I am using the metaphor of Craig Ireland, see his *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience: Self-Identity, Late Modernity, and the Politics of Immediacy* (Montreal: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2004), 22.

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15. See Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

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21. Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47, here 18.

22. Zenon E. Kohut, *The Question of Russo-Ukrainian Unity and Ukrainian Distinctiveness in Early Modern Ukrainian Thought and Culture* (Washington, DC: Kennan Institute, 2001), 15.

23. Timoty Brennan, “From Development to Globalization: Postcolonial Studies and Globalization Theory,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120–138, here 134.

24. See Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 14–24, esp. 19–22.

25. Terry Eagleton, “Afterword: Ireland and Colonialism,” in Terrence McDonough, *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Politics, and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), 327–333, here 323.

26. Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 389–392.

27. Arcadius Kahan, *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History*, ed. Roger Weiss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3–26; Ivan Koropec’kyj, ed., *Ukrainian Economic History: Interpretative Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1991), 233–243, 245, 272, 340; Iakov Lestshchinsky, *Hatefutsah ha-yehudit: ha-hitpathut ha-hevratit ve-ha-kalkalit shel kvutsei ha-yehudim be-europa u-va-america ba-dorot ha-ahronim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1960), 102–130.

28. Volodymyr Zhabotyn’s’kyi, *Vybrani statti z natsional’noho pyttannia* (Kyiv: Respublikans’ka asotsiatsiia ukrainoznavtsiv, 1991), 100–101.

29. On Kesar Bilylov’s’kyi, see chap. 1; for Hurovych, see a brief editorial preface to the publication “Z poezii H. Hurovycha,” *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* (hereafter *LNV*) 25 (1904): 100–101; for Hekhter, see his “Za syntezom (storinka z istorii rosiis’koho ievreistva),” *LNV* 43 (1908): 84–99; for Frenkel, see Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv v 12 tt.* (Kyiv:

Naukova dumka, 1975–79), 11:48, 72, 73, 167, 176, 177, and commentaries on pp. 370, 395, and 424.

30. See, e.g., Liber Rabinovych, “Shaia-traktorst,” *Nova heneratsiia* 5–6 (1926): 53; “Vesni,” *U myslyvtsiv ta rybalok* 4 (1930): 35; “Sonety,” *Chervonyi shliakh* 11–12 (1932): 25.

Chapter 1. A Prayer for Ukraine: The Improbable Identity of Hryts’ko Kernerenko

1. I do not refer here to Russian-language publications that randomly published some materials in Ukrainian, such as *Gubernskie vedomosti* (established in southwestern provinces in 1838). For more detail, see Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 366–367. For the analysis of the tsarist governmental policies toward Ukraine at that period, see Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 60–95.

2. For the English translation of these anti-Ukrainian documents, see Magocsi, *History of Ukraine*, 369–370, and Miller, *Ukrainian Question*, 267–269. Olga Andriewsky discusses these decrees in the context of the “politicization” of the Ukrainian question in the Russian Empire after the 1863 Polish revolt, see her “The Russian-Ukrainian Discourse and the Failure of the ‘Little Russian’ Solution, 1782–1917,” in Andreas Kappeler et al., eds., *Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter, 1600–1945* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003), 182–214, esp. 208–213. For a brief discussion of the negative Russian imperial attitude to the languages that, according to the patronizing authorities, “generally lacked a literary standard,” see Andreas Kappeler, “*Mazepintsy, Malorossy, Khokhly*: Ukrainians in the Ethnic Hierarchy of the Russian Empire,” in Kappeler et al., *Ukrainian-Russian Encounter*, 166–167.

3. In the 1890s, a meager circulation of several periodicals, such as *Zoria* and *Literaturno-naukovyi vistyntk (LNV)*, was allowed to be sent by mail to a number of Russian cities, but in the late 1890s and in early 1900s the authorities enforced the ban, preventing the circulation of some 400 issues of *Zoria* and some 150–200 of *LNV*. See Ivan Franko, “Zaborona Literat.-Nauk. Vistyntka v Rosii,” *LNV* 16 (1901): 94–98.

4. Iaroslav Hrytsak, *Narys istorii Ukrainy: formuvannia modernoi ukrains’koi natsii XIX–XX stolittia* (Kyiv: Heneza, 1996), 70. For more detail, see chaps. 9 and 10 of Miller, *Ukrainian Question*, 179–210. On the persecution of Ukrainian ethnography, particularly of one of its founders, Pavlo Chubyn’skyi (1839–84), see Fedir Savchenko, *Zaborona ukrainstva 1876 r.*, reprint of the 1930 Kiev edition, ed. Omeljan Prytsak (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970), index.

5. See Anna Barvinok, “S Volyni,” *Osnova* 1 (1861): 282–292; Panteleimon Kulish, “Drugoi chelovek (iz vospominanii bylogo),” *Osnova* 2 (1861): 64–67; Nikolai Kostomarov, “Iudeiam,” *Osnova* 1 (1862): 38–58.

6. See Panas Myrnyi, *Tvory v p’iaty tomakh* (Kyiv: Derzhvydav, 1960), 216–217. For the anti-Jewish Galician Ukrainian publications, see *Hromada* 2 (1878): 50–51, 62–63, 77–78; 357–359; 4 (1879): 23–24; 5 (1882): 2–5, 253–258. Austrian context is discussed in detail in Israel Bartal and Antony Polonsky, “The Jews in Galicia under Habsburgs” and Józef Buszko, “The Consequences of Galician Autonomy after 1867,” *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish*

Studies 12 (1999): 3–24 and 86–99; Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1987), 299–314.

7. For Bilylovs'kyi's complaints about Kulish's bigotry in his letter to Mykhailo Lobodovs'kyi, see Viddil rukopysiv Instytutu literaturny Natsional'noi akademii nauk Ukrainy, the Department of Manuscripts of the Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (hereafter VRILNANU), f. 182 (the letter is dated February 3, 1895; unprocessed collection of Ieremiia Aizenshtok). For a detailed analysis of Kulish-Bilylovs'kyi relations and the reasons for their quarrel, different from those indicated by Bilylovs'kyi, see Stepan Zakharkin's commentary on Bilylovs'kyi's memoirs, *Kyivs'ka starozyna* 1 (2003), 152–153 n50, and the extensive bibliography Zakharkin amasses there.

8. On Franko's stance on ethnic problems in Galicia, see Yaroslav Hrytsak, "A Ukrainian Answer to the Galician Ethnic Triangle: The Case of Ivan Franko," *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* 12 (1999): 137–146.

9. Vynnychenko's philosemitic writings have not been subjected to scholarly analysis. Among the most important pieces containing complex, contradictory, yet in most cases positive Jewish images, see his short story "Talisman" and his plays "Mizh dvokh syl" (Between Two Powers) and "Pisnia Izrailia (Kol Nidrei)" (The Song of Israel). Vynnychenko seems to have been one of the first who traced parallels in the mistreatment of the Jews and Ukrainians in the Russian Empire. See his "Otkrytoe pis'mo k russkim pisateliam" (An Open Letter to the Russian Writers), *Ukrainskaia zhizn* 10 (1913): 29–33. For the later development of Vynnychenko's philosemitic stance, see his 1923 essay "Ievreis'ke pytannia na Ukraini" (Jewish Question in Ukraine), reproduced in *Suchasnist'* 8 (1992), 116–125.

10. I rely on Patricia Herlihy's insightful observation that the bigger the city in the nineteenth century Ukraine, the less it was Ukrainian. See her "Ukrainian Cities in the Nineteenth Century," in Ivan Rudnytsky, ed., *Rethinking Ukrainian History* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1981), 135–149. For Chykalenko's observation, see Ievhen Chykalenko, *Spohady* (1861–1907) (Kyiv: Tempora, 2003), 213–214.

11. Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 548–550, 587–595.

12. On Jabotinsky's sympathies to the Ukrainian cause and his criticism of Russian chauvinists, see Israel Kleiner, *From Nationalism to Universalism: Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky and the Ukrainian Question* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2000) and Alexei Miller's review of this book in *KRITIKA: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 (2003): 232–238; Olga Andriewsky, "'Medved' iz berlogi: Vladimir Jabotinsky and the Ukrainian Question, 1904–1914," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3–4 (1990): 249–267. For Jabotinsky's Ukrainophile essays, see Volodymyr Zhabotyns'kyi, *Vybrani statti z natsional'noho pytannia*, trans., preface, and commentary by Izrail Kleiner (Kyiv: Respublikans'ka asotsiatsiia ukrainoznavtsiv, 1991).

13. Ihor Kachurovs'kyi, "Pro Hryts'ka Kernerenka," *Khronika 2000: Ukrain's'kyi kul'turolohichnyi al'manakh* 21–22 (1998): 174–176; Oleksa Kovalenko, ed., *Ukrains'ka muza. Poetychna antolohiia* (Kiev: n.p., 1908), 797. This anthology of Ukrainian poetry has been reprinted partially (Buenos Aires: Vydavnytstvo ukrains'koho katolyts'koho universytetu, 1973), and in full (Kyiv: Oberehy, 1993) with a preface and edited by Fedir Pohrebennyk. These scarce biographic details go back to a short autobiography that Oleksa Kovalenko com-

missioned Kernerenko to write for his anthology *Rozvaha*, see Chernihiv's'kyi istorychnyi muzei (Chernihiv Local History Museum (hereafter ChIM), Al 52–147/1/539 (Kernerenko to Kovalenko, December 26, 1906), ark. 1–10b.

14. See references to places where his early poems were written in Hryts'ko Kernerenko, *Nevelychkyi zbirnyk tvoriv* (Khar'kov: Zilberberg, 1880), 22, 24.

15. See A. V. Belash and V. F. Belash, *Dorogi Nestora Makhno: istoricheskoe povestvovanie* (Kiev: Proza, 1993), 577n2; R. I. Goldshtein, *Materialy k istorii evreiskoi obshchiny Dnepropetrovshchiny* (Dnipropetrovsk: Dnipro, 1992), 9.

16. Anatol Hak (Martyn Zadeka), *Vid Huliai-polia do N'iu-Iorku: spohady* (Philadelphia: Novyi Ulm, 1973), 24, note.

17. *Ibid.*, 24–25.

18. *Ibid.*, 26–30.

19. Ivan Franko, ed., *Akordy: antolohiia [sic] Ukrain's'koi liryky vid smerti Shevchenka* (L'viv: Ukrain's'ko-rus'ka vydavnycha spilka, 1903), 274. Published by Mykhailo Il'nyts'kyi in a facsimile edition (Kyiv: Veselka, 1993); *Ukrain's'kyi deklamator: rozvaha. Artystychnyi zbirnyk poezii, opovidan' v prozi, monolohiv, zhartiv i humoresok naivydatsniishykh ukrain's'kykh poetiv i pys'mennykiv* (Kyiv: Kul'zhenko, 1905 and 1908), 1:89–93, 271; 2:226–227, 268, 330; Oleska Kovalenko, ed., *Ukrain's'ka muza: Poetychna antolohia od pochatku do nashikh dniv* (Kyiv: n.p., 1908 [1909]), 797–806. Zerov mentions it among the last pre-1920s anthologies of Ukrainian poetry. See Mykola Zerov, *Ukrain's'ke pys'menstvo* (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2003), 228. On Kernerenko–Kovalenko relations, see Kernerenko's letters to Oleksa Kuz'mych Kovalenko in the ChIM, Al 52–147/1/539 (Kernerenko to Kovalenko, December 26, 1906), ark. 1–2; Al 52–147/5/539 (December 26 [in fact, November 27], 1906), ark. 1; Al 52–147/2/539 (February 2, 1907), ark. 1–10b.; Al 52–147/3/539 (November 10, 1908), ark. 1; Al 52–147/4/539 (November 5, 1907), ark. 1–2a; B. Lepkyi, *Struny: antolohiia ukrain's'koi poezii vid naidavnishykh do nynishnikh chasiv*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1922), 2:74–76.

20. Ievhen Chykalenko, *Spohady* (1861–1907) (New York: Ukrain's'ka vil'na akademiia u SSHA, 1955), 238. For Aleksandrov's Ukrainian folklore endeavors, see *Narodnyi pisennyk z naikrashchykh ukrain's'kykh pisen, iaki teper naichastish spivaiutsia, z notamy* (Khar'kov: Mikhailov, 1887). For his short biography, see Zerov, *Ukrain's'ke pys'menstvo*, 983. For archival material, see *Putivnyk po fondu viddily rukopysiv Instytutu literatury* (Kyiv: Spadshchyna, 1999), 23–25, and VRILNANU, f. 22, spr. 11–13, 37, 38, 49, 50, 54–56, 87, 88, 90–96, 157 (for 1877–92). Alexandrov's own verse, imbued with romantic motifs, is indebted to Schiller, Heine, Lermontov, and their epigones. See his *Skladka: almanakh* (Khar'kov: Adolf Darre, 1886), 5–6, 44, 46, 69, 81, 91, 169, 218.

21. VRILNANU, f. 72 (Kesar Bilylovs'kyi), spr. 243, ark. 1–2. On Bilylovs'kyi, see P. A. Dehtiarev, “Zaliublenyi v krasu ridnoho slova,” in Kesar Bilylovs'kyi, *V charakh kokhamia* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1981), 3–24; *idem.*, “Kesar Bilylovs'kyi,” in *Pys'mennyki radians'koi Ukrainy: Literaturno-krytychni narysy* 13 (1987): 38–112, and Isai Zaslavs'kyi and Stepan Zakharkin, “Spohady Kesaria Bilylovs'koho,” *Kyivs'ka starovyna* 1 (2003): 134–154; 2 (2003): 84–102; 3 (2003): 118–145. Bililovs'kyi used Jewish motifs in his poetry, see, e.g., his “Zhyteis'ka mudrist'” (Life Wisdom), “Zhyteis'kyi dosvid” (Life Experience), “Chervonyi shliub” (The Red Wedding), “Daite-bo zhyt'!” (Let Me Live), and “Elehia” (Elegy), in *Ukrain's'kyi deklamator*, 263–264, 305–306, 384–385, 411, 486–487. Also see Bilylovs'kyi's ethical and didactical poems with some Judaic flavor, such as “Desiat' dariv na sviti” (Ten

Wordly Gifts), “Klym Haneba,” and “Daite-bo zhyt” (Let Me Live!) in Aleksandrov, ed., *Skladka: almanakh*, 7, 82–84, 131–132.

22. The collaboration between Kernerenko and Bilylovs’kyi did not bring fruit because in 1897 Bilylovs’kyi stopped publishing the *Skladka* almanac. On *Skladka*, see Zakharkin’s detailed commentaries to Bilylovs’kyi’s memoirs, *Kyivs’ka starovyna* 2 (2000): 100–101, n128–139; and 3 (2000): 141–142, n231. For an unknown reason, Bilylovs’kyi did mention Kernerenko among Aleksandrov’s circle of Ukrainian intellectuals in his much-detailed memoirs, see “Spohady Kesaria Bilylovs’koho,” *Kyivs’ka starovyna* 2 (2000): 90–91.

23. For an example of a Ukrainian recruit drafted into the army despite his married status, see D. Mordovtsev, “Saldatka,” [sic] *Osnova* 4 (1861): 15–32. Kernerenko could have been well familiar with this text since he worshipped Mordovtsev as the champion of the Ukrainian cause after the death of Taras Shevchenko and Panteleimon Kulish. See his dedication to Mordovtsev in his panegyric poem “Lyst do D. L. Mordovtsia” (A Letter to D. L. Mordovtsev), in Hryts’ko Kernerenko, *Menty natkhnennia* (Huliai-Pole: N. Libman, 1910), 84.

24. See VRILNANU, f. 70 (Kantseliariia Kyivs’koho okremoho tsenzora), spr. 57, ark. 1–37 (first version, November 18, 1887), f. 70, apr. 58, ark. 1–38 (second version, February 1, 1896).

25. See censor’s marks in VRILNANU, f. 70, spr. 57, ark. 3–5, 12, 33–34.

26. Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 122–132; Magocsi, *History of Ukraine*, 436–457; Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, 315–352.

27. In his letter to LNV Kernerenko wrote: “I reverently beseech the respected Editorial Board to publish my translations from N. Minskii and Sully-Prudhomme and a couple of my own verses that I am sending you now. Soon I will send you my dramatic etude for here it has been twice forbidden for publication.” See VRILNANU, f. 3 (Ivan Franko), spr. 1620, ark. 141–142 (June 13, 1899). For Kernerenko’s first publications in this journal, see LNV 9 (1900): 116–117; 12 (1900): 125. For Kernerenko’s letters to Franko, see VRILNANU, f. 3, spr. 1620, ark. 219–220, 463–464.

28. In the 1880s, Franko penned a number of articles on Jewish emancipation and its harbingers, e.g., on Moses Mendelsohn and European Jewish Enlightenment, *Zoria* 7 (April 1 / 13, 1886): 114–115, and on Jewish poet and folklorist, Wolf Ehrenkrantz (Zbyraski), LNV 32 (1905): 87–94. For the literary aspects of Franko’s interest in Zionism, see Asher Wilcher, “Ivan Franko and Theodor Herzl: To the Genesis of Franko’s Moisej,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 2 (1982): 233–243. The most significant, though somewhat outdated, article on the issue is Pavlo Kudriatsev, “Ievreistvo, ievrei ta ievreis’ka sprava v tvorakh Ivana Franka,” *Zbirnyk prats’ ievreis’koi istoriko-arkheohrafichnoi komisii*, 2 vols. (Kyiv: Vseukrains’ka Akademia Nauk, 1929), 2:1–81. For Franko’s keen interest in Judaism, see his notes on and from the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud in his private notebook, VRILNANU, f. 3, spr. 202, ark. 4–11.

29. See VRILNANU, f. 3, spr. 1630, ark. 527–530, “Hryts’ko Kernerenko to Ivan Franko,” January 17 (30), 1906. Significantly, Franko did not follow Kernerenko’s stylistic “innovation” and changed the Ukrainian “Khyvria” back to the Yiddish “Reizi.” See Kernerenko’s translation of Sholem Aleichem’s tale “Diad’ko Pini ta titka Reizia” in LNV 33 (1906): 544–551.

