



The Passions of Bohdan Krawciw

Citation

Grabowicz, George G., 2011. The passions of Bohdan Krawciw. In *Ukraine under western eyes: The Bohdan and Neonila Krawciw Ucrainica Map Collection*, ed. S. Seegel, xi-xxxii. Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute.

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:9310882>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

The Passions of Bohdan Krawciw

George G. Grabowicz

In the thirty five years since his death the figure of the poet and critic Bohdan Krawciw (1904-1975) has been slowly coming into sharper focus, both in his native Ukraine where he spent the first thirty five years of his life and in the West, “the emigration,” as it was then known, where he spent the second half of his allotted life span. The seeming regularity of these periods (each just slightly more than a third of a century) only masks the interrupted and uneven pace of his entry into the canon. The edition of his *Collected Works*, initiated by fellow-poet and critic Bohdan Boychuk still remains incomplete: the first relatively complete volume of poetry (complete, but hardly flawless in its structure) appeared in 1978; the second volume of critical, primarily literary studies, appeared soon thereafter in 1980; the third volume, containing Krawciw’s journalistic writings, was published only in 1994, a few years after Ukraine’s independence and at the height of its post-independence economic chaos and hyperinflation (to which the poor quality of the paper, typography and binding of this volume still bear witness).¹ The projected fourth volume of translations, of which Krawciw’s translations from Rilke would have been the centerpiece, has still not appeared—and this, as we shall see, is not just a lacuna in the present corpus, but an absence that continues to distort the poet’s overall profile.² A 1993 Lviv edition of the poetry, based largely on vol. 1 of the *Collected Works*, marks the first stage of the post-Soviet rediscovery of Krawciw in Ukraine.³

¹ Cf. Bohdan Krawciw, *Collected Works*, vol. I, Poetry, New York 1978; Vol. II, Prose, New York, 1980 (both by The New York Group); and Vol. III, Publicistic prose, Kiev, 1994 (Svitovydy).

² Cf. his *Речі і образи, вибрані поезії в перекладі Богдана Кравцевої*, Nuernberg, 1947.

³ Cf. Богдан Кравців, *Поезії*, Львів, 1993, compiled by Taras Salyha. The collection also includes Krawciw’s translation of the *Song of Songs*, which had first appeared in full in 1935; cf. pp. 405-429. Given his later aggressive championing of the nationalist slant of interwar Ukrainian literature, Salyha’s treatment of Krawciw is still quite restrained

The configuration and assessment of Bohdan Krawciw's place in 20th century Ukrainian literature and culture which began with the reception of his first collections of poetry in the 1930s, then the provisional valuation of his (still incomplete) legacy in the influential anthology of 20th century Ukrainian émigré poetry, *Koordynaty* (1969), the first volumes of his *Collected Works*, the retrospective comments on the occasion of his death and then his reemergence in post-Independence Ukraine is thus, as always, an ongoing process.⁴ It is the task of each generation, as T. S. Eliot observed, to engage in such reconsideration. The present edition facilitates this by documenting a dimension of Bohdan Krawciw's life and work that many of his readers and admirers did not even suspect existed—his role as map collector, specifically of cartographic Ukrainica. The dimension and importance of this activity, especially when combined with the enlightened decision to make it part of a universal cultural legacy by donating it to Harvard, the University with which he was affiliated in the last years of his life as Research Fellow in the newly established Ukrainian Research Institute, throws new light on some guiding principles of his life and brings some of its more known facets into sharper relief. In effect, it invites us to reconsider the whole—and its underlying values, motivations and strategies.

*

Within the context of Ukrainian interwar and émigré poetry, the pressures and turbulence of those years and of Krawciw's no less turbulent biography, his poetic corpus, as conveyed, for example, by the first volume of his *Collected Works*, is not particularly large; nor, at first glance, is it particularly small. For lyrical poetry (he makes few forays into the narrative and none into the dramatic) it approaches what might be

here, presumably reflecting the slow dissipation of Soviet attitudes among the newly converted literati. In recent Ukrainian writings on Krawciw, particularly on the internet, the nationalist claim on him is quite evident.

