

Отримано: 15.10.2020 р.

Прорецензовано: 02.11.2020 р.

Прийнято до друку: 16.11.2020 р.

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DOI: 10.25264/2409-6806-2020-31-194-207

Mycak S. Researching Ukrainian Australian literature: towards a literary history. Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія». Серія «Історичні науки». Острог, 2020. Вип. 31. С. 194–207.

УДК 94(477).152:83(477)

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## RESEARCHING UKRAINIAN AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE: TOWARDS A LITERARY HISTORY

*The article is devoted to the study of the history of the development of Ukrainian literature in Australia. Analyzing Ukrainian literary life, the author focuses on its diversity. The chronological framework covers the period from the arrival of Ukrainian emigrants in the postwar period to 1991, geographically – Sydney and Melbourne as the most important centers of Ukrainian literary activity, but it is also noted that Ukrainian literature developed in other Australian cities. The article is based on a wide variety of source materials. Special attention is paid not only to the history of literary publications and their authors, but also to the activities of literary and cultural organizations and the role of Ukrainian periodicals in Australia. It is claimed that various organizations and associations were created by the first Ukrainian emigrants in the post-war period, which contributed to the development of the Ukrainian literary world.*

**Key words:** Sydney, Melbourne, writer, Ukrainian literature, literary association, literary magazine, “Novyi Obrii” (New Horizon), bookstore.

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## ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ АВСТРАЛІЙСЬКОЇ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ: ДО ІСТОРІЇ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

*Стаття присвячена дослідженню історії розвитку та поступу української літератури в Австралії. Аналізуючи українське літературне життя, авторка робить наголос на його розмаїтті. Хронологічні рамки охоплюють період від прибуття українських емігрантів у післявоєнний час та до 1991 року, географічно – Сідней та Мельбурн як найважливіші центри літературної діяльності українців, але при цьому також зауважено, що українська література розвивалася й в інших австралійських містах. Наукова розвідка написана на основі широкого кола джерельних матеріалів. Особлива увага приділяється не лише історії літературних видань та постатям їхніх авторів, а й діяльності літературно-культурних організацій, вивченню україномовної періодики в Австралії. Розповідається, що саме першими українськими емігрантами у післявоєнний час було створено різні організації та об'єднання, що сприяли популяризації українського літературного слова.*

*Доведено, що українське літературне життя в Австралії було доволі виразним, структурованим, добре організованим та продуктивним. Воно динамічно розвивалося завдяки безпосередній активній діяльності письменників, книговидавців, публікаціям в існуючих українських газетах, літературних журналах та функціонуванню українських бібліотек і книгарень, проведенню літературних вечорів тощо. Авторкою запропоновано власну схему, що ілюструє її бачення взаємозв'язків у розвитку українського літературного життя в Австралії.*

*Зазначено, що сприяли процвітанню української австралійської літератури й нелітературні громадські організації. Зокрема, це проявлялося в питаннях фінансування видання книг українських письменників, підготовки та публікації перекладів їхніх творів.*

*Окремо звертається увага на міжнародні зв'язки. Наприклад, Об'єднанням українських письменників «Слово», що було засновано в Нью-Йорку, час від часу видавалися твори українських письменників в Австралії.*

*Зауважено, що за кілька років після постання незалежної України з'явилася антологія українсько-австралійської літератури, а українські австралійські письменники почали публікувати свої роботи у часописах України, окремі з них вступили до Спілки письменників України.*

**Ключові слова:** Сідней, Мельбурн, письменник, українська література, літературне об'єднання, літературний журнал, «Новий обрій», книгарня.

In recent years, Ukrainian-Australians have been celebrating 70 years of Ukrainian settlement in Australia, dating from the years when some 21,000 Ukrainians arrived on Australia's shores<sup>1</sup>. They immigrated in a single wave as persons displaced through the Second World War and Soviet occupation of their homeland. There were men, women and children, young and old alike, and whilst subjected to Allied attacks, they had been victims of both Nazi and Soviet regimes. Amongst them were enforced slave-labourers, political dissidents, prisoners of war, homeless civilians, and those who had been deported, evacuated or otherwise forced to escape.