30. Kernerenko appeared regularly in LNV, e.g., see his short story “Tsilushche zillia” (The Healing Herb), in LNV 28 (1904): 95–99; the translation of Nadson’s “Mrrii” (Dreams),

LVN 33 (1906): 280–283, of Sholem Aleichem’s tale “Diad’ko Pini ta titka Reizia,” *LVN* 33 (1906): 544–550; of Frug’s “Z ievreis’kykh melodii: rebro Adama” (From the Jewish Melodies: Adam’s Rim), *LVN* 34 (1906): 264; of Frug’s “Z ievreis’kykh melodii: Spadshchyna” (From the Jewish Melodies: Heritage) and “Pisok ta zirky” (Sand and Stars), *LVN* 35 (1906): 28, 212; of Frug’s “Dvi Troiky” (Two Troikas), *LVN* 37 (1907): 495–496, and “Novyi rik” (The New Year), *LVN* 41 (1908): 187. For Kernerenko’s correspondence with *LVN* publishers, see VRILNANU, f. 3, spr. 1630, ark. 623–624 (February 11, 1904), ark. 525–526 (January 4 [17], 1906). For Franko’s contribution to the editing of the foreign literature section of *LVN*, see Iu. G. Shapoval, “Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk” (1898–1932): *tvorennia derzhavnoi ideologii Ukrainstva* (L’viv: Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrainy; L’vivs’kyi natsional’nyi universytet, 2000), 58–59.

31. See CHIM, Al 52–147/4/539 (letter of Kernerenko to Kovalenko, November 5, 1907), ark. 1–1a.

32. I am grateful to Liubov Hryhorivna Hen’ba, the director of the Huliai-pole local museum (*Kraieznavchyi muzei*) for this information.

33. Hryts’ko Kernerenko, *Pravdyva kazka* (Khar’kov: M. F. Zilberberg, 1890); there were at least two editions of this small fifteen-page book.

34. See Taras Shevchenko, *Tvory v triokh tomakh* (Kyiv: Khudozhnia literatura, 1955), 222–228.

35. Shevchenko, *Tvory*, 172–200, 333–347, 438–446.

36. *Ibid.*, 335, 461–462, 580–582.

37. Kernerenko, *Pravdyva kazka*, 9.

38. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

39. See “Ave Mariia: kontsert M-lle H.” (Ave Maria: The Concert of M-lle H.), “Do ptashky” (To a Bird), “Usi drazhniat’ mene ‘shliondra’” (Everybody Dubs Me a “Whore”), “U Basurmans’komu poloni” (In a Turkish Bondage), “Pro mene” (Will Pass Over), “Rivochtsi K.” (To Little Rivka K.), “Dolia” (A Fate), in *Menty natkhnennia*, 17, 31, 45, 46, 66, 77, 86, 96.

40. See “Moia Muza” (My Muse) in Kernerenko, *Menty natkhnennia*, 5.

41. For the romantic lachrymose theme of the vanished love and youth, see also Kernerenko, *Menty natkhnennia*, 17, 52, 66, 67–68, 133.

42. *Ibid.*, 127–138, 141–146, 149–164.

43. For more Heine-esque themes in Kernerenko, see, “Mynule” (The Past); “Pisnia: Z Nimets’koho” (A Song: From German); “Napys na fotohrafichnii kartsii: Zakharovu” (An Inscription on a Photo: To Zakharov); and a Ukrainian version of Heine “Iunak lyubyt’ divku” (The Boy Got in Love with a Girl), in *Menty natkhnennia*, 37, 44, 54, 97.

44. See VRILNANU, f. 3, spr. 3354, ark. 401/78 (January 12, 1899). Earlier D. Mordovtsev published Kernerenko’s piece anonymously in the Russian-language newspaper, see *Novosti*, February 26, 1896.

45. Pavlo Hrabovs’kyi, *Vybrani tvory v dvoikh tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1985), 2:105–109.

46. See *LVN* 12 (1900): 116–117.

47. See VRILNANU, f. 35 (Sabo), spr. 48, ark. 19–21; Kernerenko, *Menty natkhnennia*, 26.

48. *Rada* 47 (1907); Kernerenko, *Menty natkhnennia*, 27; for the original, see VRILNANU, f. 35 (Sabo), spr. 48, ark. 5–6.

49. The imagery of a sower imbued with biblical and Christian connotations is character-

istic of many poets of that period, such as Franko, Aleksandrov, Hrynchenko, and others. See Iryna Betko, *Bibliini siuzhety i motyvy v ukrains'kii poezii: XIX—pochatku XX stolittia* (Zielona Góra: WSP, 1999).

50. For the complex imagery of “Haidamaky,” see the nuanced analysis in Ivan Dziuba, “Shevchenko i ‘Haidamaky’ z vidstani chasu,” *Suchasnist’* 6 (2004): 67–92.

51. Kernerenko, *Menty natkhnennia*, 69.

52. See VRILNANU, f. 3, spr. 3353, ark. 10–11 (a collection of verse sent to Ivan Franko), and *Menty natkhnennia*, 51.

53. In some cases Kernerenko rebuked his editors, demanding that they should correct the mistake indicating that a poem published under his name was written by Frug. See, e.g., VRILNANU, op. 3, spr. 1630, ark. 537–538 (December 26, 1906). In the context of Kernerenko’s attachment to Ukraine, one should bear in mind that Frug’s poems are also permeated with a profound sense of spiritual attachment to Ukraine. See S. G. Frug, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 3 vols. (Odessa: Sherman, 1916), 1:94–96, 2:63–65, 3:194–196.

54. “Dve troiki” (Two Troikas) in *LNV* 27 (1907): 495–496, see also VRILNANU, f. 35, spr. 48, ark. 43–46. Cf. Sh. Frug, *Ale shriftn*, 3 vols. (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1910), 1:12–15.

55. “Novyi rik” (New Year) in *LNV* 41 (1908): 107, see also VRILNANU, f. 35, spr. 48, ark. 47–48. Cf. Yiddish text in Frug, *Ale shriftn*, 1:81–82.

56. Frug, *Ale shriftn*, 1:43. For Kernerenko’s version, see *Ukrains’ka muza: poetychna antolohiia* (Kyiv: Petro Bars’kyi, 1908), 804–805.

57. See *LNV* 8 (1902): 7.

58. *Ukrains’ka khata* 3–4 (1909): 207. See VRILNANU, f. 35, spr. 48, ark. 49–50. For the Yiddish version, see Frug, *Ale shriftn*, 2:20.

59. On the family metaphors in Shevchenko’s poetry and their function in his Weltanschauung, see Kornei Chukovskii, *Litsa i maski* (St. Petersburg: Shipovnik, 1914), 40–75.

60. See the commentary to this “dropped” preface in Heinrich Heine, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Hans Kaufmann, 10 vols. (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1961), 1:752–773.

61. See VRILNANU, f. 35, spr. 48, ark. 37–38. Kernerenko’s notebooks indicate that the poem was written in Huliai-pole in 1909. It was published in *Rada* (1908) and *Menty natkhnennia*, 25.

62. “M.K.,” the author of a review of Kernerenko’s collection is identified as Mykhailo Komarov (1844–1913), Ukrainian bibliographer, critic, folklorist, and doctor. See Hrabov’s’kyi, *Tvory*, 2:309.

63. M[ykhailo] K[omarov], review of “V dosuzhnyi chas. Lyrna poeziia Hryts’ka Kernerenska,” *Zoria* 15 (August 1–15, 1891): 338–339.

64. See Hrabov’s’kyi, *Tvory*, 2:107.

65. Iurii Luts’kyi (George Luckyj), *Literaturna polityka v radians’kii Ukraini, 1917–1934* (Kyiv: Helikon, 2000), 33.

66. Mykola Ievshan, *Krytyka: Literaturoznavstvo. Estetyka*, ed. Natalia Shumylo (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1998), 240–241, 248–250.

67. See S[erhii] Ie[fremov], [review of *Menty natkhnennia: Tvory Hryts’ka Kernerenska*], *Rada* 164 (1910): 4. On *Rada* in the context of Ukrainian press, see O. V. Lysenko, “Rol’ presy u formuvanni ukrains’koi natsional’noi idei,” *Problemy istorii Ukrainy XIX—pochatku XX st.* 1 (2000): 217–227.

68. The words in parentheses are in Russian with a derogatory sense. See Khrystia [Khrystyna Alchevs'ka], [Review of Hryts'ko Kernerenko, *Menty natkhnennia*, Huliai-Pole, 1910.—288 P.], in *Ukrains'ka khata* 1 (1910): 75–76. For the contextual analysis of *Ukrains'ka khata*, see Oleh S. Ilnytskyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914–1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1997), 3, 12, 21.

69. At the same time Shapoval found Kernerenko's verse lacking originality and negligent toward contemporary poetic innovations. See M[ykyta] Shapoval, "Novyny nashoi literatury (*Menty natkhnennia* Hryts'ka Kernerenska)," *LVN* 4 (1910): 124–129. On Shapoval's role in Ukrainian literature, see Kachyrovskyy, *Promenyti sil'vety*, 103.

70. *Struny: antolohia ukrains'koi poezii*, 74.

71. The Israeli award-winning writer David Markish is the son of the famous Yiddish poet Perets Markish, known for his strong pro-Ukrainian sympathies. See Vadim Skuratovskii, "Ukrainskaia literatura" in *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, 10 vols. (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976–99), 8:1274–1275.

72. On Makhno's stance on Jewish issues, see Moshe (Mikhail) Goncharok, *Vek voli: russkii anarkhizm i evrei (XIX–XX vv.)* (Jerusalem: Mishmeret shalom, 1996), 29–62.

73. David Markish, *Poliushko-pole. Donor: romany* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1991), 40–41.

74. Petro Rebro, *Zaporiz'ka pravda*, April 20, 1999.

75. See Ivan Kushnirenko and Volodymyr Zhylyns'kyi, *Literatura Huliiapil'shchyny (Na pruhkykh vitrah)*, 2 vols. (Dnipropetrovs'k: Dnipropetrovs'kyi natsional'nyi universytet, 2002), 1:11–20. Among the selected Kernerenko's texts were "On the 37th Anniversary of Shevchenko's Death," "To a Certain Friend," "Monopoly," "Everything Has Its Own Season," "A Vain Expectation," "In the Foreign Land," "The Sand and the Stars," "Mädchens Wunsch," see *ibid.*, 16–21.

76. Vadym Skuratovskyy, "Na perekhrestyakh dushi" (At the Crossroads of the Soul), *Suchasnist'* 12 (1996): 86–89.

Chapter 2. Between Two Fires: The National-Communist Utopia of Ivan Kulyk

1. Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Tvory v dvokh tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 2000), 1:514–579. On the importance of this play in Ukrainian-Jewish discourse, see George Grabowicz, *Do istorii ukrains'koi literatury: doslidzhennia, esei, polemika* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2003), 235–236. For the discussion of a contradictory stance of Vynnychenko on the issues of Ukrainian revivalism and socialism, see Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1987), 417–435.

2. VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 41 (The Biography of I. Kulyk), ark. 1–2.

3. Z. M. Voloshenko, "'Na krutomu provulku:' spohady pro dytiachi roky I. Iu. Kulyka," TsDAMLNU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 174, ark. 2–3.

4. Nadiia Surovtsova, *Spohady* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo im. Oleny Telihy, 1996), 136.

5. For a description of the Uman massacre and a copy of the lamentation, written in the form of an acrostic, see V. Ivashchenko, *Istorieskii ocherk Umani i tsaritsyna sada "Sofievka"* (Kiev: S. N. Kulzhenko, 1895), 44–46.

6. The Sofiivka Park inspired many Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian literati, among them Nikolai Andreev, Ivan Dolgorukii, Leonid Smilians'kyi, Iurii Smolych, Olimpiada Shishkina,

and Stanisław Trembecki. See A. P. Rohotchenko, *Umanskoe chudo* (Kyiv: Budivel'nyk, 1980), 10–20, and Stanisław Trembecki, *Sofijówka*, ed. Jerzy Snopek (Warsaw: “Pro Cultura Litteraria,” 2000).

7. Ivan Kulyk, *Virshi ta poemy: vybrane* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1962), 198.

8. See Voloshenko, “Na Krytomu provulku,” TsDAMLMU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 174, ark. 6–8.

9. When released from prison, Yosef Kulyk could not come to grips with the reactionary atmosphere in post-1905-revolution Russia and committed suicide. See Mykhailo Kulyk, “Rozмова tryvaie” (The Conversation Continues) in *Poet revoliutsii: Spohady pro Ivana Kulyka*, ed. Iukhym Beider (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1971), 16–23.

10. Kulyk, *Virshi ta poemy*, 206.

11. A. Leites and M. Iashek, *Desiat' rokiv ukrains'koi literatury, 1917–1927*, 2 vols. (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928) 1:268–269; also see TsDAMLMU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 2 (Surovtsova, “Ivan Kulyk”) and TsDAMLMU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 46, ark. 4 (Surovtsova, “Na provesni”).

12. *Rada* 17 (January 29, 1914): 2. Jewish ethnography was also on the agenda of the Uman branch of the Society of the Preservation of the Monuments, yet apparently Kulyk was not interested in it. See TsDAMLMU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 3.

13. See the memoir of Esfir Kulyk “Boiova molodist' brata” (My Brother's Combative Youth), in Beider, *Poet revoliutsii*, 9. Surovtsova supports this legend, see TsDAMLMU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 1 (Nadia Surovtsova, “Ivan Kulyk”).

14. Kulyk, *Virshi ta poemy*, 201.

15. Fr[anciszek] Ravita, *Het'man Mazepa: istorychna povist'*, trans. Vasyl' Rolenko (L'viv: Delo [Dilo], 1893), 149–163, 195–196. The name of the translator “Vasyl' Rolenko” appears only at the end of the text, p. 275. Kulyk liked Ravita (Pol.: Rawita-Gawroński) as a Polish writer and historian who wrote extensively on Ukraine and who revised the biased Polish attitude to the Ukrainian struggle against Polish oppression. See, e.g., Franciszek Rawita-Gawroński, *Historia ruchów hajdamackich* (w. XVIII) (Brody: F. West, 1899); idem., *Bohdan Chmielnicki* (L'viv: H. Altenberg, 1906–9); idem., *Sprawy i rzeczy Ukraińskie: materjaly do dziejów kozaczyzny i hajdamaczyzny* (L'viv: Jakubowski, 1914).

16. For Mazepa's separatist stance, his clash with Peter the Great, Peter's designation of Mazepa as “the new Judas,” and Mazepa's role in the Charles XII's campaign, see Orest Subtelny, *The Mazepists: Ukrainian Separatism in the Early Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press for Boulder East European Monographs, 1981), 37–52.

17. Cited in Mykola Komarnyts'kyi, “Z dytiachykh ta iunats'kykh rokov Ivana Kulyka,” see Beider, *Poet revoliutsii*, 34.

18. Ralf K. Rolinato [Ivan Kulyk], *Pryhody Vasylia Rolenka (v kraini feikeriv)* (Kharkiv: Proletarii, 1929), 6.

19. See Franz Kafka, *America: roman* (Munich: K. Wolff, 1927). Kulyk disguised his authorship twice: not only did he put the name of Vasyl' Rolenko on the title page as the author, but he also sent the manuscript to the Soviet Embassy in Canada from a certain Ralf Rolinato with his, Rolinato's, letter of recommendation. See a detailed commentary in VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 159/ I–II, ark. 389–393.

20. Ralf K. Rolinato [Ivan Kulyk], *Pryhody Vasylia Rolenka (v kraini feikeriv)* (Kharkiv: Proletarii, 1929), 14–15, 24, 35, 85, 104.

21. [Ivan Kulyk], “Zhen’ka-pochtalion: iz vospominanii detstva R. Rolinato,” *Novyi mir* (May 27–28, 1915).

22. *Robitnyk*, May 24, 1917. For Kulyk’s publications in the American workers’ Ukrainian-language press, see VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 18. Here Kulyk once again underscores his fascination with Ukrainian folklore, which he calls the “beautiful adornment of the people’s art” (*krasne namysto narodnoho mystetstva*), see VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 18, ark. 170. Kulyk’s other publications in the American press testify to his sensitivity to the manifestations of anti- and philosemitism among Ukrainians. See, e.g., his depiction of a Ukrainian elder (*starshyna*) defending a Jew against the Cossacks during a pogrom, Ivan Kulyk, “Amerykans’ky lam-polyzy,” VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 159/1-II, ark. 176–185.

23. R. Rolinato [I. Kulyk], “Pisni emihrantiv (etnohrafichnyi narys),” *Kalendar “Robitnyk,” 1916* (Cleveland, Ohio), 165–170, here 166; VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 28.

24. Ivan Kulyk, “Staryi Leizer,” *Novyi mir* (December 15, 1915). See VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 159/1-II, ark. 338–342.

25. See his short story “Diadia Arsen” (Uncle Arsen), *Novyi mir* (December 11–12, 1916).

26. VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 42 (The Biography of I. Kulyk), ark. 6; Beider, *Poet revoliutsii*, 46. For the context of his early Bolshevik activities (and quotes from his presentations) see Taras Hunczak, ed., *The Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1977), 105–106, 107–108.

27. See Kulyk’s unpublished “Iz shchodennyka chervonoho partyzana.” (From the Diary of a Red Partisan), VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 159/1-II, ark. 82–96, here 83.

28. The Kyiv Soviet periodical, *Izvestia Ispolkoma Kievskogo Soveta Rabochikh Deputatov*, reported on March 7, 1919: “In Ukraine, before Great Russia [Velikorossia], they organized the first Red Army unit.” VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 42 (typewritten copies of the documents on I. Kulyk’s activities in 1918–1919), ark. 10. See also Kulyk’s own account of the formation of the First Red Cossack Kurin [Regiment], in VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 159/1-II, ark. 172–174. In 1917, Kulyk was still too leftist to subscribe to Ukrainian revivalism, which he considered “chauvinistic.” For the context of his early Bolshevik activities (and quotes from his presentations), see Hunczak, *Ukraine*, 105–106, 107–108.

29. For the original in Russian, see VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 42 (typewritten copies of the documents on I. Kulyk’s activities in 1918–1919), ark. 2.

30. TsDAMLNU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 46, ark. 15 (Surovtsova, “Na provedeni”).

31. Ivan Kulyk, “Iak pochynalasja sprava v Halychyni” (How It Began in Galicia), see VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 159/1-II, ark. 125–127. See Iu. Milov (Iu. Beider), “Redahue Ivan Kulyk,” *Radians’ke Podillia* 28 (February 10, 1968). In the repository of TsDAMLNU, f. 364, op. 1, spr. 748 (no pagination).

32. Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: spohady. Knyha persha* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), 57.

33. See “Spilka proletars’kykh pys’mennykiv Hart,” *Ukrains’ki robitnychi visti* 43 (April 9, 1925). For Kulyk’s key role in organizing the literary group of Ukrainian writers in North America, see his letters to the poet Mykola Tarnovs’kyi written between 1924 and 1926, in TsDAMLNU, f. 364 (Tarnovs’kyi), op. 1, spr. 503, ark. 1–6. On the Hart and its role in the literary life of Ukraine, see V. Blakytyni, “Bez manifestu,” and “Statut proletars’koi spilky

Hart,” in *Shliakhy rozvytku ukrains'koi proletars'koi literatury: literaturna dyskusia, 1925–1928*, ed. S. Fedchysyn and B. Kovalenko (Kharkiv: Ukrains'kyi robotnyk, 1928), 256–266 and 267–270.

34. Iu. Kulyk, “Partkerivnytstvo literaturoiu” (On the [Communist] Party Management of Literature), in *Shliakhy rozvytku ukrains'koi proletars'koi literatury*, 337–339.

35. Ilnytzyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 132.

36. For example, in his unpublished memoir Iurii Smolych calls Kulyk, “one of the bosses of the whole cultural life in Ukraine” and tells a story about Kulyk’s attempts to cancel the premiere of Smolych’s antinationalist play “On the Other Side of the Heart.” See TsDMALMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 85, ark. 249–259. In addition, see the plea of Ivan Mykytenko, the second head of the Union of the Soviet Writers, who asked Kulyk to help the proletarian Revolution Theater acquire the status of the nationalist Berezil Theater. See TsDAMLUMU, f. 657, op. 1, spr. 113, ark. 1–2 (Mykytenko to Kulyk, July 17, 1933).

37. On the ambiguity of Ukrainization, see Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 547; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 380–402; G. Y. Shevelov [Sheveliov], “L’ukrainization: Une politique soviétique (1925–1932),” *La Renaissance nationale et culturelle en Ukraine de 1917 aux années 1930: Actes du colloque* (Paris: INALCO, 1986), 39–66.

38. See Lazar Kaganovych, “Iz dopovidi na X z'izdi KP(b)U,” in *Shliakhy rozvytku ukrains'koi proletars'koi literatury: literaturna dyskusia, 1925–1928*, ed. S. Fedchysyn and B. Kovalenko (Kharkiv: Ukrains'kyi robotnyk, 1928), 212–215 (diagram on p. 213); Ivan Koshelivets, *Mykola Skrypnyk* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1972), 95–114; Shevelov [Sheveliov], “L’ukrainization,” 47–50.

39. For a nuanced contextualization of Skrypnyk’s key role in balancing the Ukrainian revivalism, see Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 111–125.

40. See George Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956). See also the Ukrainian edition: Iurii Luts'kyi, *Literaturna polityka v radians'kyi Ukraini, 1917–1934* (Kyiv: Helikon, 2000); Iurii Lavrynenko, *Rozstriliane vidrozhennia: Antolohiia, 1917–1933* (Kyiv: Prosvita, 2001); for a paramount bibliographic guide, see Leites and Iashek, *Desiat' rokiv*; Ivan Koshelivets', *Rozmozy v dorozh do sebe: frahmenty spohadiv ta inshe* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1985); and the now indispensable Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

41. See “Z tsykladu ‘Kanada’” (From the Series “Canada”), in Kulyk, *V otochenni* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1927), 18–19.

42. See his “Kaunawaga,” in Kulyk, *V otochenni*, 31.

43. See Beider, *Poet revoliutsii*, 77–78.

44. See TsDAMLUMU, f. 364, op. 1, spr. 503, ark. 2–20b. (Kulyk to Tarnov's'kyi, September 13, 1926).

45. See Anon. [I. Kulyk], “Taras Shevchenko—borets' za vyzvolennia bidnoty,” *Ukrains'ki robotnychi visti* 22 (March 11, 1924). According to Petro Kravchuk, Kulyk published a literary opera as Ivan Kulyk, feuilletons as Vasyli' Rolenko, and political essays as I. Viktor. See

Beider, *Poet revoliutsii*, 109. For Kulyk's activities in the preservation of material Ukrainian culture, see V. A. Voinalovych, "Holova UKOPK (I. Iu. Kulyk)," *Represovane kraieznavstvo (20–30-ti roki)* (Kyiv: Ridnyi kraj, Instytut istorii Ukrainy, 1991), 320–324.

46. Volodymyr Sosiura, *Tretia rota: roman* (Kyiv: Ukrain's'kyi pys'mennyk, 1997), 275.

47. See the editorial "Kanada naperedodni rozpochattia torhivli z Ukrainoiu," *Ukrain-s'ki robitnychi visti* 19 (March 4, 1924).

48. See his explicitly Ukrainophilic essay signed by pen name Vasyl' Rolenko, "Mohutnia kul'turna zbroia," *Ukrain's'ki robitnychi visti* 113 (October 9, 1924), and a more balanced assessment of the same trend, I. Iu. Kulyk, "Za sim lit," *Ukrain's'ki robitnychi visti* 126 (November 8, 1924).

49. See "Tov. Iv. Kulyk pro ekonomichne polozhennia na radians'kii Ukraini," *Ukrain-s'ki robitnychi visti* 21 (March 8, 1924).

50. Vasyl' Rolenko [Ivan Kulyk], "Suchasna ukrains'ka kul'tura," *Ukrain's'ki robitnychi visti* 31 (April 1, 1924).

51. See Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 32.

52. Vasyl' Rolenko [Ivan Kulyk], "Suchasna ukrains'ka kul'tura (prodovzhennia)," *Ukrain's'ki robitnychi visti* 32 (April 3, 1924).

53. [Ivan] Kulyk, "Sviato ukrains'koi kul'tury" (The Celebration of the Ukrainian Culture), *Ukrain's'ki robitnychi visti* 134 (November 7, 1925).

54. Vasyl' Rolenko [Ivan Kulyk], "Suchasna ukrains'ka kul'tura (zakinchennia)," *Ukrain's'ki robitnychi visti* 33 (April 5, 1924).

55. See M. Ravych-Cherkas'kyi [review of the book: I. Kulyk, M. Iavors'kyi, "Narysy istorii Komunistychnoi Partii (Bil'shovykiv) Ukrainy"], *Chervonyi shliakh* 2 (1923): 286–288.

56. See his "Vidpovid' ukrains'kym chornosotentsiam i zhovtoblakytynkam: Lyst tov. I. Iu. Kulyka" (An Answer to the Ukrainian Chauvinists and Yellow-Bluish [Nationalists]: The Letter of I. Iu. Kulyk," in *Ukrain's'ki robitnychi visti* 52 (May 20, 1924) and 61 (June 10, 1924).

57. Voloshenko, "Na Krutomu provulku," ark. 11. Cf. the same text in the censored version, Beider, *Poet revoliutsii*, 24–30.

58. Kulyk, *Virshi ta poemy*, 196.

59. VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 20, ark. 1–2 ("Dokladnaia zapiska o poezdke v Umanski uezd. Kulyk. May 28, 1919").

60. What Oswald Burghardt (Iurii Klen) sharply criticized as the residual traces of Russian phraseology, syntax, and grammar in Kulyk's translations from American English were most probably some rudimentary Yiddishisms that surreptitiously made their way into Kulyk's Ukrainian. Osw. Burghardt (Iurii Klen), [review of the book: I. Kulyk, "Antolohiia amerykans'koi poezii, 1855–1925"], *Chervonyi shliakh* 11 (1928): 275–276.

61. After Kulyk pointed out the importance of Mike Gold, Ukrainian literati made efforts to introduce his prose to the reader, see Maikl Gold, *Said's'ki novely*, trans. M. Iogansen, P. Petrov, and V. Mysyk (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1930).

62. There were at least three different editions of this text, yet I managed to identify only the second book edition, Lev Kvitko, *Porosiata*, trans. Ivan Kulyk (Kharkiv: Dityvday, 1936). See also VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 159/1–I, ark. 331–332. This poem helped Jewish children overcome their millennia-long religiously inculcated prejudice against pigs.

63. [I.Iu. Kulyk], "Tov. Ivan Iu. Kulyk pro 'kontr-revoliutsiini aliarmy'" (Comrade Ivan

Kulyk on Counterrevolutionary Alarms) *Ukrains'ki robotnychi visti* 23 (March 13, 1924). See the continuation of this discussion in Ivan Kulyk, “Shche pro ‘Ievreis’ku respubliku” (Again on the “Jewish Republic”), *Ukrains'ki robotnychi visti* 104 (September 18, 1924).

64. See “Doklad I. Iu. Kulika o literature USSR,” *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1934), 38–49, here 48.

65. Kulyk, *Virshi ta poemy*, 35.

66. On the mildly anti-Ukrainian stance of Gorky on the translation of his novel *Mat'* (Mother) into Ukrainian, which he called “a dialect,” see Luts'kyi, *Literaturna polityka*, 135, and Ilnytzyk, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 105n4.

67. For example, he mocks the gullibility, haughtiness, and snobbishness that shaped the attitude of Catherine II toward Ukrainians (Little Russians) during her tour through the empire with Count Potemkin. See Ivan Kulyk, *Zapysky konsyla* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1958), 139–141.

68. James Willard Schultz, *My Life as an Indian: The Story of a Red Woman and a White Man in the Lodges of the Blackfeet* (London: J. Murray, 1907), 382. For the multiple examples of Riel's consistent effort to conceptualize the Métis and Indians as the new Hebrews, see Thomas Flanagan, *Louis ‘David’ Riel: “Prophet of the New World”* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 43, 74, 81–84, 86, 91–92, 116, 156.

69. Kulyk, *V otochenni*, 43–44.

70. See I. Iu. Kulyk, “Predstavnyk radians'koi Ukrainy v Kanadi v oboroni M. Drahomanova,” *Ukrains'ki robotnychi visti* 30 (March 29, 1924).

71. See Richard Popkin, “The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Indian Theory,” in *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*, ed. Yosef Kaplan et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 63–82.

72. Kulyk, *Zapysky konsula*, 16.

73. *Ibid.*, 15.

74. On Babel's Ukrainian and Yiddish ingredients, see my essay, “Isaak Vavilonskii: iazyk i stil v ‘Odesskikh rasskazakh’ Babelia,” *Yehupets* 14 (2004): 88–100.

75. As if continuing the same line of thought, in one of the short stories written during her stay with Kulyk, her husband, in Canada, Luciana Piontek unites *Krik*, the Odessa Jewish gangster, and *Kruk*, a Canadian Indian, in the image of *Kruk*, a Ukrainian rural bandit. See L. Piontek, “Bandytykha,” *Ukrains'ki robotnychi visti* 105 (September 20, 1924): 3 (for the whole story, see *ibid.*, 106 [September 23, 1924] and 107 [September 25, 1924]).

76. Ivan Kulyk, *Zapysky konsyla* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1958), 20. *Balagola* is the Yiddish for a cabman.

77. I. Iu. Kulyk, *Antolohiia amerykans'koi poezii, 1855–1925* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928), 10–18.

78. *Ibid.*, 221, 305, 323–324.

79. Carl Sandburg, *Dym i krytsia: vybrani poezii* (Smoke and Steel: Selected Poetry), trans. and with preface by Ivan Kulyk (Kharkiv: Literatura i mystetstvo, 1931), 27–28.

80. This stereotype survived the Bolshevik revolution and found its way into the writings of some Ukrainian literati. See Petro Panch, *U mistechku Be: opovidannia* (Kharkiv: Knyhospilka, 1925), 4–19. For a different treatment of the Jew, see his *Holubi eshelony* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928), 5–92, esp. 80–81.

81. See M. Levyts'kyi, “Shchastia Peisakha Leidermana: opovidannia likaria,” in

Khrestomatia novoi ukrains'koi literatury, ed. Mykola Plevako (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1926), 348–353.

82. Stepan Vasyľchenko, “Pro zhydka Marchyka, bidnoho kravchyka” (On a Little Jew Marchyk, Poor Tailor, 1919), in his *Opovidannia: Povisti: Dramatychni tvory* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1988), 214–221.

83. *Ibid.*, 215, 217, 218.

84. Volodymyr Hzyhts'kyi, *Mutsa: povist'* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928), 104.

85. Arkadii Liubchenko, *Vybrani tvory* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 1999), 41–45.

86. Kost Kotko, “Sviaty, Anhel i Shlioma,” *Chervonyi shliakh* 8–9 (1929): 8–17, here 14.

87. Iurii Smolych, *Kinets mista za bazarom* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1924), see esp. 24–26.

88. See the chapter “Myr vsim,” in Iurii Smolych, *Dytynstvo* (L'viv: Biblioteka “Dila,” 1939), 42–72.

89. See Dovid Hofshsteyn, “Af Shevchenkos keyver” (On Shevchenko's Grave), *Der Shtern*, September 14, 1938; Perets Markish, “Kobzar,” *Proletars'ka pravda*, March 6, 1939; Itsik Fefer, “Balada pro pozhezhu: prysv'iachuet'sia T. G. Shevchenku,” *Bil'shovyk*, February 6, 1939; L. Biesov, “Kazka pro Sholom-Aleikhema: virshi,” *Bil'shovyts'ka pravda*, April 18, 1939; Teren' Masenko, “Sholom-Aleikhem: virshi,” *Sotsialistychna Kharkivshchyna*, April 15, 1939; T. Odud'ko, “Sholom-Aleikhem u Vinnytsi v 1908 r.” *Bil'shovyts'ka pravda*, April 18, 1939.

90. See “Iak Zbruch-richku prokhodyly” (When We Crossed the River of Zbruch), in I. Kulyk, *Moi kolomyiky. Zbirnychok poezii (z halyts'koho al'bomu)* (Kharkiv: Vseukrains'ke Derzhavne vydavnytstvo, 1921), 23.

91. It is very likely that in his short story “Vin ne pomih” (It Did Not Help, 1920), Myroslav Irchan depicted some idiosyncratic features of his good friend Ivan Kulyk, while telling the story of a baptized Jew, Vasyľ, from Uman. Like Ivan Kulyk, Irchan's Vasyľ, born Froym (Efraim) Fridman, was always in the front lines and trenches, always looked like a fifteen-year-old girl and not a soldier, and was always kind and smiling. It should be mentioned that Irchan dedicated his short story *Apostoly* (1927) “To comrade I. Iu. Kulyk in memory of the Canadian prairies.” See Myroslav Irchan, *Tvory v dvokh tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1987), 273–276, 330. Irchan shared Kulyk's admiration for Riel. See his reference to the republic of rebels led by Riel in Irchan, *Tvory v dvokh tomakh*, 418.

92. In the original, *boliuche-solodko*. See I. Iu. Kulyk, *Zelene sertse* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1921), 9 (emphasis added).

93. I. Iu. Kulyk, *V otochenni: zbirka tretia* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1927), 7.

94. *Ibid.*, 72–73.

95. The final words of Kulyk's long poem are as follows: “Ta tse vzhe ne z Chornoii epopei— / Tse—z Chervonoii” (But this is already not from the Black Epic, / This is from the Red One). See Kulyk, *Virshi ta poemy*, 185.

96. See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, [Preface], in Ivan Kulyk, *Poezii* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1967), 17–18, and Stepan Kryzhanivs'kyi, *Khudozhni vidkryttia: statti z teorii ta istorii literatury* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1965), 281–283.

97. Cf. Tychyna's poem penned in 1918: “Iak upav zhe vin z konia, / Ta i na bilyi snih. /

Slava! Slava!”—Pokotylos’ / Ta i liahlo do nih” (When he fell down from his horse / On the white snow / Glory! Glory! It rolled / And lay down at his feet). See Pavlo Tychyna, *Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1983), 1: 93.

98. Kulyk, *Zelene sertse*, 9.

99. *Ibid.*, 10.

100. Kulyk, *V otochenni*, 67.

101. *Ibid.*, 17.

102. *Ibid.*

103. Some scholars consider this period as the genocide of the Ukrainian nation, see, e.g., Taras Hunczak, *Ukraina: persha polovyna XX stolittia: narysy politychnoi istorii* (Kyiv: Lybid’, 1993), 195–203; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 403–424. Other scholars see this period as marking a change in the central government’s attitude toward national communism across the country in general and in Ukraine in particular. For a well-balanced and archival-based analysis of the repressions in Ukraine, see Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 345–356.

104. In the original: “Ale khiba Moskva na myt’ iedynu letom / Zahaialas’ u vys,’ koly pirnula vhylyb? / Ni, ia ne perestav tsyvisty ii poetom.” (literally—“her poet”; emphasis added). See Ivan Kulyk, *Zmuzhnila molodist’: poezii* (Kyiv: Molodyi Bil’shovyk, 1935), 4.

105. Here and elsewhere I owe the differentiation between the all-Russian as imperial, the Russian ethnic and the Ukrainian ethnic as national to an insightful essay by Oleh Ihnytzkyj. See his “Cultural Indeterminacy in the Russian Empire: Nikolai Gogol’ as a Ukrainian Post-Colonial Writer,” in *A World of Slavic Literatures: Essays in Comparative Slavic Studies in Honor of Edward Mozejko*, ed. Paul D. Morris (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 153–171.

106. See TsDAMLNU, f. 302, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 10.

107. Kulyk, *Zmuzhnila molodist’*, 20.

108. See his poems “Lyst V” (The Fifth Letter), “Promova” (Presentation), “Pisnia pro moriaka i pilota” (A Song on a Sailor and an Aviator), “Z poemy ‘Bilomor’ia” (From the Long Poem “The White Sea”), in Kulyk, *Zmuzhnila molodist’*, 3–15, 20–23.

109. Luts’kyi, *Literaturna polityka*, 126, 130, 137. A keen observer of Kulyk’s behavior during the Ukrainian writers’ meeting with Stalin corroborates Kulyk’s sycophantic gestures, see Volodymyr Sosiura, *Tretia rota: roman* (Kyiv: Ukrains’kyi pys’mennyk, 1997), 270.

110. The original Ukrainian is even more suggestive: “I nyschchyty neshchadno do kintsial!” See Kulyk, *Zmuzhnila molodist’*, 15.

111. See Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation*, 36 and 38. See also Kulyk’s lengthy essay dedicated to Blakytyni’s memory in *Ukrains’ki robitnychi visti*, January 9, 1926; January 12, 1926; January 14, 1926.