⁴ Cf. *Координати. Антологія сучасної української літератури на Заході*, Сучасність, 1969, vol. I, pp. 265-276. Cf. also Ostap Tarnavs'kyj, "Poetychnyj shljakh Bohdana Kravceva," *Suchasnist'*, No. 11, 1977, pp. 18-39.

taken to be an average.⁵ (Publishing practice, at any rate, tends to so round out the product: a volume per poet, with dimension determined by degree or principles of selection.) But poetry, of course, is not judged by quantity or by any averages and the “product,” by its very nature, varies greatly; and the principles of selection may in time be profoundly altered. Krawciw’s poetry, in fact, was not written in a steady and predictable stream, but in spurts of activity, and it is prone to circle back and eddy, and in its various stages differs considerably in terms of its intrinsic weight and the esthetic and existential problems it poses. Most tellingly, with maturation Krawciw’s understanding of poetry undergoes a palpable shift: from a poetry that in its early stages is often eclectic and echoes various thematic and rhetorical fashions of the day, to one that is highly focused, demanding and inward-looking, created in a process of intense forging and long gestation; a poetry, in a word, of ever greater concentration. From the larger perspective, the nature of both his early and his late poetry, of what is really implied by this binary chronology, and of the deeper continuities between the two phases, also require rethinking—and for this one must start at the beginning.

Bohdan Krawciw was born on May 5, 1904 in western Ukraine in the family of a Uniate priest. Too young to serve in the soon to erupt war to end all wars, the defining experience of his young life, as he later recalled in a retrospective poem (“Simnadejatoho roku,” 1936), was the news in the Spring of 1917 that an independent Ukrainian Republic had come into being. Unable to participate in or witness the struggle, his passionate involvement in the reborn nation was displaced, as he recounts in the poem, to iconic mementoes and images brought back from Ukraine by an uncle—the currency of the new nation, a postcard of Kyiv’s Saint Sophia. The call of patriotism, of serving Ukraine and devoting his life to her became a guiding principle for Krawciw in the interwar years. He completed the academic gymnasium in Lviv in 1923 and then first entered the secret Ukrainian University (1923-25) and in 1925 the Polish University of Jan Kazimierz in Lviv, studying literature and archeology (1925-28) and later law (1928-30). During this

⁵ His output is certainly much smaller than the prodigious production of a Vasyl’ Barka or an Emma Andrijevs’ka, but is certainly considerably larger than that of such contemporaries like Oleh Olzhych, or Olena Teliha, or Oksana Liaturyns’ka.

time he became involved in the Ukrainian student movement, in the Ukrainian scouting movement (Plast), and finally the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). In the late 1920s he was already highly placed in that organization.

In the aftermath of the armed Polish-Ukrainian conflict of 1918-1919 the western Ukrainian National Republic was absorbed by Poland. Ukrainian political and cultural hopes for self-determination, conceded by the treaty of Versailles (and subscribed to by Poland) were subsequently foiled by Polish intransigence, and the resultant OUN militancy and terrorism were answered by massive Polish repressions and state terrorism. Given his position in the OUN, it was not surprising that Krawciw was soon arrested and sentenced to three years in prison (1930-33). Upon his release he married in 1934 his sweetheart Nila Holovac'ka, but a few weeks after that was rearrested and sent to the notorious concentration camp of Bereza Kartuska. With his health impaired by the brutal treatment there, he was released sometime later after the personal intervention of the Ukrainian Metropolitan Andrej Sheptyc'kyj.

Throughout this time Krawciw was also writing and publishing poetry—while also serving as editor of various Galician Ukrainian newspapers and journals.⁶ His first collection, *Doroħa* (The Road), appeared in 1929; a second collection, *Promeni* (Rays), came out a year later. While in prison he wrote another collection, *Sonety i strofy* (Sonnets and Strophes), which appeared after his release in 1933. The differences between the two first collections and the latter are evident. In the former Krawciw is still searching for his own voice, testing, among other things, modalities established a decade and more earlier by the two most prominent poets of the powerful new Soviet Ukrainian literature—Pavlo Tychyna and Maxym Ryl's'kyj. Echoes of these poets (for example, the Ryl'skian “Do ostroviv svitlyx” (To the Bright Islands) or “Ja neznanomu navstrich” (Facing the unknown) or “Rozsmijalys' temni vulychky” (Dark streets laughed aloud) in *Doroħa*, and the Tychynian “Xrystos rodyvsja” (Christ is Born) or “Rataj” (The Plowman) in *Promeni*) are so manifest in their overall style, diction and topoi of these