Despite challenging conditions, on arrival in Australia, Ukrainians quickly formed a networked community and organised social and cultural institutions and infrastructure. They established cultural and artistic organisations, dance troupes, choirs, theatrical societies, orchestras, women's groups, youth and scouting associations, sporting clubs, co-operatives, learned societies, newspapers and presses. They acquired property and built meeting halls, churches and schools. Community networks spread across Australia, in cities and larger regional centres.

A lively literary life also flourished. Authors, many of whom had begun writing prior to arrival in Australia, wrote largely in their native Ukrainian tongue. They wrote across all genres, producing poetry, prose, novels, plays, memoirs and essays in a wide range of subjects and styles.

The aim of my project<sup>2</sup> is to research and write a book-length history of Ukrainian literature in Australia; documenting seminal authors and publications and the cultural institutions which allowed for the production, distribution and circulation of literary texts. At first I envisaged that the timeframe to be studied would begin with the post-war arrival of Ukrainian 'displaced persons' and trace the development of Ukrainian writing in Australia up to the present day. However, given the amount of information which began to surface, I altered the scope of the project up to the year 1991, being the year Ukraine achieved independence. This would not only make the study more manageable but conceptually this would be an accurate periodisation, given the momentous shift which then occurred. Post-war arrival in Australia until the collapse of the USSR was a distinct and historic period of community and literary-cultural development, which deserves to be documented in its own right. Decisive and abrupt change occurred with the proclamation of Ukrainian sovereignty in 1991, after which a new phase of creative and communal life developed in connection with an independent Ukraine. I envisage that post-1991 Ukrainian writing in Australia could constitute a worthwhile future project in itself.

The project is not one of literary criticism; it is not a technical literary analysis of individual texts. Instead I take a scholarly book-history approach. I retain a focus on authors and texts; however, I am also compiling an account of literary-cultural organisations (institutions), in order to understand not only *who* (italic – S.M.) wrote and *what* was written, but *how* it was published, distributed and consumed. Firstly, this involves accessing texts and publications. I scan and catalogue bibliographical information of books published in Australia. In this, I am steadily working towards having as complete as possible a record of poems, short stories, novels, plays, anthologies and other publications by Ukrainian-Australian writers. Secondly, it is necessary to analyse Ukrainian-language newspapers and periodicals produced in Australia. These function as both primary and secondary sources in that they both publish and write about literature; over the years, newspapers have functioned as both producers and descriptors of the literature. Thirdly, sources for fieldwork include the archives and records of cultural organisations (held privately, by community organisations, or in State libraries). Fourthly, I undertake interviews with authors, readers and community activists within the Ukrainian-Australian community, although I was already equipped with a certain level of cultural competence and prior knowledge of the community before undertaking the project.

A number of issues have confronted me in this research. Firstly, assessment of newspaper and periodical archives has proven to be a much larger task than expected, partly because there are many years of print to assess but also because the literary activity was more substantial than one would expect. Ukrainian-language newspapers have proven to be an invaluable resource for two reasons: on the one hand, they printed poems and short stories; on the other hand, they reviewed new publications and reported on other

<sup>1</sup> According to official statistics, of the 170,700 refugees who arrived in Australia through the Displaced Persons Mass Resettlement Scheme (1947–1954), 14,500 were Ukrainians, who arrived in the years from 1948 to 1951 [1, p. 43]. However, Eugene Seneta has calculated a higher figure of 21,000, because ethnic Ukrainians could have given their country of birth as Poland, Russia, Austria, Bukovyna, Romania, Ruthenia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Germany, due to the changing borders of Ukraine and volatile wartime experiences [6, p. 88]. A significant number were also classified as «stateless» and thus would not have figured within the official number of Ukrainians [5].