112. See Oleksandr Bilets’kyi, “Dvadtsiat’ rokiv novoi ukrains’koi liryky,” *Pluh* 1 (1924): 158–185, here 182.

113. See M. Zerov’s review, see *Holos druku* 1 (1921): 203–204.

114. Iu. Poletyka, [review of the book: I. Kulyk, *Zelene sertse*], *Russkii sovremennik* 4 (1924): 250–251.

115. A. Khutorian, “Novyna proletars’koi poezii (I. Kulyk, “V otochenni”),” *Literaturna hazeta* 15 (October 25, 1927).

116. M. Dolenho, “Zhovtneva liryka,” *Chervonyi shliakh* 10 (1924): 163–173, here 170.

117. M. D. [Dolengo], review of I. Kulyk, *V otochenni*, in *Hart* 4–5 (1927): 131–132.

118. Volodymyr Koriak (pseud.: real name—Vol'ko Blumshtein, 1889–1937) was in the early 1920s the head of the Commissariat of Education, and later a member of the Hart, the head of the Department of Ukrainian Literature at the Kharkiv Institute of People's Education, and the director of the cabinet of the post-1917 Ukrainian literature at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature. Accused of “bourgeois nationalism,” he was shot in 1937.

119. Volodymyr Koriak, *Ukrains'ka literatura: konspekt* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928), 168.

120. See M. Dolengo, “Kyiv ta Kharkiv—literaturni vziemovidnoshennia,” *Chervonyi shliakh* 6–7 (1923), 154–157, here 156. “The Worker Shura” was translated by Aleksandr Gatov into Russian (the translator did not like Kulyk's poem) and included in a representative Russian-language anthology *Antologïia ukrainskoi poezii v russkikh perevodakh*, ed. A. Gatov and S. Pilipenko, pref. A. Beletskii (Kiev: Gosizdat, 1924), 126–127.

121. Two others were lengthy poems “Na splokh” and “Oduzhannia” (Recovery). See M. Plevako, *Khrestomatiia novoi ukrains'koi literatury* (Kharkiv: Rukh, 1926), 510–513.

122. See Pavlo Hrunsk'yi, “Literaturni sharzhi,” *Chervonyi shliakh* 2 (1923): 67.

123. See Osv[ald] Burghardt (Iurii Klen), [review of the book: I. Kulyk, *Antolohiia amerykans'koi poezii, 1855–1925*], *Chervonyi shliakh* 11 (1928): 274–276.

124. I. Raid, [review of the book: I. Kulyk, “V otochenni”], *Molodiak* 10 (1927): 129–131.

125. Hr. Maifet, “‘Chorna epopeia’ I. Iu. Kulyka,” *Chervonyi shliakh* 3 (1930): 105–123. (Maifet also included the critique of all other reviews of Kulyk's “The Black Epic.”)

126. See Natal'ia Gromova, *Uzel. Poety: druzhby i razryvy. Iz literaturnogo byta kontsa 20kh—30-kh gg.* (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2006), 305–306.

127. TsDAHOU, f. 263, op. 1, spr. 37630, ch. 1, ark. 173–173zv.

128. *Ibid.*, ark. 97–126.

129. On this issue, see the article by Luciana Piontek (most likely, by Kulyk himself) entitled “Five Years of the Work at the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences,” see “Piat' lit roboty Vseukrains'koi akademii nauk,” *Ukrains'ki robitnychi visti* 108 (September 27, 1924) and 109 (September 30, 1924).

130. In the mid-1920s, Vynnychenko planned to return to Ukraine, especially since the Rukh and Knyhospilka publishing houses started to issue his complete works (almost thirty volumes). See B. Podoliak [Hr. Kostiuik], “Ostannia rezydentsiia V. Vynnychenka,” in *Volodymyr Vynnychenko (statti i materialy)* (New York: Ukrains'ka vil'na akademiia nauk u SShA, 1953), 17–18. For Kulyk's explanatory note, see TsDAHOU, f. 263, op. 1, spr. 37,630, ch. 1, ark. 97–126, here 104. Other sources corroborate Kulyk, see Mykyta Shapoval, *Shchodennyk*, 2 vols. (New York: Ukrain'ska hromada im. M. Shapovala, 1958), 2:9.

131. VRILNANU, f. 159, spr. 37 (Postupal'skyi's letter to the CPSU Central Committee, January 26, 1957).

132. See, e.g., Stepan Kryzhaniv's'kyi, *Khudozhni vidkryttia: statti z teorii i istorii literatury* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1965), 264–265.

133. Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, “Zhyttia—tvorchist'—revoliutsiia” (Life, Creativity, Revolution), in *Poet revoliutsii*, 119.

134. For the picture of the plaque, see Iu. Beider, “Uvichnennia pamiaty,” *Radians'ke Podillia* 135 (July 9, 1967).

135. Beider's book vanished in the drawers of Dnipro Publishers.

136. For seventeen of Leonid Pervomais'kyi's letters to Iukhym (Haim Vol'kovych) Bei-

der written between 1966 and 1972, see Beider's private collection in possession of his widow, Eva Lodzernik (Brooklyn, NY), and son, Vladimir Beider (Jerusalem). The following discussion is based on these unpublished letters.

137. See Iurii Smolych, "Rozpovidi pro nespokii," in his *Tvory v vos'my tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986), 7:271 and 7:273–74. Smolych, however, acknowledges Kulyk's delicate and diplomatic management of the literary groups, pp. 574–575.

Chapter 3. Writing the Body: The Passion and Freedom of Raisa Troianker

1. See TsDAMLUMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109 ("Intymna spovid"), ark. 28–34, here ark. 29. Smolych's memoir partially appeared in Iurii Smolych, "Raia," *Komentar* 3 (2003): 15 (published by Iaryna Tsybmal and Mykola Klymchuk). Smolych (1900–1976), a creator of Ukrainian fantasy novels, befriended many Jewish writers and was among very few Ukrainians who penned memoirs on them. Among these unpublished texts is his insightful memoir on Der Nister, TsDAMLUMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 84 ("Rik v Alma-Ati ta inshi [spohady]"), ark. 175–201. For the examples of conscientious philosemitism of Smolych, see Iurii Smolych, *Ia vybyraiu literaturu* in his *Tvory v vos'my tomakh* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1970), 8:58–59. Smolych's stance, which did not remain unchanged through his career, was forged by his experience of an actor in a Jewish amateur theater, see *ibid.*, 256, and his *Rozpovid' pro nespokii* in his *Tvory u vos'my tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986), 7:333.

2. Based on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 144, 271, 273.

3. The Troiankers' fate was idiosyncratically Eastern European and Jewish. One of Raisa's brothers was murdered in the civil war pogroms. Her sister Maria lost her mind in late 1910, during a pogrom in Uman, when she saw soldiers raping her friend. Three other members of the family were murdered in the Babi Yar in September 1941. Troianker's granddaughter (the daughter of Olena/Elena Turgan and the Moscow painter Merkulov), a professional actress, performed at Moscow's Sovremennik Theater (Neelova theater cast), appeared in seven feature films (psychological dramas) in the 1980s, and in 1990 settled with her family in Berlin, where she became active as a Russian art journalist and the reporter for the Moscow journal *Kultura*. Personal correspondence with Alexandra Turgan, December 7, 2004. Private collection of Elena Turgan, courtesy of Alexandra Turgan. Hereafter ETPC.

4. Raisa Troianker, *Horyzont* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1930), 9–10.

5. Raisa Troianker, *Povin'* (Kharkiv: Pluzhany, 1928), 23.

6. For her poems based on Jewish themes, see Troianker, *Povin'*, 3–4, 23–24, 27–28, and *Horyzont*, 9–16.

7. See "The School, Where I Learned to Read, Is No More" (*Toi shkoly net, / Gde ia chitai' uchilas'*), in Raisa Troianker, *Surovaia lirika* (Murmansk: Poliarnaia pravda, 1942), 40. I thank the Rare Book Division at the Russian National Library for providing me with a copy of Troianker's Russian poetry collection. The copy in National Library bears a handwritten dedication, "To the tender Aleksandr Zharov in memory of the Arctic meetings over one war winter. Raia Troianker. March 17, 1942. Murmansk, on the other side of the Polar Circle."

8. For an account of Troianker's favorite poets, see Elena Turgan, "Podvig materi" (unpub. essay, 1979), l. 6, ETPC.

9. Elena Turgan, “Rasskaz o nepokoe,” an unpublished memoir essay triggered by the publication of Iurii Smolych’s memoir “Opovid’ pro nespokii” (typescript, ca. 1969), ll. 2–3, ETPC.

10. Troianker, *Horyzont*, 10.

11. See “Raisa Troianker: Zapadnyi front: Pis’mo ukrotitelia tigrov Dzhordani,” copy by Elena Turgan, ll. 1–3, here l. 3, ETPC.

12. Raisa Troianker, “Zhadka,” *Avanhard: Mystets’ki materialy* (Kharkiv: n.p., 1929), 91.

13. For the Ukrainian translation of Whitman’s poem, see I. Iu. Kulyk, *Antolohiia amerykans’koi poezii, 1855–1925* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928), 47–48.

14. Raisa Troianker, “Kapitan i kytaianka,” *Biuletyn Avanhardu* (Kharkiv, 1928), 15. *Lioniu* is the vocative of *Lionia*, the diminutive of Leonid. It is not impossible that this poem had also another addressee, namely, Leonid Chernov (Maloshyichenko), who together with Troianker was a founder and active member of Polishchuk’s Avanhard group: Chernov in fact traveled in Indonesia and India. See Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid’ pro nespokii*, in his *Tvory u vos’my tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986), 7:248–255.

15. See “Raisa Troianker: Zapadnyi front: Pis’mo ukrotitelia tigrov Jordani” (typescript copy by Elena Turgan), ll. 1–3, here 2–3, ETPC. I omitted the most explicit lines.

16. See Smolych, “Intymna spovid’,” TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109, ark. 28; corroborated in Elena Turgan, “Rasskaz o nepokoe,” typescript, l. 4, ETPC. See also a photo of Sosiura among Uman-based writers and poets made in July 1926, in TsDAMLMU, f. 44, op. 1, spr. 1194, ark. 1–12v.

17. See Troianker, *Povin’*, 7–8, and Volodymyr Sosiura, *Rozstriliane bezsmertia: Virshi ta poemy* (Kyiv: Ukrains’kyi pys’mennyk, 2001), 112–113.

18. See Elena Turgan, “Za strokoi nekrologa: Il’ia Ivanovich Sadofiev” (typescript, unpub. essay, ca. 1969), ll. 1–10, here l. 8, ETPC. In addition to their purported encounter around 1925, Sosiura and Troianker remained good friends, and most likely it was Troianker, already a Leningrad dweller, whom Sosiura met again in Leningrad under funny erotic circumstances. See Sosiura, *Tretia rota*, 272–273. For Onoprii Turhan, the earliest bibliography is Iv[an] Kapustians’kyi, “Pluzhans’ka tvorchist’” in *Pluh* 2 (1926): 266–293. Turhan’s entry is on p. 289.

19. Troianker, *Povin’*, 23–24.

20. Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social and Demographic Profile* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), 72–74.

21. See his groundbreaking book *Being for Myself Alone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

22. See memoirs containing analysis of the Berezil Theater in Iurii Sherekh, “Les’ Kurbas i Kharkiv,” in his *Poza knyzhkamy i z knyzhok* (Kyiv: Chas, 1998), 173–184; and Iurii Smolych, *Rozpovid’ pro nespokii* in his *Tvory u vos’my tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986), 7:59–65, 281–333.

23. B. Sim, “Kul’turno-mystets’kyi Kharkiv siohodni,” *Chervonyi shliakh* 11 (1928): 266–268; for Kharkiv as a new center of Yiddish theater and literature, see Gennadi Estraiikh, *In Harness: Yiddish Writers’ Romance with Communism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 122–123; for literary impressions of Kharkiv, see Teren’ Masenko, *Roman pam’iati* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi pys’mennyk, 1970), 97.

24. Volodymyr Kulish, *Slovo pro budynok* “*Slovo:* ”*spohady* (Toronto: Homin, 1966), 34–39, 46, 66–67.

25. Masenko, *Roman pam’iati*, 73–74.

26. See Luts’kyi, *Literaturna polityka*, 70–78; Vasyly Myn’ko, *Spovid’ kolyshnioho pluzhanyna* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi pys’mennyk, 1972), 44–46, 79–80; Smolych, *Tvory u vos’miy tomakh*, 7:239–244.

27. Masenko, *Roman pam’iati*, 94–95; Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady*, 2 vols. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), 1:257–258.

28. Leonid Pervomais’kyi, “Kharkiv,” in his *Proloh do hory* (Kharkiv: Molodyi bil’shovyk, 1932); Pervomais’kyi changed the last two lines of the poem to “Like a window—wide open—into eternity.” See TsDAMLUMU, f. 133, spr. 1 (author’s corrections of 1945).

29. See D. Feldman, “Prohulianky,” trans. E. Raisin, *Literaturnyi iarмарок* 9 (1929): 136.

30. Yiddish: *fun a nisht vert a yesh geboyrn*. See Der Nister, *Hoypshet: fartseykhenungen* (Kharkiv: Literatur un kunst, 1934), 7.

31. See Ben-Yaakov [pseud.; real name—Kalman Zingman], *In der tsukunft shtot “Edenya”* (Khar’kov: Yiddish, 1918), reprinted in a bilingual Hebrew Yiddish edition in Ben-Yaakov, *Ba-ir-he-atid edenya: roman* (Tel-Aviv: Eked, 1996).

32. See TsDAMLUMU, f. 271 (Plevako), op. 2, spr. 15, ark. 15 (V. Polishchuk, “Auto-biografiia”), esp. ark. 1–4.

33. This emphasis on the specific, individual, and personal made Polishchuk, among other things, reject the mechanical Bohr-Reserford model of the atom, claiming that even atoms should be different from one another. See Valer’ian Polishchuk, “*Koly zhyty—hordo zhyty!*” *Literaturna spadshchyna: Spohady pro Valer’iana Polishchuka* (Rivne: Azalia, 1997), 107, 120–128.

34. See Zinovii Sukhodub, “Portret zibranyi po krupynkakh (zamist’ peredmovy),” in Polishchuk, “*Koly zhyty—hordo zhyty,*” 3; Myn’ko, *Spovid’ kolyshnioho pluzhanyna*, 79.

35. Polishchuk compared creative writing and artistic inspiration to erotic ecstasies, see his diaries, TsDAMLUMU, f. 136, spr. 7, ark. 1–12v.

36. For example, in a poem imitating the Ukrainian song he depicted the irresistible charms of Olena-Rachel and Lida: “Oh, my beautiful sisters, / I have strength to love both / I will live and love, / Once as a lover, once as a brother.” Later Iolon’ka (Olena-Rachel) Konukhes became his legal wife. See Valer’ian Polishchuk, *Blazhen, khto mozhe hority*, ed. Zinovii Sukhodub (Rivne: Azalia, 1997), 23, and Vitalii Krykunenko, *Filosof z holovoiu khlopchyka: Za malovidomyi storinkamy tvorchoi spadshchyny Valer’iana Polishchuka* (Moscow: Biblioteka ukrains’koi literatury, 1997), 57.

37. See Valer’ian Polishchuk, *Blazhen, khto mozhe hority*, 61–91; for his Talmudic quotes, see pp. 67–68; for his utopian novel, see “Na shliakhu do velykoho maibutnioho: Roman-fantasia” (On the Road toward the Great Future), in TsDAMLUMU, f. 136, spr. 95; for his biblical apocrypha, see Valer’ian Polishchuk, *Kozub iahid: opovidannia, aforyzmy, bryzky myslu i tvorchosti, stezhky dumok i alehorii liudyny, iaku zhyttia pryperchylu* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1927), 36–40, and Valerian Polishchuk, *Vybukhy syly, poezii 1921 roku* (Kyiv-Katerynoslav, n.d.), 7–18. His contemporaries sharply criticized his apology of “onanism and chaotic coitus”; see M. Iohansen, “*Eroryzm v novii ukrains’kii poezii,*” *Zhovten’: zbirnyk, prysviachenyi rokovynam velykoi proletars’koi revoliutsii* (Kharkiv:

Vseukrains'kyi literaturnyi komitet khudozhnioho sektora Holovprosvity, 1921), 98–99. Accused of pornography, Polishchuk was eventually expelled from the literary group of Ukrainian proletarian writers (VUSPP), see Ihnytzyk, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 156.

38. TsDAMLUMU, f. 136, spr. 95, ark. 7 (“Na shliakhu do velykoho maibutnioho: roman-fantasia”).

39. Oksana Heorhievna Chykalenko, oral communication, May 27, 2005.

40. “Polishchuk with Chernov and Troianker founded the Avanhard, antagonistic to the VUSPP, and to the Politfront, and to the Nova heneratsiia.” See Iurii Smolych, *Tvory u vos'my tomakh: Rozpovid pro nespokii* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986), 7:129. For a sharp criticism of the Avanhard group and Polishchuk's leadership, see “Avanhardo,” *Literaturna hazeta* 24 (1928): 2.

41. Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia: Spohady* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), 1:264.

42. TsDAMLUMU, f. 271 (Plevako), op. 1, spr. 141 (V. L. Polishchuk, *Biohrafichni ta bibliohrafichni vidomosti*), ark. 10.

43. Krykunenko, *Filosof z holovoiu khlopchyka*, 21; TsDAMLUMU, f. 136, spr. 4, ark. 12v; Masenko, *Roman pam'iaty*, 97; V.M. [Vasyl' Mysyk] [review of Raisa Troianker, Povin'], in *Pluh* 10 (1928): 73; Smolych, *Tvory u vos'my tomakh*, 7:129.

44. See Smolych, “Intymna spovid,” TsDAMLUMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109, ark. 31.

45. Raisa Troianker, *Horyzont* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1930).

46. The way Troianker transcribes Yiddish—*Olte un Inge* [*sic*]—reflects the specificities of her oral Yiddish characteristic to Volhynia dialect, the so-called Volhynian Yiddish, see Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 386–387, 578–580, 681–718.

47. Cf. Iosif Utkin's *Povest o ryzhem Motele, gospodine inspektore, ravine Isaie i komissare Blokh* (A Story on Ginger Motele, Mister Inspector, Rabbi Isaiah, and Commissar Blokh), in Iosif Utkin, *Stikhotvorennia i poemy* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel, 1966), Bol'shaia biblioteka poeta series, 267–287.