⁶ Ostap Tarnavs'kyj notes that he was editor of such nationalist newspapers and journals as *Visti*, *Holos natsiji* and *Holos*; *op. cit.*, p. 28.

poems that one can see them as poetic homages to these new bards.⁷ At the same time these styles are so different from each other that Krawciw seems inadvertently to be casting himself as a novice at loose ends, torn in quite opposite and contradictory directions.⁸ Even more than the tug of powerful if distant poetic voices, the first two collections reveal the seductive pull—very much a reflection of an emerging nationalist poetics and indeed but a slightly distorting mirror to the Soviet model—of poetry conceived as a surrogate for political and ideological action, and the poet as tribune and herald of the nation’s cause. This became the hallmark of Jevhen Malaniuk, soon the preeminent (and paradigmatic) poet of the interwar period in western Ukraine, a feature of various members of the so-called Prague group of poets, and above all the battle cry of the nationalist ideologue, Dmytro Dontsov, and his journal *Visnyk*.⁹ In Krawciw, however, this appears in an attenuated form: both of these collections are free of any overt ideological or political rhetoric or content. What does appear in *Doroha*, however, is a cycle of prose pieces, in effect, poems in prose, the first of which is entitled “Tale of Fire”,¹⁰ which basically present a cycle of campfire talks to a group of scouts (*plastuny*). The tenor of that mode, its symbolism (and unavoidable sentimentalism), its topoi and images were very much part of Krawciw's real life activities; they are projected here both as an esthetic recapturing of that facet of his world and as a generic projection of the scouting mystique, its love of nature, of the fellowship of the young and innocent, of idealism, as it were, in its pure form. It is, however, consistently unideological and

⁷ Cf. *Collected Works*, vol. 1, pp. 27-28 and 49-50.

⁸ Just a few years earlier, in 1925, in the diptych “Suchasnykam” (To my contemporaries) the soon to become preeminent émigré poet Jevhen Malaniuk had cast these two, Ryl’s’kyj and Tychyna, as not just opposite, but totally incommensurate entities: with Ryl’s’kyj a poet of culture who finds the inner strength to resist the Soviet system, and Tychyna the poet of genius, indeed the national poet, who betrays his calling and allows himself to become a witless tool of deadly totalitarianism. That Krawciw invokes both poets without any apparent recourse to this judgment is perhaps revealing; whether it signals his belief in poetry free of such ideological judgments and strictures is another matter.

⁹ Dontsov was editor of the Lviv-based *Literaturno-naukovyj vistnyk* from 1922 to 1933, when it became the programmatically nationalist *Visnyk*, which he then edited to 1939, i.e., to the outbreak of the war.

¹⁰ In the Salyha edition the whole cycle is so named; in the *Collected Works* the cycle is not named.

unpolitical. The solitary, concluding reference to Ukraine in the last piece, where she is invoked and distanced as a “sublime ideal of an eternal Ukraine” recapitulates again the ubiquitous mode of the idealistic and the symbolic. In a curious reversal of the role of the poet as national leader so powerfully appropriated by Tychyna (and so coveted by Malaniuk), Krawciw projects an almost self-effacing alternative: the poet not even as scout-leader, but rather as one who along with the scouts is caught in a transcendent reverie on nature and the scouting way.

The 1933 collection *Sonety i strofy* has a totally different cast as it recounts his prison experience in fourteen sonnets and eighteen double quatrains. To say “recounts”, however, may be misleading for the formal constraints of the sonnet and the concision of the quatrains, coupled with a consistent, multifaceted removal or bracketing out of the real and sensual, make this a remarkable and somewhat disorienting experience. For in effect this is a poetry of displacement, where the real life sights, smells, sounds and a myriad of other experiences of prison are indeed at times noted, or alluded to, but seldom if ever depicted in extenso, as experiences in and of themselves. Instead, they are for the most part supplanted, displaced by other moments—images, recollections, phantasies and reveries of the outside, free world, but also by the very texture and process of casting this all as poetry—of a highly formalized and “classicist” kind. In a sense literature, or literariness, supersedes reality; and experience becomes secondary to the text. But this also becomes a form of psychological and existential escape, of structuring and thereby of imagining and creating a separate non-prison reality—precisely foreshadowing the poetry of Vasyl Stus written in the gulag in the late Soviet period, the process of reestablishing self-dignity, humanity, indeed one's, intrinsic, non-prison identity as such. It is a poetry of self-regeneration—albeit couched in the “impersonal”, “cold” structures of a classicist, in effect, neo-classicist poetics. A fundamental measure of its authenticity is that it indulges in no political or ideological posturing, no cant, or self-pity.¹¹ At the same time,