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful for the support of the Ukrainian Studies Foundation in Australia, which is funding this research based at the Centre for European Studies at the Australian National University.

forms of literary activity within the community. This dual literary-journalistic function of both producing literary texts and reporting on literary activity has meant that my study of newspaper archives has been very productive but voluminous. Secondly, significant domestic travel across Australia is necessary in order to develop a national focus. I have prioritised study of the literary culture as it existed in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne, as these were arguably the most important centres of literary activity. However, cultural life thrived within Ukrainian communities in other cities and regional centres, and travel to those sites to undertake fieldwork is the ideal way to investigate the extent of literary activity which existed. Thirdly, whilst Australia's Ukrainian community has been remarkably structured and organisations have been highly interconnected, there exists no centralised community archive, at either a national or state level. This means there has been no single venue or facility in which documents and files could be deposited, meaning that preservation of archival material has been sporadic and dependent upon individuals. Unfortunately, this has resulted in significant loss of documentation. Further to this, archival documents have not on the whole been digitised, making access to them difficult and unpredictable.

Despite these challenges, I have made good progress and found that within the Ukrainian-Australian community a distinct and dynamic literary culture evolved, comprising the following agencies of production: authors, writers' associations, a literary advocate, newspapers and periodicals, literary journals and publishers. Distribution was achieved through booksellers and libraries. Institutions of reception took the form of academic and journalistic literary criticism, and literary education. An audience of readers has also been reached by way of reading clubs and community events.

Considering processes of material production, authors have had several avenues for publication. Community-based newspapers and periodicals played a monumental role. July 1949 saw the appearance of the first Ukrainian-Australian newspaper, *The Free Thought* («Вільна Думка»). Distributed as a weekly, by August of that same year the newspaper was publishing literary works by newly-arrived immigrant writers [4, p. 656]. This newspaper would go on to feature literary pages and even contained a literary supplement for several years. With time, other newspapers were established, such as *Ukrainian Settler in Australia* («Українець в Австралії») which also contained a «literary page».

Literary associations were founded as part of the cultural network in most cities. Arguably the most active writers' association was established in Melbourne in 1954. In 1976 it took the name of «Wasył Symonenko Arts and Literary Club» (Літературно-мистецький клуб імені Василя Симоненка). This Club held «Literary Evenings» (літературні вечори), featuring presentations about prominent Ukrainian writers, past and present, with readings of their work. Over a thirty-year period, this Club organised 102 such events [3]. There were also «Authors' Evenings» («авторські вечори») during which members of the Club read their own work.

The director of the Wasył Symonenko Arts and Literary Club was Dmytro Nytczenko (Дмитро Нитченко). He himself wrote under the pen name of Dmytro Chub (Дмитро Чуб) but perhaps even more importantly, he fulfilled the role of literary advocate. He was conscious of creating and maintaining a tradition of Ukrainian-Australian literature and a community of writers. He was a consistent and key networker who initiated opportunities for recital and publication. He encouraged potential writers and promoted the work of established ones.

One of his most important activities was editing and producing *The New Horizon* («Новий Обрій»), an *Almanac* («Альманах») subtitled *Literature, Art, Cultural Life* («Література, Мистецтво, Культурне життя») published every five years, beginning in 1954. *The New Horizon* was not the first literary journal, as *The Word: Ukrainian Monthly in Australia* («Слово: Український місячник в Австралії»), edited by Eugen Yu Pelenskyj (Євген Ю. Пеленський) had been published in Sydney in 1953. However, *The New Horizon* endured, becoming the most significant journal and record of Ukrainian-Australian literary culture.

Whilst authors could submit work to literary journals and community newspapers, they could also negotiate directly with publishers to have a book published. The first Ukrainian-Australian book published is thought to be *Pisia Oblohy Mista: Noveli* by Volodymyr Rusal's'kyj (Володимир Русальський «Після Облоги Міста: Новели»). The book *Katrusia: A Story* by Jurij Odlyha (Юрій Одліга «Катруся: Оповідання») is also thought to have been published in or before 1951<sup>3</sup>. Many books would be published in the following decades.

<sup>3</sup> Details of the publisher and exact date of publication are not known as neither are shown on the book itself. However, research by Wolodymyr Motyka has ascertained that the book was published in Adelaide some time before 1951. I am indebted to Dr Motyka for the information he has provided (telephone interview 06.6.2016).