48. Cf. Troianker's somatic metaphors with which she depicts a newly erected edifice in “Moie kokhannia” (My Love), *Horyzont*, 49–50. Cf. technocratic utopianism in Valer'ian Polishchuk, “Radio,” *Pluh* 1 (1928): 38–39, and his *Metalevyi tembr: poezii industrial'noi doby* (Metalic Timbre: The Poetry of an Industrial Epoch) (Kharkiv: Derzhdrukarnia, 1927), 16–18, 25–39, 53–59.

49. Troianker, “Moie sihodennia,” in *Horyzont*, 52–53.

50. Troianker, “Moia mriia,” in *Horyzont*, 51.

51. Ia. Khomenko, [review of Raisa Troianker, *Povin'*], *Krytyka* 10 (1928): 138–141; V.M. [review of Raisa Troianker, *Povin'*], *Pluh* 10 (1928): 72–73. Characterization of Vasyl' Mysyk is from Kostiuk, *Zustrichi i proshchannia*, 321.

52. D. Zahul, “Zhinocha liryka,” in *Literaturna hazeta* 1 (1929): 5; O. Mak [I. Momot], “Literaturni budni (Shcho spivaiesh, zhovta mandolino?)” *Komsomolets' Ukrainy* (September 22, 1928): 5.

53. Iakiv Savchenko, “Mertve i zhyve v ukrains'kii poezii,” *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia* 1 (1929): 118–138; 2 (1929): 122–138. Savchenko made a presentation on this topic in the Blakytnyi House; see a positive review of his appearance that mentions Troianker's book in Literary Chronicle rubric, *Literaturna hazeta* 24 (1928): 8.

54. M. Dolengo, "Notatky pro nashu liryku," *Krytyka* 9 (1928): 30–31.
55. Stepan Kryzhaniv's'kyi, *Spohad i spovid z XX storichchia* (Kyiv: Stylos, 2002), 60.
56. See Iurii Lavrynenko, *Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia: Antolohiia, 1917–1933* (Kyiv: Prosvita, 2001), 277–281.
57. M. Bulatovych, "Berdychiv," in *Chervonyi shliakh* 8–9 (1933): 82–86.
58. O. Lan, "Vinnys'ts'kii Ierusalymtsi," *Zhyttia i revoliutsia* 2 (1930): 79–80. For the most representative collection of Lan's poetry, see O. Lan, *Vybrani poezii* (Cherkasy: Siiach, 1997).
59. David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 112–113.
60. Troianker, *Horyzont*, 15–16. Mind the interchangeability of references to two Jewish towns, as if their names convey one and the same meaning: the shtetl.
61. On the Jewish context of this poem, see Leonid Katsis, *Osip Mandel'shtam: Muskus iudeistva* (Moscow: Gesharim; Mosty kultury, 2002), 70–79.
62. Among the eight lines that appeared in the first journal publication but excluded from the book version, Troianker introduced the "black synagogue on festive days," "the old Jehovah," a "colorless day," and a "black [burial] cover." See Raisa Troianker, "Spohady," in *Shkval* 21 (1929): 11.
63. Troianker, *Horyzont*, 9–10.
64. Babel, "Gedali," in his *Konarmia: Rasskazy. Zakat* (St. Petersburg: Kristall, 2001), 29–31.
65. Troianker, *Horyzont*, 11–12.
66. *Ibid.*, 10.
67. Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge, 1998), 218.
68. Iurii Klen (Oswald Burghardt), *Vybrani tvory* (Drohobych: Kameniar, 2003), 215–216; Oleksa Vlyz'ko, *Vybrane* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1988), 30, 38, 74; Volodymyr Sosiura, *Mazepa: Poema; Liryka* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 2001), 136, 167, 211, 213. On Sosiura's national symbolism, see Serhii Halchenko, "Fenomen talantu, abo zakhaliavna tvorchist' Volodymyra Sosiury," in Volodymyr Sosiura, *Rozstriliane bezsmertia* (Kyiv: Ukrain's'kyi pys'mennyk, 2001), 5–17, here 12.
69. Ukr.: *syniavo-zoloty*, see *Horyzont*, 11.
70. Troianker, *Povin'*, 23–24.
71. *Ibid.*, 24.
72. Elena Turgan's four memoir essays were written in the 1960s and 1970s and never published, whereas Iurii Smolych's memoir was written in 1945–46 and published partially only in 2004. See Elena Turgan, "Rasskaz o nepokoe," l. 4, ETPC.
73. For more detail, see Smolych, "Intymna spovid," TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109, ark. 29–30.
74. See Carleton, *Sexual Revolution*, 38–47.
75. See "Dyskusia pro 'kokhannia,'" *Zhyttia i revoliutsia* 4 (1926): 53–56.
76. Smolych, "Intymna spovid," See TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109 ("Intymna spovid"), ark. 28.
77. Kostiuik, *Zustrichi i proshchannia*, 1: 204.
78. Dokiia Humenna, *Dar Evdotei: Ispyt pam'iaty* (Baltimore: Smoloskyp, 1990), 253. Humenna mistakenly refers to Luciana Pionteck as Ludmyla.
79. Sosiura, *Tretia rota*, 237. Sosiura had in mind Iakiv Savchenko's article "Mertve i zhyve v ukrains'kii poezii," *Zhyttia i revoliutsia* 1 (1929): 118–138; 2 (1929): 122–138.

80. Smolych, “Intymna spovid,” See TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109 (“Intymna spovid”), ark. 29 and 31.

81. Troianker, *Povin'*, 7–8.

82. Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1976), 26–27.

83. *Ibid.*, 34.

84. *Ibid.*, 38.

85. Troianker, *Horyzont*, 24.

86. *Ibid.*, 26–27.

87. *Ibid.*, 12.

88. Troianker, *Povin'*, 11.

89. Troianker introduces her poem “Evening” (*Vechir*) by resorting to a Kiplingesque epigraph from Oleksa Vlyz'ko: “Nam treba kozhnoho soldatom / Na nashi budni i fronty” (Everyone has to be a soldier / On our everyday and on our fronts). See her *Povin'*, 21.

90. Cf. Troianker’s “Leaves Are Falling” and Sosiura’s tango-rhythm poems, such as “Swallows in the Sun” (“Lastivky na sotsi,” 1922) and “Mad Streets, Beloved Streets” (“Vulytsi shaleni, vulytsi kokhani,” 1923). See Sosiura, *Rozstriliane bezsmertia*, 47.

91. Troianker, *Povin'*, 5.

92. This poem seems to be inspired by a poem Sosiura apparently dedicated to Troianker. He writes: “You are already somebody else’s wife / While I am the famous Ukrainian poet.” Cf. Troianker: “I am now somebody else’s wife. / You have overcome your love.” See Sosiura, *Mazepa: liryka*, 122, and Troianker, *Povin'*, 18–19.

93. Troianker, *Povin'*, 15.

94. Troianker, “Na paroplavi” (On a Steamship), in *Avanhard: Mystets'ki materialy* (Kharkiv: n.p., 1929), 92.

95. See “Nichna rozmova,” in Troianker, *Horyzont*, 41–42.

96. Raisa Troianker, “Nevelychka poema pro staroho profesora,” *Mystets'ki materialy avanhardu* (Kharkiv: n.p., 1928), 44–45.

97. On Sadofiev in the context of the 1920s Russian literary milieu, see Nikolai Chukovskii, *Pravda i poeziiia* (Moscow: Pravda, 1987), 23; Nikolai Poletika, *Vidennoe i perezhitoe: iz vospominanii* (Tel Aviv: Biblioteka–Aliia, 1982), 243; Igor Diakonov, *Kniga vospominanii* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii dom, 1995), 252.

98. The three other members of the delegation were Boris Lavrenev, Nikolai Braun, and Konstantin Fedin. On their visit to Kharkiv, see Smolych, “Intymna spovid,” TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109, ark. 30. On Sadofiev’s visit to Kharkiv, see Myn'ko, *Spovid' kolyshnioho pluzhanyna*, 114.

99. Smolych recalled that when he met with Troianker and Sadofiev after their marriage, Raia confessed that Sadofiev’s powerful and insatiable sexuality once and for all dissuaded her from having affairs outside of wedlock. See Smolych, “Intymna spovid,” in TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 109, ark. 33.

100. For the relations between Troianker and Sadofiev, see Elena Turgan, “Za strokoi nekrologa: Il'ia Ivanovich Sadofiev” (Behind the Lines of the Eulogy), pp. 1–10. Also see two unpublished Russian poems Troianker dedicated to Sadofiev, “Ia ne mogu uiti ot etikh sten” (I Cannot Leave These Walls, 1934); “Ia, dorogoi, ni o chem ne zhaleiu” (I, Darling, Do Not Regret Anything, 1935), and seven Sadofiev dedicated to Troianker (“Industrial'naia svirel',”

“Ne vsiakii mozhет uviазat’,” “Gde ty,” “Na severnom vetru,” “Raіke-liubke,” “Zachem zhestokim nakazaniem,” “Triolety,” ca. 1934–35), typescript, no pagination, in ETPC.

101. Ilnytskyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 178.

102. Sosiura, *Tretia rota*, 274.

103. Carleton, *Sexual Revolution*, 220–221.

104. See the eight-page children’s book L. Kvitko, *Tramvai*. Pereklad R. Troianker (Kharkiv: Molodyi bil’shovyk, 1931).

105. Elena Turgan, “Podvig materi” (The Deed of a Mother, a memoir essay, typescript, 1979), ll. 4–7, ETPC.

106. A. A. Sinkliner, *Na Vermane “boi mestnogo znachenia”: zapiski voennogo perevodchika* (Murmansk: Murmanskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1981), 39–40, see other quotes from Troianker’s poetry, *ibid.*, 54–55.

107. Iu. Zhuchkov, “Zvezda kapitana Khabarova,” *Poliarnaia pravda*, January 9, 1982.

108. Elena Turgan, “Zolotaia koroleva severa,” l. 4, ETPC.

109. *Ibid.*, l. 3.

110. See her Russian poem “Iz proshlogo,” in Meter, Oktiabrev, Troianker, Koretskii, Sanovich, Khlebnikov, Ermilov, Polishchuk, *Radius avangardovtsev: literaturnyi sbornik rus-skoi seksii* (Khar’kov: Izdanie avtorov, 1928), 16.

111. Troianker, *Surovaia lirika*, 41.

112. For the English version, see Ilia Ehrenburg, *Russia at War* (London: Hamilton, 1943).

113. “Eto bylo u tikhogo Dona,” (It Was Near the Quiet Don), in Troianker, *Surovaia lirika*, 54.

114. Unfortunately, the photo of Troianker and Simonov from the Turgan’s family archive was not recovered, personal interview with Alexandra Turgan, January 26, 2005.

115. Troianker, *Surovaia lirika*, 40–41. Another example of Troianker’s juxtaposition of the Ukrainian and the Jewish in her Russian lyrics is the poem “on a Jewish girl [Liuba] tortured by fascists in Kiev,” that one of Troianker’s Murmansk colleagues remembered by heart. I was not able to find this poem, and it does not appear in her Russian collection *Surovaia lirika*. See Irina Kol’tsova’s memoir in Elena Turgan, “Zolotaia koroleva Severa,” l. 3.

116. “Literaturnaia peredacha iz tsikla ‘Muza v voennoi shineli’: Raisa Troianker,” l. 13, ETPC.

117. Alexandra Turgan to Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, personal correspondence, December 1, 2004, YPSPC.

118. “Neugomon,” the copy of this poem was preserved in Troianker’s archive. ETPC.

119. See Konstantin Belkhin, *Stikhi iz soldatskikh bloknotov* (Murmansk: Murmanskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1965), 57–68 (“Laplandiia” cycle).

120. See the script “Literaturnaia peredacha iz tsikla ‘Muza v voennoi shineli’: Raisa Troianker,” ll. 14–15, ETPC.

121. During the war, Elena Turgan worked in the Murmansk military evacuation hospital no. 1441 and was awarded a medal “for the defense of the Soviet Transpolar Region.” See her unpublished memoir essay, “Evakogospital N 1441” (1979), ll. 1–4 (44–47).

122. See the literary script “Literaturnaia peredacha iz tsikla ‘Muza v voennoi shineli’: Raisa Troianker” (1979), ll. 1–17, ETPC.

123. See *Televidenie i radio* (Murmansk) 15 (April 7–13, 1980).

124. Ivan Turchak, “Poetessa iz Umani,” *Raduga* 11 (1988): 172; Mykola Sulyma, “Raisa Troianker: ‘Siohodni stalos’,” *Lel’: iliustrovanyi literaturno-khudozhnii ta naukovo-populiarnyi zhurnal pro kokhannia* 2 (2000): 5; Oleksandr Kryvenko, “Mii nizhnyi, smuhastyi liubovnyku,” in *Postup: suspil’no politychnyi chasopys tovarystva Leva* 3–4 (1991): 11. Iurii Smolych, “Raia,” *Komentar* 3 (2003): 15.

125. Sosiura, *Tretia rota*, 343n22.

126. See Svitlana Matvienko, “Bereh literatury,” *Komentar* 3 (2004): 14.

Chapter 4. Being for the Victims: Leonid Pervomais’kyi’s Ethical Responses to Violence

1. Ivan Koshelivets’, *Rozmovy v dorozhi do sebe: frahmenty spohady ta inshe* (Munich: Suchasnist’, 1985), 407; Vadim Skuratovskii, “Ukrainskaia literatura,” in *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, 10 vols., ed. Naftali Prat et al. (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976–92), 8:1278.

2. See TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 1332, ark. 13–14 (December 24, 1942).

3. See Leonid Pervomais’kyi, *Khai lyshaet’sia vohon’: z neopublikovanoi spadshchyny: Poezii, proza, notatky, lysty* (Kyiv: Radians’kyi pys’mennyk, 1983), 134–139.

4. Sergei Parkhomovsky’s private collection (hereafter SPPC) includes the whole corpus of Pervomais’kyi’s postwar correspondence; his literary drafts; original proofs with author’s corrections; unpublished plays such as “The History Teacher, or a Retired Soldier on One Foot”; original papers; memoirs by his daughter; and other invaluable documents. While this chapter was being written, negotiations were underway on the possibility of transferring the archive to Kyiv and placing it under the auspices of the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

5. See Leonid Pervomais’kyi, *Tvory v semy tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1985), 1:165–168, here 166.

6. Ivan Senchenko, *Opovidannia, povisti, spohady* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1990), 192–194.

7. Leonid Pervomais’kyi, “Tretia zhinka (miniatiura)” (The Third Woman: A Miniature), *Literaturnyi iarmarok: almanakh* 2 (January 1929): 137–139, here 137.

8. Pervomais’kyi, *Tvory*, 1:261–264, here 262; “Z pisen moei materi” (From My Mother’s Songs), 7:381–383; (another essay under the same title), 7:401–402; also see his variations on the themes of Ukrainian songs, *idem.*, 1:325–328.

9. TsDAMLMU, f. 133, d. 18 (February 27–November 24, 1949).

10. Leonid Pervomais’kyi, “Zemlia obitovana,” *Molodniak* 1 (1927): 11–35; 2 (1927): 3–18, here *Molodniak* 2 (1927): 13–15.

11. Apparently Pervomais’kyi discovered Taras Shevchenko through his mother. He recalled that as a child he became an avid reader of “books about great people, about Washington and Franklin, about the Kholmogory moujik Lomonosov, about the blind poet Milton, about the serf Shevchenko.” See Pervomais’kyi, *Tvory*, 3:106.

12. See Leonid Pervomais’kyi, “V paliturni,” *Molodniak* 4 (1928): 71–80, here 72.

13. “Z Pismi Pisnei: rapsodia,” in Pervomais’kyi, *Tvory*, 3:94–114.

14. Leonid Pervomais’kyi, “V paliturni,” 71.

15. Babylonian Talmud, *Menakhot* 29b.

16. Pervomais'kyi, “V paliturni,” 76 (emphasis added). This passage disappeared from later editions of the story. Cf. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:20.

17. Mention should be made of Isaac Fraifeld (nicknamed “Spartacus”), Pervomais'kyi's close friend, the only one in his Komsomol milieu who did not mock his poetic talents and who encouraged him to pursue a career in poetry. See *Khái lyshaetsia vohon'*, 180–181, 192–193.

18. “My moloda nevmrushcha syła, / Nam do staroho nema vorottia” (We are a young immortal force, / There is no return to the past). See Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:46. For an unknown reason, the first edition was co-signed with Ivan Senchenko.

19. Pervomais'kyi, “Zemlia obitovana,” *Molodniak* 2 (1927): 18.

20. On Pervomais'kyi's close relations with, and adoration of, these two major literary figures, see his essays “Poezia Ivana Kulyka” and “Iz spohadiv pro Ivana Mykytenka,” in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 7:78–88, 88–116.

21. See Sava Holovaniv's'kyi, *Memorial: spohady* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1988), 14; Pervomais'kyi, *Khái lyshaeitsia vohon'*, 241–242.

22. On Pervomais'kyi's reading his “Kommol'tsi” to Kulyk, see *Leonid Pervomais'kyi: Dramaturgi Sovetskoi Ukrainy* (Khar'kov: Gosudarstvennyi teatr Russkoi dramy, 1935), 133.

23. For the literary manifesto of the Molodniak group, see Leites, Iashek, *Desiat' roktiv ukrains'koi literatury*, 2:218–219.

24. Oksana Chykalenko, May 14, 2005. Born in 1908, Oxana Chykalenko is the widow of Levko Chykalenko, the secretary of the Central Rada; she served in the late 1920s and 1930s as a Kharkiv-based stenographer of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine.

25. “Pochatok Zhyttia: Komsomol'tsi,” See Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:592–657 (first version, “Komsa”). Pervomais'kyi found this play immature, yet he mentioned how its popularity and success was triggered, according to him, by the “repertoire hunger” of Ukrainian theaterers in the early 1930s.

26. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:594–595, 599, 634, 636–637.

27. Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Mistechko Ladeniu* (typewritten autograph), ark. 9, SPPC.

28. Pervomais'kyi explained in a note, as he used to do in many cases when he was introducing Jewish terms and notions: “kadish—mourner's prayer.” See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Den novyi* (Kharkiv: Pluzhanyn, 1927), 7.