¹¹ Elab here how this was received by others—such as Malaniuk review// To speak of this as a form of realism—as Salyha does—seems rather off... cf. NB elab here esp. on the irony—if this is the right word—maybe rather the brazen gall of Malaniuk telling Krawciw how he should have written it—this is from the poet-tribune who didn't spend a

a sense of something missing is inescapable—of experience not confronted, of insights into the self not explored. This absence, however, can be apprehended only from a larger perspective, not least of all one that is empowered by Krawciw's later, mature poetry.

The next two collections Bohdan Krawciw published were *Ostannja osin'* (The Last Autumn), 1940, containing poems from the years 1927-1938, and *Pid chuzhymy zorjamy* (Under Foreign Stars), 1941, which reflected poems written in 1940-1941. Both were published in Berlin where Krawciw had been taken by the German authorities and along with other Ukrainian writers put to work writing journalism for the growing number of Ukrainians in the forced labor brigades. Both collections, especially the second, have a retrospective, at times distinctly elegiac cast and reflect a sense of foreboding and the premonition that he had seen Ukraine for the last time. Much more pronounced—in comparison with his earlier poetry—is his readiness to address political issues of the day. In *Ostannja osin'* this is reflected in several retrospective poems on the political struggle, from the November 1, 1918 dramatic beginning of the Western Ukrainian independence struggle and the seizure of Lviv from the Austrian authorities, which in turn precipitated the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918-1919 (“I, XI, 1918”), to the 1938 proclamation of a free Carpathian Ukraine and the subsequent heroic but doomed struggle of several thousand patriots crushed by the Hungarian army (“Karpats'ka Sich”). In the second collection, the only one in which Krawciw turns to long, narrative, and in part contemplative poems, he devotes some of them to the mode of political commentary and indeed exhortation, particularly “Slovo pro Polkovnyka” (Recollections of the Colonel), an elegiac account of the life and his significance for the nationalist movement of its founder Colonel Jevhen Konovalts (1891-1938).¹² The topicality here is twofold. Not only is the poem a requiem for a political leader recently assassinated, the mode in which this done—a requiem combined with political exhortation and historiosophic musings—echoes the recent appearance of Jurij Klen's highly resonant poem *Prokljati roky* (The Cursed Years, 1937), where the poet who was a member of the Kyiv

day in jail for his sabbre-rattling.../elab this.../NB too that not only Malaniuk—a host of other critics telling him how better he should have done so

¹² Konovalts was assassinated in 1938 in Rotterdam.../

neoclassicist group,¹³ but was allowed to emigrate to the West, combines an impassioned lament for the victims of the Soviet terror with a no less passionate indictment of the perpetrators.¹⁴ As with Krawciw's earlier poetry, this again seems to try out another topical role and rhetoric. (That he is cognizant of Klen's model is indicated by his drawing on *Prokljati roky* for an incipit to the first poem of *Pid chuzhymy zorjamy* i.e., “Oleni revut' 1”¹⁵). On the whole, the attempt is not successful, the voice does not ring true, and it is to Krawciw's credit that he himself apparently comes to the same conclusion, for he was never again to return to this exhortatory mode—although the opportunities and temptations were many.