Once literary texts were published, there were two modes of distribution. Within the Ukrainian community, churches, schools and local community organisations (known as «Hromady» (громади)) established and maintained small but significant lending libraries. One example is the library of the Ukrainian community in Sydney (Бібліотека Української Громади в Сіднею) which was housed in the Ukrainian community hall (Український Народний Дім) owned by that organisation. The most significant church library was located in Melbourne in the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul (Петра і Павла Св. Апостолів Українська Католицька Катедрa). The «Ukrainian Bishop's Library» (Бібліотека Єпископа) had a dedicated space and a sizeable collection of 14,000 volumes by the early 1990s [8, p. 24–25].

Readers purchased books from a variety of booksellers. In Sydney, Petro Serediuk (Петро Середюк) ran a bookstore (Книгарня) located within the premises of the Ukrainian Youth Association (Дім Української Молоді). It was mostly open on Sundays, at which time there was much communal activity. The business was still functioning in the 1990s and Serediuk would run advertisements in the newspaper, *The Free Thought* listing books for sale. Earlier in the literary life of the community, Fokshan Library & Book Supply (Українська Висилкова Книгарня в Австралії), based in Melbourne, functioned as an effective mail-order bookseller. An advertisement which featured on the back cover of the first issue of literary journal *The New Horizon* (1954) showed that the agency sold a wide range of material<sup>4</sup>. A very substantial catalogue was issued annually. Bayda Books, a company established in Melbourne by Yuri Tkacz (Юрій Ткач), exists to this day. It now sells on-line and a sizable catalogue is circulated regularly. Tkacz will often set up a book stall at a community concert, event or bazaar.

The reception of literary texts could to a certain extent be measured through two forms of literary criticism. Firstly, journalistic literary criticism was an effective way of informing the Ukrainian community and potential readers about new work. Volunteer reviewers assessed material and their reviews were published in community newspapers. Secondly, scholarly and critical work was professionally undertaken at two academic centres of Ukrainian Studies established within Australian universities: Monash University in Melbourne and Macquarie University in Sydney. The work of Professor Marko Pavlyshyn (Марко Павлишин) has been invaluable in establishing Ukrainian-Australian literature as a discipline and field of study. Notable also has been the work of Dr Halyna Koscharsky (Галина Кошарська).

Literary education was undertaken through community-run Ukrainian («Saturday») schools, which included Ukrainian-Australian literary material within their syllabi. Looking at the programme of the concert in commemoration of Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko held by the Ukrainian Central School (Українська Центральна Рідна Школа імені Кн. Ольги) in Sydney in 1975, one sees that literary texts written by Ukrainian-Australians featured alongside poetry from Ukraine. One student recited the poem «My native land» («Рідний Край») by Lidiya Hayevs'ka-Denys (Лідія Гаєвська-Денис) whilst five students performed a play written by Wasyl Onufrienko (Василь Онуфрієнко) titled «Learn from your elders» («Вчиться у старших»). The role of community schooling in the promotion of Ukrainian-Australian writing was particularly evident in the so-called *Months of the Ukrainian Press and Book* («Місяці Української преси і книжки»). Each year, the national Ukrainian Central Education Council Australia (Українська Центральна Шкільна Рада) declared July and August to be a two-month campaign («Двомісячник книжки і преси») to promote the Ukrainian printed word, across Australia, in all places where Ukrainians had settled. During these two months, it was expected there would be literary festivals, readings and recitals, together with the sale of books and periodicals to complete private and community library collections [7].

Readers were also reached through reading or book clubs, quite formal organisations that met regularly to read and discuss literature. The Booklovers' Club (Гурток Книголюбів) in Sydney is a good example. It was established in 1976. The Booklovers' Club met regularly in the Ukrainian Community Hall (Український Народний Дім) and held scholarly and critical discussions. Usually a member of the group would present a lecture on an author or text of their choice.

Community events also provided a way for literary texts to be received. Poems in particular, were often recited at concerts and commemorations within the Ukrainian-Australian community. At times authors participated directly in this form of literary reception, by reading their own work. For an example, look to the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2015, at the concert held in Sydney to commemorate the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ukrainian independence. The programme featured two poets reading their own work: Luiba Moskal (Люба Москаль) recited her poem

<sup>4</sup> Fiction, poetry, religious and scholarly material, textbooks for learning English, dictionaries, children's literature, school textbooks, musical scores, songbooks, patterns of embroidery, maps of Ukraine, books about Ukraine written in English, and subscriptions for many journals and magazines.