29. Jorge Luis Borges, *Textos Cautivos: Ensayos y reseñas en “El Hogar”* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1986), 202–203.

30. For more detail, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, “Odisei sredi kentavrov: evrei i kazaki v Konarmii Babelia,” *Yehupets* 9 (2001): 219–228, and idem., “Isaak Vavilonskii: iazyk i stil v Odesskikh rasskazakh Babelia,” *Yehupets* 13 (2004): 88–100.

31. Leyb Kvitko, *Liam un Petrik* (Khar'kov: Melukhe-farlag fun Ukraine, 1930); Avrum Veviorka, *Der Step Brendt: pyese in drey aktm* (Kiev: Kulturlige, 1930); on Jewish Soviet agricultural settlements in southern Ukraine, see Jonathan Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924–1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). For the literary reflections of the “decaying shtetl,” see David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture, 1918–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 185–201.

32. I. Shkarov's'kyi, “Literaturni siluety ievreis'kykh pys'mennykiv,” *Literaturna hazeta* 12 (1929): 5.

33. See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Zemlia obitovana* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1927); 2d ed., same publishing house, 1930; 3d ed., adapted for children, Kharkiv: Molodyi bil'shovyk, 1931. There were no reprints of this text after 1931, and it was not included in any of the postwar editions of Pervomais'kyi's writings.

34. Pervomais'kyi, "Zemlia obitovana," *Molodniak* 2 (1927): 5.

35. For an analysis of Bogrov's novel and his Ierukhim, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *Evrei v russkoi armii, 1827–1914* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003), 370–376.

36. Pervomais'kyi, "Zemlia obitovana," *Molodniak* 1 (1927): 11.

37. On the Ukrainian famine, see Iurii Shapoval, 33 in *Soviet Ukraine: A Documentary Collection*, trans. Marta D. Olynyk (Kingston, Ont.: Kashtan Press, 2005); Lubomyr Luciuk, *Not Worthy: Walter Duranty's Pulitzer Prize and the New York Times* (Kingston, Ont.: Kashtan Press, 2004); Serhii Bilokin, ed., *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraini: prychyny ta naslidky* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003).

38. See Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "Do ievreis'ko-ukrains'koho dialohu: Roman Rakhmannyi," *Yehupets* 14 (2004): 353–362.

39. Pervomais'kyi, "Zemlia obitovana," *Molodniak* 2 (1927): 16–17.

40. *Ibid.*, 15.

41. A Marxist critic reviewing Pervomais'kyi's novel published in book format noted that the author portrays his Jewish ghetto with warmth and sympathy. See Vol. Pokal'chuk [review of Pervomais'kyi's *Zemlia obitovana*, Kharkiv: DVU, 1927], in *Chervonyi shliakh* 9–10 (1927): 254–255.

42. The play *Mistechko Ladeniu* appeared in print for the first (and last) time in Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Dramatychni tvory* (Kyiv: Molodyi bil'shovyk, 1935), 135–316. I was not able to locate this edition and used Pervomais'kyi's typewritten copy from SPPC. For the critical feedback on this play, see the Russian-language edition *Leonid Pervomaiskii* (Khar'kov: Khar'kovskii gosudarstvennyi teatr russkoi dramy, 1935), 40–41, 72–73, 82. On failed attempts to put the play on stage at Chernivtsi Musical Drama Theater after World War II, see TsDAMLNU, f. 211, op. 4, spr. 177 (Kazakovs'kyi to Pervomais'kyi, April 3, 1963).

43. Pervomais'kyi, *Mistechko Ladeniu*, ark. 28, SPPC.

44. All quotes are from *ibid.*, ark. 71–73, 76.

45. For more detail, see Ana Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 27–35, here 34.

46. All quotes are from *Mistechko Ladeniu*, ark. 1, 3–13, 22, SPPC.

47. Both quotes are from *ibid.*, ark. 74.

48. On the phenomenon of *surzhyk*, a Ukrainian–Russian concoction of first-generation urban dwellers in Ukrainian towns, see Michael Flier, "The Rules of Engagement," in Zvi Gitelman et al., *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2000), 113–136.

49. See [Ol.] [review of Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Zemlia obitovana*, Kharkiv: DVU, 1927] *Chervonyi shliakh* 9–10 (1927): 254–255.

50. *Literaturna hazeta* 6 (1927): 5.

51. See Ia. Berdichevskii, "P'iesy Leonida Pervomaiskogo," in *Leonid Pervomais'kyi, Dramaturgi sovetskoi Ukrainy* (Kharkiv: Teatr Russkoi Dramy, 1935), 41, and A. Bartoshevich, "Siluet dramaturga," in *ibid.*, 72–73.

52. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:3–140. Recall that Iliusha was Pervomais'kyi's real Jewish name.

53. “V paliturni,” in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:14–27.

54. *Ibid.*, 74.

55. As the result of this imposition, the Russian (and common Slavic) *evrei* (Jew), coming from the language of the metropolis, acquired positive or neutral connotations, whereas the Ukrainian and Polish *zhyd* (yid), originating from a “lower” colonial substratum, turned negative and insulting. On the connotations of “yid” and “Jew,” see John D. Klier. “Zhyd,’ the Biography of a Russian Epithet,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 1 (1982): 1–15. Also, see how a leading western Ukrainian writer residing in the Diaspora explains the offensive connotations of the word *yavrei* and neutral *zhyd* in Ivan Bahrianyi, *Publitsistyka: dopovidi, statii, pamphlety, refleksii, esse* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 1995), 283. For an analysis of these two concepts defining Jews in both the Ukrainian and Russian mentalité, see the somewhat biased yet indispensable publication, Zynovii Knysh, “*Ievrei*” chy “*zhydy*” [“Jews” or “Yids”] (Toronto: Sribna surma, 1984); for the discussion of the terms *zhyd* and *evrei* in the context of the identity shift from Ruthenians to Ukrainians, see chapter 24 of Yevhen Nakonechnyi, *Ukradene im'ia: Chomu rusynny staly ukraintsiamy* (L'viv: L'vivs'ka naukova biblioteka im. V. Stefanyka NAN Ukrainy, 2001).

56. A. Klochchia, “Khystkyi mistok” [review of L. Pervomais'kyi, *Den' novyi: opovidania*, Pluzhany, 1927], *Literaturna hazeta* 6 (1927): 5.

57. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:4.

58. *Ibid.*, 3:6.

59. See Iuliia Mirmovich, comp., *Obzor dokumental'nykh istochnikov po istorii evreiskoi literatury v fondakh arkhivokhranilishch Kieva* (Moscow: Evreiskoe nasledie, 1996), 20–22, “Jewish archive” series, available at <http://www.jewish-heritage.org/sea6.htm>.

60. TsDAML MU, f. 211, op. 2, spr. 69, ark. 1–11 (“Parasol'ka Pinkhusa-Moti,” a type-written copy with the author's corrections, 1926; 1958).

61. A comparison of Pervomais'kyi's final drafts to the texts published in his collected works proves that Soviet censorship meticulously eliminated references to Jewish themes and topics in Pervomais'kyi's works, even if they were to Komsomol members, Red Army soldiers, or proletarians of Jewish descent. The censor (or the editor) blotted out some explanations from Pervomais'kyi's eulogy-memoir dedicated to Aron Kopshtein—in particular, those that spelled out Jewish names in Kopshtein's poetry. See TsDAML MU, f. 211, op. 2, spr. 147, ark. 4, 6 (“Aron Kopshtein,” February 6, 1941). In certain cases, Pervomais'kyi's “inner censor” removed some bold descriptions: for instance, he took out a note about David Kanevs'ky's perception of time as a forthcoming catastrophe, as if it could have provided the impression of a young Jewish poet who prefigures a future unknown to the party and the government. See TsDAML MU, f. 211, op. 2, spr. 149, ark. 3 (“David Kanevs'ky”).

62. Iurii Lotman and Boris Uspenskii, “Mif—imia—kultura,” in *Uchenye zapiski tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 308 (1973): 283–303. (Trudy po znakovym sistemam, vol. 6.)

63. Among them *Molodniak*, *Chervonyi shliakh*, *Literaturnyi iarmarok*, *UZh*, *Mystetstvo i zhyttia*.

64. In the 1920s, Ivan Mazepa (1639–1709) appeared in textbooks in a positive light, as a redeemer of Ukraine; see M. N. Pokrovskii, *History of Russia: From the Earliest Times to the*

Rise of Commercial Capitalism, trans. and ed. J. D. Clarkson and M. R. M. Griffiths (New York: International Publishers, 1931). The book was last published in 1933 and taken out of circulation immediately afterwards.

65. See Dokiia Humenna, *Dar Evdotei: Ispyt pam'ciati* (Baltimore: Smoloskyp, 1990), 182, 197–212.

66. *Pro Leonida Pervomais'koho: spohady, statti, lysty, narysy* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'menyk, 1978), 31, 116, 158.

67. *Pro Leonida Pervomais'koho*, 107.

68. See Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:387.

69. For a discussion of Kipling's characters becoming “cog[s] in the imperialist wheel,” see Zohreh T. Sullivan, *Narratives of the Empire: The Fictions of Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), particularly p. 176.

70. Among the most renowned Russian followers of Kipling's poetics (perceived through the medium of Nikolai Gumilev, shot in 1919 for an allegedly plotting an anti-Bolshevik coup) were Eduard Bargritskii (1895–1934), Pavel Kogan (1918–42), Mikhail Kul'chitskii (1919–43), Vladimir Lugovskoi (1891–1957), Nikolai Otrada (1918–40), Konstantin Simonov (1915–79), Boris Slutskii (1919–86), Nikolai Tikhonov (1896–1979).

71. Among Ukrainian poets who imitated Kipling were Maksym Ryl's'kyi, Volodymyr Sosiura, Vasyly Mysyk, Oleksa Vlyz'ko, David Kanevs'kyi, Sava Holovanivs'kyi, Oleh Ol'zhych, and Olena Teliha. See Ihor Kachurovs'kyi, *Promenyisti syl'vety: Lektsii, dopovidi, statti, eseï, rozvidky* (Beaming Silhouettes: Lectures, Reports, Articles, Essays, Research) (Munich: Ukrainische Freie Universität, 2002), 437–446.

72. See “Ostannia zustrich” (The Last Meeting, 1937) devoted to Mate Zalka's death, “V hodyny radisti i smerti” (In the Times of Joy and Death, 1937), “Mozhlyvo v doshch, mozhlyvo v stuzhu i snih” (Perhaps in Rain, Perhaps in Cold and Snow, 1937) in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:58–60, 114–117, 131–134.

73. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:130.

74. Cf. Pervomais'kyi's refrain “The sentinels should not sleep” in *ibid.*, 1:58–60.

75. See “Snih letyt” in *ibid.*, 1:176.

76. See “Pislia boiv” in *ibid.*, 1:240.

77. “Saper i smert.” See *ibid.*, 1:180–181.

78. *Ibid.*, 1:173–175.

79. *Ibid.*, 1:192 and 1:249.

80. Pervomais'kyi befriended Vlyz'ko, who lived in Kyiv, at one of the Molodniak group meetings during one of Vlyz'ko's visits to Kharkiv. On their relationship and Pervomais'kyi's attitude to Vlyz'ko's poetry, see his memoir “Obitsiannia i zdiisnennia” (Promises and Fulfillment) in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 7:116–132.

81. For other Kiplingesque poems, see Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:58–60, 114–117, 131–134, 176, 240–242.

82. Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Uchytel' istorii: narys* (n.p.: Ukrvydav TsK KP(b)U, 1943), 4. See TsDAMLUMU, f. 211, op. 4, spr. 4.

83. TsDAMLUMU, f. 211, op. 4, d. 156 (Pervomais'kyi's “Certificate on the active military service,” 1942), ark. 1.

84. This piece of earth has been preserved and is now part of the Pervomais'kyi exhibition

at the Central National Archive Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine (TsDAMLNU). For the text of the poem, see Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:512.

85. TsDAMLNU, f. 211, op. 2, spr. 195 (“The Inventory Book of the Red Army Commander,” 1945), ark. 1.

86. See Pervomais'kyi's Order Certificates—the Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad, the Medal for the Taking of Budapest, the Medal for the Taking of Vienna, the Medal for the Victory over Germany, the Order and the Medal of the Great Patriotic War of the First Rank, the Medal for the Defense of Kiev—in TsDAMLNU, f. 211, op. 4, spr. 158, ark. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9.

87. Il'ia Ehrenburg, “Babii iar,” *Stikhotvorennia i poemy*, series “Novaia Biblioteka poeta” (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2000), 514.

88. See Szuszana Ozsváth, *In the Footsteps of Orpheus: The Life and Times of Miklós Radnóti* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); George Gömöri and Clive Wilmer, eds., *The Life and Poetry of Miklós Radnóti* (Boulder: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1999); George Emery, *The Poetry of Miklós Radnóti: A Comparative Study* (New York: Karz-Cohl, 1986); Shimon Markish, “Primer Miklosa Radnoti (ob ukhodiashchikh),” in his *Babel i drugie* (Moscow: Gesharim, 1997), 169–180.

89. See Marina Chukovskaia, “Schastlivoie vdokhnovenie,” in *Vospominania o Leonide Pervomaiskom* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel, 1986), 284–290, here 289.

90. Pervomais'kyi, *Khai lyshaiet'sia vohon'*, 219 (emphasis in the original). An excerpt from this letter was included in Pervomais'kyi's selected works as an independent reflection on Radnóti. See Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 7:409–410.

91. David Samoilov, “Fantasia o Radnóti,” in his *Za tret'im perevalom* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal “Neva,” 1998), 30–31.

92. Leonid Pervomais'kyi, “V Babynim Iaru,” in *Tvory*, 1:373.

93. Vassili Grosman, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, ed. S. Lipkin (Moscow: Vargius/Agraf, 1998), 2:401–414.

94. See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, “Vulytsia Mel'nykova,” in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:416–429, and cf. Boris Iampols'kii, “Desiat' liliputov na odnoi krovati,” in his *Iarmarka* (Moscow: Vargius, 1995), 191–200.

95. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 3:429. Klava's desire to pass Nastia's boy for her own apparently is Pervomais'kyi's oblique reference to the biblical child of Ruth born “to Naomi.” Book of Ruth, 4:16–17.

96. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 4:156–162, 197–210.

97. *Ibid.*, 251–252.

98. *Ibid.*, 328.

99. N. Stepanov, “Soldatskoe serdtse (tvorchestvo Leonida Pervomaiskogo),” *Znamia* 5–6 (1945): 167–172; M. Ushakov, “Zhar-ptytsia,” *Literaturna hazeta* 23 (September 13, 1945); A. Tarasenkov, “Poet bratskoi Ukrainy,” *Izvestiia* 305 (December 23, 1945).

100. *Literaturnaia gazeta* 5 (January 27, 1946); Stepan Kryzhanovskii, “Podvig poeta,” *Stalinskoe plemia*, February 3, 1946; Leonid Khinkulov, “Voenna proza poeta,” *Ukrainian Daily News*, June 8, 1947. For more critical responses, see TsDAMLNU, f. 211 (Pervomais'kyi), op. 4, spr. 215 (critical articles from the newspapers) and TsDAMLNU, f. 211 (Pervomais'kyi), op. 2, spr. 197 (articles on Pervomais'kyi's writings).

101. See references to Pervomais'kyi in A. Korneichuk, *O vypolnenii Soiuzom Sovetskikh*

Pisatelei Ukrainy postanovleniia TsK VKP(b) o zhurnalakh "Zvezda" i "Leningrad": doklad na plenumie SSPU 15–20 sentiabria 1947 g. (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1947), 29; O. Kornichuk, *Stan i cherhovi zavdannia ukrains'koi radians'koi literatury: dopovid' na Druhomu z'izdi Spilky Radians'kykh Pys'mennykiv Ukrainy 6 hrudnia 1948 r.* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1948), 45.

102. See Jeffrey Veidlinger, "Soviet Jewry as a Diaspora Nationality: The 'Black Years' Reconsidered," *East European Jewish Affairs* 1 (2003): 4–29.

103. Holovaniv's'kyi also found himself at the epicenter of the campaign. See TsDAMLUMU, f. 404, op. 3, spr. 340, ark. 1. The state security organs had good reasons to attack Holovaniv's'kyi: his telephone book contained phone numbers of the arrested top officials of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, see TsDAMLUMU, f. 404, op. 3, spr. 172, ark. 123 and 132 (Sava Holovaniv's'kyi, "Zapysni knyzhky, 1939–1943").

104. See TsDAMLUMU, f. 404, op. 3, spr. 124 (A presentation on the meeting of the writers in Minsk, December 24, 1948), ark. 2–3.

105. *Z arkhiviv VUChK, GPU, NKVD, KGB* 3–4 (1998): 50.

106. Sergei Parkhomovsky, oral communication, May 12, 2005.

107. See "Pro odnu antypatriotychnu hrupu teatral'nykh krytykiv," *Radians'ke mystetstvo* 5 (February 2, 1949); this was a reprint from *Pravda* of January 28, 1949.

108. "Pidsumky XII plenumu pravlinnia SRP SRSR ta stan i zavdannia teatral'noi i literaturnoi krytyky na Ukrainini,' dopovid' L. D. Dmyterka na II plenumi Pravlinnia SRPU 28 liutoho 1949 r." *Radians'ke mystetstvo* 9 (March 5, 1949).

109. Due to the 1949 accusations, in later publications of the poem Pervomais'kyi had to provide "Sinaia" with a footnote mentioning its geographic location. In addition, he had to eliminate the final stanza, which had particularly irritated the literary and party boss. See Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:225–226.

110. See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Bl'oknot blukan'* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1931), 3–12, here 11–12.

111. "Rezoliutsia II plenumu Pravlinnia SRPU," *Radians'ke mystetstvo* 11 (1949). These materials widely circulated among the Ukrainian reading public. See, e.g., *Literaturna hazeta* 9 (March 5, 1949) and 11 (March 17, 1949). Other vicious attacks against Pervomais'kyi followed, see S. Ivanov, "V poloni shkidlyvykh kontseptsii i porochnykh pohliadiv," (Imprisoned by Harmful Concepts and Offensive Opinions), *Vitchyzna* 6 (1949): 168–179.

112. *Z arkhiviv VUChK, GPU, NKVD, KGB* 3–4 (1998): 64.

113. Stanislav Tsalik and Pylpel Selihei, interview with Bela Kipnis. I thank them for allowing me to use this information from their book project on the Rolit and its famous dwellers.