*

The following period of Krawciw's poetic activity encompasses the immediate post-war years of 1945-1949 and basically coincides with the so called MUR (*Mystec'kyj ukrajins'kyj rukh*—Ukrainian Artistic Movement) period where in the various DP (displaced persons) camps scattered across western occupied Germany, principally in Bavaria, Ukrainian literary life experienced a remarkable efflorescence of creativity and organized activity. In a brief period of four or five years hundreds of literary, critical and scholarly works were published and dozens of periodicals and organizations came into being (and also quickly disappeared), but in sum the whole constituted a “small renaissance” of Ukrainian cultural life after the deprivations of WW II and Stalinism.¹⁶ Krawciw actively participated in the literary life of this period, but above all he found what he never could enjoy either before or after—the time and the freedom to actually write poetry. In sum, he will write only two or three slim volumes of poetry and publish

¹³ In terms of its organization the group was altogether tenuous, and its members hardly cut from the same cloth; in terms of their impact the neoclassicists—Mykola Zerov, Maksym Ryl's'kyj, Pavlo Fylypovych, Mykhajlo Draj-Khmara and Klen himself—had a massive impact on 20th century Ukrainian poetry, especially in the non- and then the post-Soviet frames.

¹⁴ cf. *Prokljati roky*,,

¹⁵ cf. p. 105/Boychuk edition/ coll works vol 1. Krawciw's contacts with Klen, his reliance on Klen's help in publishing the Rilke translations is attested in the postscript to them; cf. below.

¹⁶ Cf. GGG re A Great Literature...

two of them, but this is a poetry of a very high order, and dramatically different from what he wrote before and would write later.

“Two or three” volumes seems something of a circumlocution (presumably it should be easy to determine whether it was two or three), but the imprecision flows from Krawciw’s own indirection as he revisits, rewrites and edits his earlier poetry, and in light of his intensive translating from Rainer Maria Rilke, over-writes his voice and poetic persona with the insights gained from that difficult task. In effect, he crafts a new poetic voice, and with it an altogether original and inimitable style. The volumes in question are: 1) the largely retrospective collection *Korabli* (Ships), subtitled “vybrani poeziji (selected poems), 1922-1947,” which appeared in 1948¹⁷; 2) *Glosarij*, with the baroque subtitle “abo tlumachnyj slovnyk tajemnykh, pry zabutykh i ne zavzhdy zrozumilyx sliv zibrav u sonetakh Bohdan Krawciw,” (Glossarium, or Dictionary of Obscure, Forgotten and often Misunderstood words, Sonnets by Bohdan Krawciw) which was completed and ready for publication in 1949, but some parts of it, eight sonnets in all, had already been included in *Korabli*, and the whole actually published only twenty-five years later, in 1974¹⁸; and 3) *Rechi j obrazy*, (Dinge und Bilder; Things and Images) a book of translations from Rilke, which appeared in 1947.¹⁹ All three were designed with utter care and attention to detail, and each is graced by covers and /internal woodcuts=zastavky/ by the soon to be famous Ukrainian painter and woodcutter Jacques Hnizdovsky. Individually and as a set they project an esthetic standard rarely matched in the entire large corpus of MUR publications. But the MUR period ended in 1949/1950, and *Glosarij* appeared only in 1974. Hence, too: “two or three.”

By all indications the crux lies in the translations: they are not only the first to be published, but are the ineluctable key to the transformations that are occurring in Krawciw’s poetry in this period; indeed, they are the watershed itself. In a revealing postscript to *Rechi j obrazy* written in both German and Ukrainian, Krawciw recounts

¹⁷ Bohdan Krawciw, *Korabli. Vybrani poeziji 1922-1947*, Bayreuth 1948, 126 pp.

¹⁸ Bohdan Krawciw, *Glosarij*, Regensburg 1949—Rutherford 1974, 73 pp.

¹⁹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rechi i obrazy, Vybrani poeziji v perekladi Bohdana Kravceva*, Nuernberg, 1947.

how he came to Rilke, first as a gymnasium student, sometime in the early 1920s. In a Lviv antique bookshop he finds a volume of *Das Buch der Bilder* (1898-1906) and discovers a poet of rare complexity and difficulty who will remain a challenge for him and a frame of reference for years to come.²⁰ A decade or so later, as a university student, and an ex-political prisoner), he again encounters Rilke when someone presents him with *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* and in this autobiographical novel he comes upon—and, as he writes, “remembers to this day”—the insights into how poetry is to be written: “Ah, there is little value in verse written too early,” he cites Rilke, “one needs to wait for their maturation, collecting for a whole lifetime their sweetness...”²¹