«Ukraine» («Україна»), and Anna Dovirak (Анна Довірак) read her poem «Ukraine united» («Україна єдина»). The previous year, the Independence Day concert had featured the work of another Ukrainian-Australian author, Bozhenna Kowalenko (Боженна Коваленко) from Melbourne. Reciter Kateryna Atamaniuk (Катерина Атаманюк) recited Kowalenko's poem «Live, Ukraine» («Живи, Україно»).

How should we understand all these forms of literary activity? How are they interconnected? I would argue that these agencies and institutions relate to each other collectively in the form of a literary field. The following model represents the network of literary institutions and agents of material and symbolic production, distribution and reception. Elsewhere the theoretical genesis of the model has been explained, as it is based on field theory and derived from an existing scheme of the literary field in contemporary Western societies<sup>5</sup>. Using the model to describe the structure and processes of literary production, distribution and reception which constitute the Ukrainian-Australian literary field will give a reliable account of Ukrainian-Australian literary culture and illustrate the ways in which literary texts have been produced, circulated and consumed within the Ukrainian community in Australia.

There are some other factors to consider, in researching the history of Ukrainian literature in Australia.

One is the role non-literary community organisations have played. Cultural organisations within the Ukrainian-Australian community occasionally provided funding for the publication of texts. Although sporadic, such financial subsidies have at times, played an instrumental role. For example, the Ukrainian Studies Foundation in Australia (Фундація Українознавчих Студій в Австралії) published three posthumous collections of poetry by noted author Wasyl Onufrienko (Василь Онуфрієнко): *My Ukraine: Poetry* («Україна Моя: Поезії») (1994); *Guest: Poetry* («Гість: Поезії») (1994); and *Poltava: Poems 1943–56* («Полтава: Поезії 1943–56») (1995). Whilst these volumes were published in Sydney by the Foundation itself, in 1999 the Foundation provided financial support for Ivan Zavada's *The Cursed Herod: Drama in 5 Acts* (Іван Завада «Ірод Окаянний: драматична поема на п'ять дій») to be published in Ukraine.

Translation is another factor to take into consideration. The leader in the field of Ukrainian literary translation in Australia is Yuri Tkacz (Юрій Ткач), who over decades has translated and published book-length works, mainly through his company Bayda Books. Tkacz translated some of Australia's most important Ukrainian writers, notably the works of Dmytro Chub (Дмитро Чуб) (see, for example, *So This Is Australia* and *West of Moscow* published in 1980 and 1983, respectively). Tkacz also went on to translate works of major authors within the Ukrainian diaspora, at the same time looking to the literary culture of Ukraine itself. His oeuvre extended to Soviet Ukrainian fiction of the 1920s and 1930s, and authors of the later Soviet period. Today he makes accessible the work of contemporary authors, playing an unsurpassed role in bringing writers of Ukraine to a diaspora and world audience.