114. TsDAMLUMU, f. 44 (Volodymyr Sosiura), op. 2, spr. 64 (Epigrams), ark. 1.

115. For his epigrams written between 1949 and 1953, see Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Dykyi Pehas* (Kyiv: Alterpress, 2004), 65 (the epigram on Lubomyr Dmyterko, the head of the Union of Soviet Writers of Ukraine), 66 (on Pavlo Hapochka, in the late 1940s assistant to the CPSU secretary on ideology), 67–68 (on Sheremet et al.), 69–70 (on Lubomyr Dmyterko and Mykola Shamota, one of the most reactionary literary bureaucrats), 70 and 71 (anonymous epigrams on his opponents).

116. Leonid Pervomais'kyi, "Z dytiachoi knyzhky," *Literaturna hazeta* 41 (November 25, 1953).

117. For a very sharp (and objective) portrayal of Sheremet, see Hryhorii Kostyuk, *Zus-*

trichi i proshchannia. Knyha persha (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), 156–158.

118. Leonid Pervomais'kyi, "Smert' liryky," *Literaturna hazeta* 15 (1929).

119. Mykola Sheremet, "Rozmova z Sel'vins'kym: vidpovid' Pervomais'komu," *Literaturna hazeta* 16 (1929).

120. Judging on the basis of the epigrams and parodies directed against Sheremet, one may want to argue that in addition to Pervomais'kyi, Sheremet also attacked Ivan Kulyk. See *Literaturna hazeta* 3 (1930).

121. "Khlib Pana Sheremeta" appeared for the first time in Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Dykyi Pehas, 1924–1964* (Kyiv: Alterpress, 2004), 112–132. All further quotes are from this edition.

122. "Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen," in Heinrich Heine, *Werke und Briefe* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1961), 435–507.

123. *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine: A Modern English Version by Hal Draper* (Cambridge, Mass.: Suhrkamp / Insel Publishers Boston, 1983), 677–688. Heine's "Disputation" is based on the historically attested 1263 Disputation in Barcelona between Rabbi Nachman (Nachmanides) of Gerona and the cleric Pablo Christiani.

124. Pervomais'kyi, *Dykyi pehas*, 112.

125. "Bo svit tsei—mii, tsei obshyr—mii, / Moia—tsia chorna skyba, / Mii trud, mii khlib—i ty ne smii / Torkatys' tsioho khliba." Pervomais'kyi, *Dykyi Pehas*, 118.

126. This is most likely an allegoric reference to the Itzik Fefer's Yiddish translations from Pervomais'kyi's Ukrainian lyrics. See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, *Mayn muntere yugnt: Lider* (Kharkiv: Literatur un kunst, 1934).

127. This idea is replicated in Pervomais'kyi's notes on the origins of human language, see *Tvory*, 7:381.

128. TsDAMLUMU, f. 404, op. 3, spr. 188 (Letters of Holovaniv'skyi to Ehrenburg, December 22, 1962), ark. 2 (original in Russian).

129. See Margarita Aliger, "Sorok let," in *Vospominaniia o Leonide Pervomaiskom*, 196–213, here 204.

130. Cf. Pervomais'kyi's letter to Antokol'skii, February 6, 1960, in *Khai lyshaet'sia vohon'*, 179.

131. Mykola Umnyk, "Z hlybyn poezii" (From the Depth of the Poetry), *Radians'ka Ukraina* 205 (September 1, 1957); Stepan Kryzhaniv'skyi, "Uiavlennia pro shchastia" (The Image of Happiness), *Literaturna hazeta* 38 (May 16, 1958); Mykola Rudenko, "Shliakh do vershyn" (A Road to the Pinnacles), *Literaturna hazeta* 38 (May 16, 1958); Leonid Vyshe-slav'skyi, "Hlyboka poezia" (A Profound Poetry), *Radians'ka Ukraina* 115 (May 17, 1958); Sava Holovaniv'skyi, "Pro Leonida Pervomais'koho" (On Leonid Pervomais'kyi), *Radians'ka kul'tura* 40 (May 18, 1958). See TsDAMLUMU, f. 211, op. 2, spr. 197 (articles on Pervomais'kyi's creative writings).

132. See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, "Po maisterniakh myttsiv," *Literaturna hazeta* 10 (March 8, 1956); "Po maisterniakh myttsiv: u Dmytra Shavykina," *Literaturna hazeta* 11 (March 15, 1956); "Po maisterniakh myttsiv: u Volodymyra Kostets'koho," *Literaturna hazeta* 13 (March 28, 1956); "Peizazhi Mykoly Hlushchenka," *Literaturna hazeta* 25 (June 21, 1956).

133. On the popularity of Heine in Russian culture, see the three-volume work by Iakov Gordon, *Geine v Rossii: 1830–1860-e gody* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1973); idem., *Geine v Rossii: 1870–1917* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1979); idem., *Geine v Rossii, XX vek* (Dushanbe: Donish,

1983). See also the seven-hundred-page bibliography of Heine's translations into Russian and secondary sources on his impact on Russian literature in A. G. Levinton, ed., *Genrikh Geine: bibliografiia russkikh perevodov i kriticheskoi literatury na russkom iazyke* (Moskva: Vsesoiuznaia Biblioteka Inostrannoi Literatury, 1958); on a unique case of Heine-esque Soviet poetry in the 1920s, see Miron Petrovskii, "Vladimir Maiakovskii i Genrikh Geine," *Voprosy literatury* 7 (1983): 154–180.

134. The essay was written in September 1928 and published in Leonid Pervomais'kyi, "Romantychni zustrichi," *Hart* 10 (1928): 67–83, here 83.

135. See L. Pervomais'kyi, "Iakhta 'Adnan,'" *Chervonyi shliakh* 2 (1930): 45.

136. See Leonid Pervomais'kyi, "Novyi chotyrytomnyk Heine ukrains'koiu movoiu," in his *Khai lyshaet'sia vohon'*, 153–164.

137. See his letter to A. Deytch of April 1, 1971. *Ibid.*, 222–223.

138. See his letter to Ie. Tardova of November 13, 1971, where he mentions "14,000 lines" that he has to edit for this project. *Ibid.*, 242–243.

139. Pervomais'kyi, *Khai lyshaetsia vohon'*, 34–35.

140. See "Nepodolanyi," dedicated to Heinrich Heine, Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:448–450.

141. See "Voskresy, mene, maibutnie" (Revive Me from the Dead, the Future) in Pervomais'kyi, *Khai lyshaetsia vohon'*, 27–29. Written in 1964 and published posthumously in 1983, this unnamed poem was dedicated to the Babi Yar, according to Sergei Parkhomovsky.

142. See Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:363, 367.

143. *Ibid.*, 1:364, 365–366, 402.

144. Pervomais'kyi was harshly criticized for this poem. See O. Mykhalevych, "Vslukh-aichys' v khody 1958–ho," *Literaturna hazeta*, July 18, 1958. An official literary biographer of Pervomais'kyi laments Pervomais'kyi's "decadent" motifs and finds solidarity with this critique. See A. Kudin, "Leonid Pervomaiskii," in *Literaturnye portrety: kritiko-biograficheskie ocherki*, 2 vols. (Kiev: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1960), 1:589–619, here 618. See also Pervomais'kyi's bitter complaint in his letter to V. Zviagintseva, October 13, 1960, in Ievhen Priso's'kyi, "Z lystuvannia Leonida Pervomais'koho," *Slovo i chas* 6 (1996), 64–69, here 65.

145. "Zasnizhylo, prymorozylo," in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:349–350 and "Mertva knyha," *ibid.*, 1:415–416.

146. See "Nemov po zaminovanomu poliu," in *ibid.*, 1:455–456.

147. See "Koly b meni korylysia slova," in *ibid.*, 1:399.

148. Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:361.

149. *Ibid.*, 1:364.

150. *Pro Leonida Pervomais'koho*, 72.

151. See *Uroky poezii* in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:396–397. Here I am citing Peter Tempest's translation from *Poetry of Soviet Ukraine's New World: An Anthology* (Woodchurch, Ashford, Kent: Paul Norbury Publications for UNESCO, 1986), 113.

152. See "Servantes v Alzhiri," in Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 1:384–385.

153. Besides the texts already discussed, there are a number of others that must be included in any more extensive discussion of Pervomais'kyi's contribution to the Ukrainian-Jewish literary tradition. Among others, one should consider the Jewish ballads from the collection *From the Depth: The Ballads of the Peoples of the World* (Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 5:180–185); the translations from Heine (Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 6:249–324); the image of Gedalia from the drama *Oleksa Dovbush* (1941), an innkeeper who hides from persecution the

leader of a Ukrainian peasant revolt (Pervomais'kyi, *Tvory*, 2:371–518, particularly 419–436); Jewish literary figures in the selected memoirs, e.g., Eduard Bagritskii (*ibid.*, 7:98–100); Aron Kopshtein, a Ukrainian-Jewish poet who perished in the Russo-Finnish war (*ibid.*, 7:142–148); David Kanevs'kyi, a poet and war correspondent who perished in Hungary (*ibid.*, 7:148–153); Zinovii Tolkachev, a renowned etcher and painter (*ibid.*, 7:361–368). Some of Pervomais'kyi's essays on Jewish themes were not incorporated into his seven-volume *Selected Writings*, e.g., his preface to *Ośmięcim*, the album of Zinovii Tolkachev's pictures (mentioned in Tolkachov's memoir essay, see *Pro Leonida Pervomais'koho*, 221–222).

154. Pervomais'kyi penned some excellent translations from Yiddish poets, see TsDAMLUMU, f. 211, op. 4, spr. 35, ark. 1–12 (Fefer); f. 211, op. 4, spr. 33, ark. 1–8 (Hofshteyn); f. 211, op. 4, spr. 34, ark. 1 (Lopata).

155. For a brief discussion of the pogromist article “Paperovi kvity poezii” (The Paper Flowers of Poetry) by Musii Bohuts'kyi, which appeared in the daily *Vechirnii Kyiv* two months before Pervomais'kyi's death, see Fishbein, *Apokryf: poezii, pereklady, proza* (Apocrypha: Poetry, Translations, Prose) (Kyiv: Dovira, 1996), 226–227.

156. *Ibid.*, 224–29 and a poem devoted to Pervomais'kyi's memory, *ibid.*, 37.

157. TsDAMLUMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 1332, ark. 233–234.

Chapter 5. A Messiah from Czernowitz: The Language and Faith of Moisei Fishbein

1. Moisei Fishbein, “The Plane in Search of an Airfield,” interview by Lesia Hanzha, *Den* 24 (January 10, 1999).

2. All quotes are from Moisei Fishbein, *Apokryf: Poezii, pereklady, proza* (Kyiv: Dovira, 1996), 9, 12.

3. “Moshe, ata lo yehudi, ata ha-yehudi.” Moisei Fishbein, oral communication, September 18, 2005, YPSPC.

4. For the difference between integration, acculturation, and assimilation in the East European Jewish context, see Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: the Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 11–12.

5. See Steven Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha-am and the Origins of Zionism* (London: Halban, 1993).

6. For the first publication, see Moisei Fishbein, *Iambove kolo* (Iambic Circle) (Kyiv: Molod, 1974), 14; for the revised version, “Khlub 1947-ho roku” (The Bread of 1947), see his *Apokryf*, 47.

7. Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 121.

8. In the German original, *Vierliederland*. *Ausländer* implies German, Romanian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. See Roza Auslender/Rose Ausländer, *Phönixzeit/Chas Feniksa* (Chernivtsi: Molodyi Bukovynets', 1998), 106–107, 206–207, 208–209.

9. Drozdowski repeatedly draws parallels between Czernowitz and the Austrian Empire, see his *Damals in Czernowitz und rundum: Erinnerungen eines Altösterreicherers* (Klagenfurt: Kleinen Zeitung, 1984). On his multiculturalism, see Petro Rykhlo, “Ia vse shche viriu, shcho Orfei spivaie,” in Drozdowski, *Todi v Chernivtsiakh i dovkola: Spohady staroho avstriitsia* (Chernivtsi: Molodyi Bukovynets', 2001), 8.

10. Moisei Loev, *Ukradennaia muza: Vospominania o Kievskom gosudarstvennom*

evreiskom teatre imeni Sholom-Aleikhema. Khar'kov-Kiev-Chernovtsy, 1925–1950 gg. (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2003), 124.

11. See Israel Chalfen, *Paul Célan: A Biography of His Youth*, trans. Maximilian Bleyleben (New York: Persea, 2001), 42–43.

12. It was built in the Moorish style by L'viv architect Julian Zacharewicz. For a brief description of the building and its appearance before and after communist reconstruction, see Dmytro Tanashchuk, ed., *Chernivtsi* (Chernivtsi: Zoloti litavry, 2000), 42–43.

13. Martin Buber, *Mein Weg zum Chassidismus: Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt: Rütten & Loening, 1918), 12–13.

14. See Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden*, ed. Beda Allemann und Stefan Reichert (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 3: 229. For a path-breaking collection of documents on Célan's life in Bukovina, see Axel Gellhaus, *Paul Antschel/Paul Celan in Czernowitz*, special issue of *Marbacher Magazine* 90 (2000).

15. See Ausländer's "Czernowitz," "Der Vater," "Sadagorer Chassid," "In Memoriam Chane Rauchwerger," in *Phönixzeit/Chas Feniksa*, 30–31, 40–41, 42–43, 238–239.

16. Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 16. Cf. "As long as we live, in our night dreams / We will see Chernivtsi, if not the Dnieper." See the poem "Ekzil" (Exile, 1999), in Moisei Fishbein, *Rozporosheni tini* (L'viv: Kalvaria; Suchasnist', 2001), 21–22.

17. Itzik Manger, *The World According to Itzik: Selected Poetry and Prose*, trans. and ed. Leonard Wolf, intro. David Roskies and Leonard Wolf (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 127.

18. See the interview with him "Ich freue mich, das ich ein jiddischer Schriftsteller bin," in "*Czernowitz is gewen an alte, jidische Schot*" (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 1999), 16–18.

19. Mosiei Fishbein, oral communication, October 2, 2005, YPSPC.

20. Moisei Loev (Brooklyn, NY), oral communication, September 22, 2005.

21. On the hybrid (fusion language) *surzhyk*, see Michael Flier, "Surzhyk: The Rules of Engagement," in *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk*, ed. Zvi Gitelman, Lubomyr Hajda, John-Paul Himka, Roman Solchanyk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2000), 113–136.

22. Moisei Fishbein, *Rannii rai* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2006), 374.

23. The theatrical studio of Valentina Bezpaliotova was a springboard for dozens of talented directors, actors, and literati working in Israel, Russia, Ukraine, and so on. On Bezpaliotova's contribution to Chernivtsi cultural life, see *Chas 2000* 16 (2005).

24. Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 203.

25. Moisei Fishbein, oral communication, September 13, 2005, YPSPC. Names and characteristics of the people mentioned double-checked thanks to the input of Moisei Loev, oral communication, September 22 and 25, 2005.

26. See Alice S. Nakhimovsky, *Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity: Jabotinsky, Babel, Grossman, Galich, Roziner, Markish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). For Galich's compositions on Jewish themes, see his *Sochiveniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Lokid, 1999), 1:303–331.

27. Later the leader of the popular Rukh movement, in the 1990s Drach borrowed Fishbein's images comparing Kyiv and Jerusalem, the Dnieper and the Jordan, and developed them in his poetry. See his *Sizifiv mech* (Kyiv: Ukrains'kyi pys'mennyk, 1999), 5 and 12.

28. See Kyseliov's "Ya pozabudu vse obidy" (I Will Forget All the Offenses), see *Til'ky dvichi zhyvemo: virshi, proza, spohady pro poeta* (We Live Only Twice: Poems, Prose and Memoirs about the Poet) (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1991), 93.

29. See Iaroslav Rozumnyi, "Leonid Kyseliov—fenomen poetychnyi chy psykhologichnyi?" in Kyseliov, *Til'ky dvichi zhyvemo*, 350–370, here 351.

30. See Ivan Dziuba, "Leonid Kyseliov z druhoi ployny dvadtsiatoho viku," in Kyseliov, *Til'ky dvichi zhyvemo*, 9–28, here 26. For his anticolonial verse directed against imperial mistreatment of Ukraine and Ukrainians, see his "V piatdesiat vtorom, kholodnom, trudnom" (In 1952, Cold, Hard), "Tsiriul'niki" (Barbers), "Tsari" (The Tsars), "Stikhi o Tarase Shevchenko" (Poems on Taras Shevchenko), "Po loskutkam, po lomtikam," (By Shreds, by Pieces), in *ibid.*, 71, 109–110, 116–117, 118–119, 139. Perhaps Fishbein's imagery of black and white goes back, among other things, to Kyseliov's classic "Til'ky dvichi zhyvemo" (Only Twice We Live, 1968) while radically changing Kyseliov's axiological parameters.

31. Conversation with Moisei Fishbein, October 2, 2005, YPSPC.

32. See Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 496–509.

33. Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 218.

34. See *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, ed. M. Davies, pref. Peter Archer (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

35. Published for the first time in *Slovo* 1349, October 8, 1967. It has been reprinted in *Suchasnist'* 11 (82) (1967): 32–35, in a number of Dziuba's works in the West, and later in a number of Ukrainian editions, such as Taras Hunczak, ed., *Tysiacha rokiv ukrains'koi natsional'noi suspil'no-politychnoi dumky*, 9 vols. (Kyiv: Dnipro, 2001), 8:224. See also Ivan Dziuba, "Pislaslovo do publikatsii vystupu v Babynomu Iaru 29 veresnia 1966 roku," *Yehupets* 1 (1995): 8–9.

36. See Hunczak, *Tysiacha rokiv*, 8:216–217; Viacheslav Chornovil, *Lykho z rozumu (portrety dvadtsiaty "zlochytstsv")* (Paris: Persha Ukrains'ka Drukarnia u Frantsii, 1968), 83–92, 155–156.

37. Leonid Plushch, *Na karnavale istorii* (London: Overseas Publication Interchange, 1979), 86–87, 197 (on his rejection of antisemitism); 194 (on his own early antisemitism); 196–197, 343–344 (on Babi Yar); 261, 287–288 (on his participation in the defense of Boris Kochubievs'kyi); 449–452 (on Semen Gluzman).