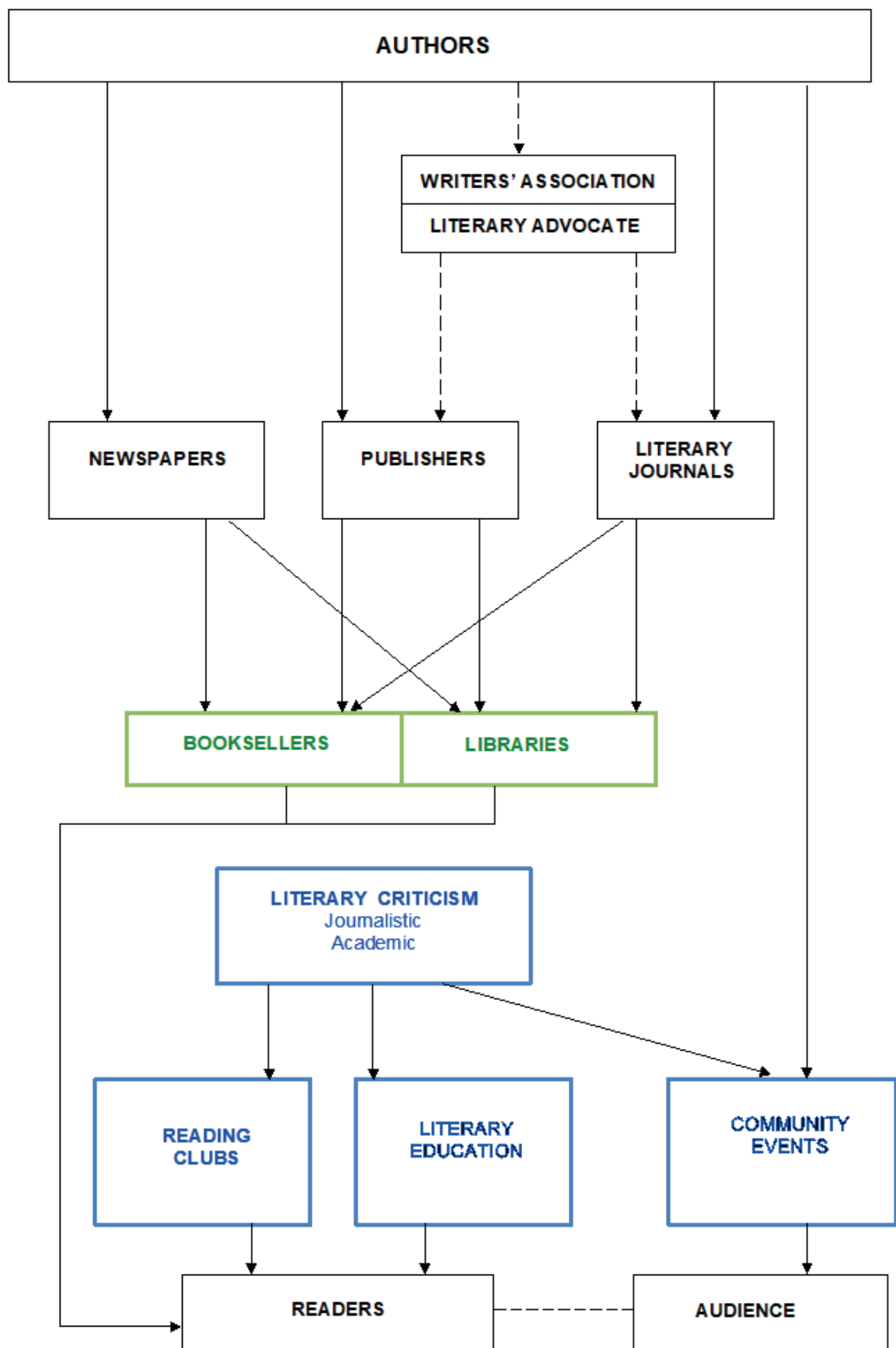
Transnational dynamics should also be taken into account, as international connections have been supportive of Ukrainian-Australian literary culture, through providing additional opportunities for publication and distribution. Transnational dynamics have been of three types to do with the pre-immigration period, the diaspora, and independent Ukraine.

Diasporic networks were established early, in the years immediately before and soon after immigration to Australia. Prior to settlement in Australia, Canada, the United States or South America, 'displaced persons' were under the care of the United Nations' International Refugee Organization (IRO) and housed in refugee camps. Educational and cultural activity was encouraged. *We and the World: Ukrainian Monthly Magazine* («Ми і Світ: Український Місячний Магазин») was an example of a Ukrainian language periodical dedicated to literature. Published in Mittenwald, West Germany, with «United Nations Displaced Persons Authorisation» and sponsored by the International Refugee Organization, it had a print run of 3,000 copies. An earlier literary journal, *Glow* («Загара») was published by the literary section of the Association of Ukrainian Writers and Journalists in Augsburg 1946, also «With Permission of UNRRA»<sup>6</sup>. Within DP camps, modest publications were circulating. Lidiya Hayevs'ka's *My Dear Children* (Лідія Гаєвська «Любі Мамлята») was an example of a Ukrainian-language book produced within the refugee camp in Ellwangen, West Germany. Looking at such works collectively is integral for understanding the literary, cultural and historical context out of which arose the work of Australian-Ukrainian writers.

On settling in Australia, many authors submitted work to Ukrainian-language newspapers and other

<sup>5</sup> I employ an institutional approach based on field theory, as exemplified by Dutch scholar Kees van Rees when he schematises the contemporary literary field in Western European countries. For more detail see Mycak 2010 [2].

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.



periodicals produced elsewhere in the diaspora. For some, opportunities extended to full-length books published by reputable international literary associations. In 1954 a group of modernist writers formed a literary association for Ukrainian writers in the diaspora. The «Word» Association of Ukrainian Writers (Об'єднання Українських Письменників «Слово») was based in New York and amongst other activities, produced a periodical highly regarded within the Ukrainian diaspora. In 1974 this organisation published a collection of satirical and humorous poetry by Melbourne writer Zoya Kohut (Зоя Когут) called *Swirling Smoke: Ukrainian Poems* («Кучерявий Дим: Поезії»).

It was the demise of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's independence that allowed for new connections with the original homeland. Two years after Ukraine achieved sovereignty, an anthology of Ukrainian-Australian literature was published in Kyiv. *Voices of the Homeland from a Far Away Continent: Works of Contemporary Ukrainian Writers of Australia* («Рідні Голоси з Далекого Континенту: Твори сучасних українських письменників Австралії») appeared in 1993. This was the product of a relationship between a Ukrainian journalist Anatolij Mykhajlenko (Анатолій Михайленко), literary advocate Dmytro Nytczenko (Дмитро Нитченко), and a number of Australian benefactors (including Ukrainian-Australian associations, and the authors themselves). Ukrainian-Australian writing began to cross into and circulate within Ukraine's contemporary literary field. Magazines *Kyiv* («Київ») and *Ukraine* («Україна») published poetry and prose by Australian-Ukrainian writers. A number of authors were accepted into the Association of Writers of Ukraine (Спілки Письменників України). Authors began publishing their books in Ukraine, as did Nadia Jarema (Надія Ярема), Hryhorij Vyshnevuj (Григорій Вишневий), Oleksander Lysenko (Олександр Лисенко), Hryhorij Yevtushenko (Григорій Євтушенко) and Ivan Zavada (Іван Завада). Issue number 9 of *The New Horizon* («Новий Обрій») was published in Poltava in 1993.

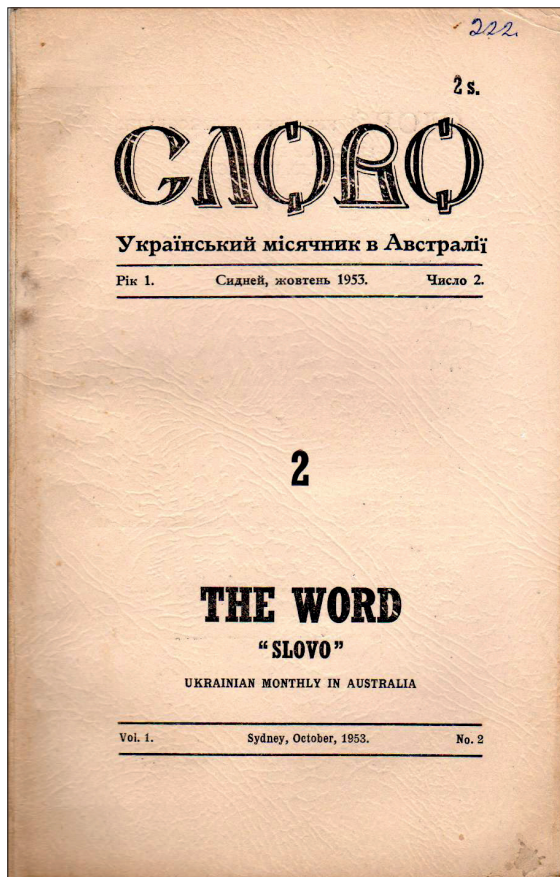
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Post-war refugees who immigrated to Australia became pioneers in institution-building, as they found no existing Ukrainian community organisations in their new homeland. The first generation of Ukrainian immigrant writers exemplified talent and resourcefulness. Through the creation of their own networks, they published within their ethno-cultural community in Australia, their wider international diaspora and eventually, their original homeland. My research shows that Ukrainian-Australian literary culture has been community-driven, highly organised and structured, productive, dynamic and effective (for a known audience). This research is significant in order to show that Ukrainian-Australians have been dynamic and effective producers of literature, and to document a detailed and lasting record of Ukrainian literary activity in Australia, so that Ukrainian-Australian literature can take a place alongside other book cultures in the literary history of Australia. In conclusion, this project aims to chart the development of what has been a unique literary culture, worthy of acknowledgement for the contribution made to literary and cultural life in Australia and Ukraine.