38. Iosif Zisels, *Esli ia tol'ko dlia sebia . . .* (Kyiv: Instytut Iudaiky, 2000), 37–38.

39. See Bohdan Nahaylo, "Ukrainian Dissent and Opposition after Shelest," in *Ukraine after Shelest*, ed. Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1983), 30–54.

40. For more detail on the context of the Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement in the Gulag, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "Jews in Ukrainian Thought: Between the 1940s and the 1990s," *Ukrainian Quarterly* 3–4 (Fall–Winter 2004): 231–270.

41. For preliminary approaches to this issue, see Israel Kleiner, "The Jewish Question and Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Ukrainian Samizdat," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Peter Potichnyj and Howard Aster (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988), 421–436.

42. Mykola Bazhan started as a Neoclassicist: his early poetry exerted a significant influence on Fishbein. Married to a Jew, Nina Lauer, Bazhan was known as a consistent philosemite. He penned a number of texts on Jewish issues, including a long poem on the Babi Yar

and an insightful essay on Sholem Aleichem, in which he discussed the impact of Ukrainian culture on the Yiddish writer's language and imagery. See "Iar" (Ravine) in Mykola Bazhan, *Tvory v chotyryokh tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1984), 1:291–293, and "Velykyi ievreis'kyi pys'mennyk (Pro Sholom-Aleikhema)" (The Great Jewish Writer: On Sholem Aleichem), in Mykola Bazhan, *Tvory v chotyryokh tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1985), 4:159–187. Bazhan also translated Henrich Heine's "Disputation" on Jewish themes, was the first to introduce Paul Célan to Ukrainian readers, and suggested that local Chernivtsi literati should look for surviving traces of Célan's Chernivtsi period. See his translations of Célan, "Todesfuge" included; *Tvory* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1985), 2:531–536.

43. See Mykola Lukash, *Vid Bokachchio do Apollinera: perekłady* (From Boccaccio to Apollinaire: Translations) (Kyiv: Dovira, 1990). On Fishbein's attitude to Lukash, see his *Apokryf*, 219–224. See also the most recent essay on Lukash's contribution to Ukrainian culture: Vadim Skuratovskii, "K poiavleniu odnogo bibliograficheskogo ukazatel'ia" (On the Publication of a Bibliographical Guide), *Stolichnye novosti* 42 (November 25–December 2, 2003). On Fishbein's attitude to Lukash, see his *Apokryf*, 219–224.

44. See Mykola Lukash, "Shpyhachky" (Pins) in *Yehupets* 11 (Kyiv: Instytut Iudaiky, 2003), 289. Consider the change of the one sound that transforms "idesh" (leaving) into "idysh" (Yiddish).

45. Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 224–225.

46. *Ibid.*, 228–229. For the official Soviet-style eulogies and the account of the funerals of Leonid Pervomais'kyi, see *Literaturna Ukraina* 90 (December 14, 1973), 2 (reflections of Mykola Bazhan, Sava Holovaniv's'kyi, Viktor Kochevs'kyi, Mykola Nahnybida, Dmytro Pavlychko and others).

47. Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 223.

48. *Ibid.*, 36.

49. Moisei Fishbein, [*Debiut v Vitchyzni*], *Vitchyzna* 12 (1970), 13.

50. Bazhan's preface was eliminated in the second part of the circulation because he compared the younger generation of Ukrainian poets to the "gloomy" Ievhen Pluzhnyk, shot in 1936. The copy Fishbein presented to Dmytro Pavlychko, latter donated to the Kyiv Mohyla Academy library (Pav 821.161.2 / 189983), does not contain Bazhan's preface.

51. Fishbein, *Iambic Circle*, 11.

52. See Moisei Fishbein, *Iambove kolo: Poezii, perekłady* (The Iambic Circle: Poems and Translations) (Kyiv: Molod, 1974), 5, 6, 10, 14, 20, 26, 34.

53. See Zhanna Kovba, *Mytropolyt Andrii Sheptyts'kyi: Dokumenty i materialy. 1941–1944* (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2003). For the discussion of this issue between the champions of the Ukrainian–Israeli dialogue and the Israeli establishment, see the documents gathered by Iakiv Suslens'kyi in the journal *Diialohy* (Dialogues) 3–4 (1983): 65–67; 5–6 (1984): 49–60; 17–18 (1988): 27–37; 11–12 (1986): 80–85.

54. See Fishbein's "Ne pidtrymuvaty siohodni Viktora Iushchenka—tse natsional'nyi mazokhizm," (Not to Support Victor Yuschenko Today Is National Masochism), *Ukraina moloda* 129 (July 15, 2005).

55. The article on Fishbein written by one of these scholars appeared only after Fishbein reestablished his reputation in Ukraine. See Wolf Moskovich, "The Axis Jerusalem–Kyiv in the Works of the Ukrainian Émigré Poet Moisei Fishbein," *Jews and Slavs* 6 (1999): 389–399.

56. Like Shevchenko, Vasyly' Stus died at forty-seven but never made it out of the colony.

By the time Fishbein spoke with Kheifets, Stus was already deadly sick yet was not allowed to obtain medicine from home. See *Khronika taborovykh budniv* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1976), 77, 84, 96, 101, 108, 110, 113.

57. Conversation with Moisei Fishbein, October 2, 2003, YPSPC.

58. The Ukrainian version of Kheifets's book was first published as *Ukrains'ky siliuety* (Munich: Suchasnist', 1984) and was reprinted in Ukraine in the almanac *Pole vidchaitu i nadii: Almanach* (Kyiv, 1994), 137–392.

59. Moisei Fishbein, "Vidstan' piznannia" (The Distance of Knowledge), *Suchasnist'* 6 (1980): 33–39; see also Moisei Fishbein, *Rannii rai* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2006), 415–423.

60. For a facsimile of this recommendation, written on 5 January 1976, see Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 220–21.

61. "Also pay attention to M. Fishbein's poems: they are published immediately after M. Vinhranovs'kyi. What a fresh, exquisite poetic talent! This is particularly pleasing because the Jews have not recently supplied Ukrainian culture with significant talents like they did in the 1920s and 1930s, and suddenly—such an unexpected surprise!" (From a letter by Ivan Svitlychnyi to his wife Leonida Pavlivna from correction colony VS 389/35, May 31, 1975. For a facsimile of the letter, see Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 62).

62. Iurii Sheveliov, "U sprobi nazvaty" (In an Attempt to Name), in Moisei Fishbein, *Zbirka bez nazvy* (An Unnamed Collection) (Munich: Suchasnist', 1984), 7–14.

63. Victoria A. Babenko-Woodbury, [Moisei Fishbein, *Zbirka bez nazvy*. New York: Suchasnist, 1984], *World Literature Today* 2 (1985): 289–290.

64. M. Strikha, "Apokryf Moiseia Fishbeina," in *Khronika-2000: Ukrains'kyi kul'turolohichnyi al'manakh* 21–22 (1998): 462.

65. For Skuratovs'kyi's writings on Jewish themes, see, e.g., his *Problema avtorstva "Protokolov sionskikh mudretsov"* (The Problem of the Authorship of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion") (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2001), and the review of his book in Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "Contextualizing the Mystery: Three Approaches to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*," *KRITIKA: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2 (2003): 395–409.

66. Vadym Skurativs'kyi, "Na perekhrestiakh dushi" (At the Crossroads of the Soul), *Suchasnist'* 12 (1996): 86–89.

67. *Slovo prosvity* 25 (245) (June 17–18, 2004).

68. Viktor Radutskii, "Moisei Fishbein," *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, 8:196–197; Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "Moisei Fishbein," *Encyclopedia of Modern Jewish Culture*, 2 vols., ed. Glenda Abramson (London: Routledge, 2005), 1:270–271.

69. Lesia Hanzha, "Roza s anemonami" (Rose with Anemones), *Stolichnye novosti* 18 (May 15–20, 2001).

70. "Vid Moiseia" [Moisei Fishbein], *Aferyzmy* (Pseudo-Aphorisms) (Kyiv: Fakt, 2003).

71. Moisei Fishbein, "O slavo sviat" (Oh, the Glory of the Holidays), from the poetic series "Shtuchky" (Trifles), October 17, 2005, YPSPC.

72. "Netorkani i zhvaltovani, zuzhyti" (Untouched and Raped, Worn Out), see *Apokryf*, 12.

73. See Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 45 (emphasis added). Miriam is not only a biblical reference but also one from Lesia Ukrainka, who portrayed a Judaized Mary by making her into a Miriam who speaks with Jesus (addressed in the poetic drama as "Messiah"). See her "Oderzhyma" (Possessed, 1901).

74. "Shche nimota molytyv na vustakh." See Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 23.

75. Translated by Bohdan Boychuk and J. Kates. See Ol'ha Luchuk and Mykhailo Naydan, *A Hundred Years of Youth: A Bilingual Anthology of Twentieth-Century Ukrainian Poetry* (L'viv: Lytopys, 2000), 508–509. Also see “I solodko vid prysmaku skorboty . . .” (And It Is Sweet Due to the Taste of Grief), *Apokryf*, 19. Note that the poem is dated late July 1991, a month before the demise of communism in Ukraine.

76. Note Fishbein's “dead Christ” and the multiple references to a God who suffers and dies but is not resuscitated. Cf. similar theme of a nonresuscitated Christ in late Pervomais'kyi's poetry, “Zniate so khresta,” TsDAMLMU, f. 169, op. 2, spr. 1332, ark. 233–234.

77. In response to a message I wrote in Ukrainian—which I had barely used for years—Fishbein replied in Hebrew: “Ata lo shakhakhta ukrainit. Metsuyan! Kol ha-kavod!” (You have not forgotten Ukrainian. Excellent! Good for you!). Moisei Fishbein to Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, November 3, 2002, YPSPC.

78. Previously elaborated parallels, such as Bulgakov's, presented Jerusalem and Kiev as two provincial towns of two empires, Roman/Christian and Russian/Eastern Orthodox: they disregarded Israeli/Jewish and Ukrainian features of the two cities. For more detail on Bulgakov's treatment of Kiev, see Miron Petrovskii, *Master i gorod: Kievskie konteksty Mikhaila Bulgakova* (The Master and the City: Kiev Contexts of Mikhail Bulgakov) (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2001), 270–277. For the alternative vision, see Roman Rakhmannyi, “Dolia Ierusalymu—dolia Kyeva i L'vova” (The Fate of Jerusalem Is the Fate of Kyiv and L'viv), *Natsional'na trybuna*, December 1, 1985. Fishbein certainly knew about Bulgakov's treatment of Kyiv yet perhaps did not know about Rakhmannyi.

79. See “I v zhe vusta sudomoiu zvelo” and “Shche teploho Velykodnia pora,” in *Apokryf*, 10–11. Here translated by Bohdan Boychuk and J. Kates. See Luchuk and Naydan, *Hundred Years of Youth*, 506–507.

80. *Blahoslovy: khai lyshat'sia meni*—note the plural of the Ukrainian verb, “Oh, bless: may they remain with me.”

81. A more accurate version would be: “As long as we, people, walk the world, as long as we, people, remember.” The translators sacrificed meaning for the sake of two excellent English lines.

82. “Was wir besitzen: eine Klagewand, / an der die Flute unser Tränen brechen.”

83. Jews as the honey of the bitter bumblebees, “Honig von bitteren Bienen.”

84. Cf. “rika pravichnosti” in Fishbein and “die Zeit fällt / fällt ins Unabsehbare” (Nicht October, Nicht November).

85. “Bäume aus heiligen Buchstaben streken Wurzeln / von Sadagora aus Czernowitz.”

86. “Der Jordan mündete damals in der Pruth,” See her “Der Vater” (The Father).

87. Fishbein, *Rozporosheni tini*, 9.

88. Fishbein claims that he first heard of Célán in 1971 from Mykola Bazhan, who recited to him his translation of Célán's *Todesfuge*. See Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 197. Skurativs'kyi insightfully noticed that Fishbein's poetry is the realm where the Ukrainian “death fugue” encounters its Jewish counterpart. See his “Na perekhrestiaikh dushi,” *Suchasnist'* 12 (1996): 87. For *Todesfuge*, see Paul Célán, *Gedichte in zwei Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), 1:41–42.

89. Moisei Fishbein, *Rannii rai* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2006), 17.

90. See “Poezia” (Poetry) in Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 37.

91. See “A tam pustelia” (And There Is a Desert) in Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 48.

92. See “Hospody, porozhnio v nashii hospodi,” *Yehupets* 11 (2003): 258.
93. Paul Célan, *Gedichte in zwei Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), 1:163.
94. See, e.g., his “Suzir’ia Ryby, misiatsia hachok” (The Constellation Pisces, the Hook of the Moon, 1969), Moisei Fishbein, *Rannii rai* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2006), 106.
95. See Pervomais’kyi, *Tvory v semy tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1985), 1:361.
96. See “Ne dekoratsii khochetsia, a sadu” (I Need the Garden, Not the Scenery), in Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 59.
97. See “Myt” (A Moment), in Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 50–51.
98. See “Touching the Forgotten Cords,” in Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 60.
99. See “Poskydaimo faini meshty” (Throw off Our Fine Shoes), in Moisei Fishbein, *Rannii rai*, 24.
100. See “Chumaky puskalysia za silliu,” in Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 39. This image seems to be a reflection of Célan’s: “Was hab ich / getan? / Die Nacht besamt” (What did I / do? / Seminated the night.” See Paul Célan, *Poems*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea Books, 2002), 194–195.
101. “Iaki to ruiny . . .” (What Are Those Ruins?), Moisei Fishbein, *Rannii rai*, 27. In the third and fourth line Fishbein’s metaphor stems in three homophones that are lost in the English version: Druzy (Druzes), druzi (friends), and druzky (rests).
102. Fishbein, *Rannii rai*, 63.
103. *Ibid.*, 54–55.
104. *Ibid.*, 28.
105. See “Peresadka, 1948” (Changing Trains, 1948), in Fishbein, *Rozporosheni tini*, 16.
106. Fishbein, *Rozporosheni tini*, 15.
107. *Vid Moiseia: Aferyzmy* (Of Moses: Pseudo-Aphorisms) (Kyiv: Fakt, 2003). The collection is dedicated to the memory of Mykola Lukash.
108. Fishbein, *Aferyzmy*, 12, 34, 44, 110, 65.
109. For scattered biographical details on Fishbein in the 1990s, see his interview, “The Plane in Search of an Airfield” (Litak u poshukakh aerodromu), in *Den*, February 10, 1999.
110. Zbigniew Brzezinski, not known for his superlatives, observed in December 2004, “The stakes [in Ukraine] are enormous and they go far beyond the issue of democracy in Ukraine itself.” See Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Imperial Russia, Vassal Ukraine,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 1, 2004, A10.
111. Among those popular Fishbein’s aphorisms was “Those who fight with Yushchenko should look for a different people.” See *Ukraina moloda* 129 (May 15, 2004) and *Slovo Prosvity* 16 (2005) (June 17–23, 2004); also quoted elsewhere.
112. Moisei Fishbein, oral communication, November 30, 2004, YPSPC.
113. See “Ia vbytyi buv shisnadtsiatoho roku . . .,” in Fishbein, *Apokryf*, 13.
114. Consider Fishbein’s continuous references to Tarkovskii’s poem “Pervye svidaniia” (First Date, 1962). Fishbein writes in his “Koly my nevmyrushchymy buly” (When We Were Immortal): “Jerusalem shone in crystal . . . and our City shone on the throne.” See his *Rozporosheni tini* (L’viv: Kalvaria, 2001), 9. Cf. Tarkovskii’s: “and you hold a *crystal sphere* on your palm . . . and you were sitting on the *throne*” (emphasis added).
115. For the best examples of Pervomais’kyi’s poetically articulated epistemology of poetry, see *Tvory*, 1:338, 361–366, 399, 374–376, 402, 415–416, 466–468.
116. Pavlo Tychyna, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tt.* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1983), 1:91.

Epilogue

1. Ivan Dziuba, “Deiaki problemy i perspektyvy ukrains’koi kul’tury.” A report at the scholarly conference “Stratehiia ekonomichnoho i sotsial’noho rozvytku Ukrainy na 2000–2005 roky,” November 13, 2001, in *Vistnyk NAN Ukrainy* 3 (2001): 18–22, here 22.

2. Avtar Brah, “Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities,” in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Reina Ledwis and Sara Mills (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2003), 613–634, here 619.

3. Barker, Hulme, and Iversen, *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial Theory*, 198.

4. Natalie Zemon Davis, “Iroquois Women, European Women,” in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Reina Ledwis and Sara Mills (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 135–160, here 136.

5. Brah, “Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities,” 632.

6. See Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: ElecBook, 2001), 225.

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Private archive of Raisa Troianker and Elena Turgan (Olena Turhan), in possession of
Alexandra Turgan, Berlin
- Private collection of Iukhym/Haim Beider, in possession of Volodymyr Beider (Jerusalem) and Eva Lodzernyk (Brooklyn, NY)
- Private collection of Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, Chicago
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Fond 44—Volodymyr Sosiura
Fond 169—Iurii Smolych
Fond 211—Leonid Pervomais'kyi
Fond 271—Mykola Plevako
Fond 404—Sava Holovaniv's'kyi
- Viddil rukopysiv Instytutu literatury im. T. H. Shevchenka Natsional'noi Akademii Nauk Ukrainy (Department of Manuscripts of the T. H. Shevchenko Institute of Literature, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), Kyiv
Fond 3—Ivan Franko
Fond 159—Ivan Kulyk
Fond 136—Valer'ian Polishchuk

Fond 112—Leonid Pervomais'kyi

Fond 133—Leonid Pervomais'kyi

Personal Interviews/Oral Communications

Oksana Chykalenko

Mosei Fishbein

Ihor Kachurovs'kyi

Volodymyr Kulish

Eva Lodzernyk (Beider)

Sergei Parkhomovsky

Iurii Shcherbak

Vadym Skuratovs'kyi

Alexandra Turgan

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Rada (Kyiv)
Rassvet (Odessa)
Robotnyk (Cleveland, OH)
Russkii sovremennik (Moscow)
Shkval (Odessa)
Shliakhy mystetstva (Kharkiv)
Suchasnist' (Munich and Kyiv)
Ukrains'ka khata (Kyiv)
Ukrains'ki robitnychi visti (Toronto and Montreal)
Umans'ka zoria (Uman')
Zaporiz'ka pravda (Zaporizhzhia)
Zhyttia i revoliutsiia (Kharkiv)
Zoria (L'viv)

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