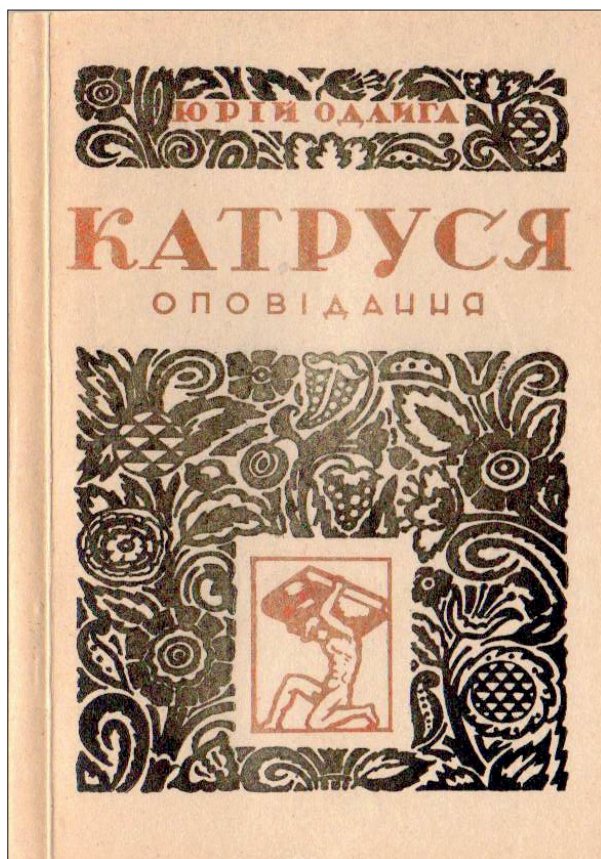
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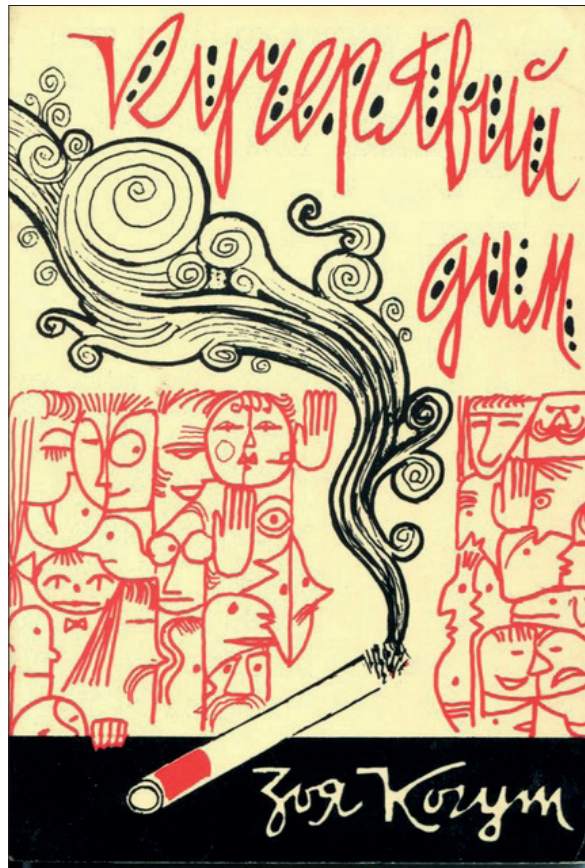


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