Translating Rilke was to come later. His first efforts were “Khlopec” (Der Knabe, The Boy, which first appeared in the collection *Ostannja osin*’, 1940) and “Osinnij den” (Herbsttag, Autumn Day, which first appeared in *Rechi j obrazy*) and which, he altogether too modestly considers here a failure.²² When circumstances brought him to Germany, his first purchases, he says, “were two volumes of Rainer Maria Rilke’s poetry, as if purposefully bought so that wandering the squares and autumn parks of foreign cities I could ponder the wise and bitter words of the poet from the poem ‘Herbsttag,’ ‘Wer jetzt kein Haus hat baut sich keines mehr’ (Who has no house now, will never build one)²³.” The end of the war finds Krawciw in a tiny mountain village of the Frankenwald with some books he had managed to save from the bombing raids, among them Rilke’s *Selected* and *Late* poems and his *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and one day in August, 1945, he begins—unexpectedly for himself—his translating: “What had once been dark and incomprehensible opened to me like the flowers of early morning, and by winter of that year I had some thirty translations ready.”²⁴ In the course of the next year he expands it by another twenty or so poems, and with the support of Jurij Klen (Oswald Burghardt) as well as Anton Kippenberg who had been Rilke’s publisher and curator of his poetic legacy succeeds in publishing it in 1947—and draws for its title, as he says,

²⁰ Cf. *Rechi j obrazy*, p. 119.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 119.

²² *Ibid.* p. 44 and 119.

²³ Edward Snow, trans., 1991) /NB the numerous translations on the internet.../

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 123

“perhaps somewhat immodestly, on two mysterious but so characteristically Rilkean terms—*things* and *images*.”²⁵

Krawciw’s sense of Rilke’s poetry—and of its deeper resonance with his own poetic development—is suggested by his epigraph for the book, which he does not identify, other than with the initials “R.M.R.”:

...doch wir wollen reifen
Und das heisst dunkel sein und sich bemühen.

These are, in fact, the closing lines from the poem “Im Saal” (In the Hall, 1906) from the *Neue Gedichte* (New Poems), Part I (1907) where the poet contrasts the life and existential frame of the assembled dignitaries—but these could as well be portraits of the nobility of past centuries, as in a museum—with those of the onlooker(s):

Sie lassen, voller Takt, uns ungestört
das Leben leben wie wir es begreifen
und wie sie’s nicht verstehn. Sie wollen blühen,
und blühen ist schön sein, doch wir wollen reifen,
und das heißt dunkel sein und sich bemühen.

With exquisite decorum they allow us
A life of whose dimensions we seem sure
And which they cannot grasp. They were alive
To bloom, that is be fair; we to mature,
That is to be of darkness and to strive.²⁶

The notion that the poet’s task is to be open to that which is dark, “to be of darkness,” “dunkel sein,” is a leitmotif in Rilke’s poetry and is a theme and image in a number of poems that are translated here. But as central, as constitutive as it is for Rilke’s world, for its defining symbolic and existential dimensions, for Krawciw it is a new and not easily assimilated moment. Even (or perhaps especially) in his poetry of prison, i.e., the *Sonety i strofy*, it is far more absent than present. In general, his had largely been the poetry of assertion and optimism, often attained through a highlighting

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *The Best of Rilke*, Translated by Walter Arndt, Dartmouth College Press, 1989, p. 83.

of the rhetorical, and in an all-but-canonical cult of deeds, valor, uplift and so on. As such it was part of the general discourse of western Ukrainian poetry of the interwar period, and in that context was even rather restrained— as compared, for example, with the unabashedly tribunicial, hectoring and at times vituperative poetry of Malaniuk.²⁷ Here the poetry is profoundly decentered. The task of poetry, as these short lines of the epigraph, and the entire body of the translations, make evident, is not to be beautiful or pretty (*schön sein*), but to seek that which is deeper and darker—and in this to attain ripeness and with it self-reflection, and self-knowledge. As Krawciw observes about “Herbsttag,” Rilke’s poetry becomes a model for such re-vision, and as with Rilke, his own poetry begins to focus more deeply on the senses, and emphasizes the task of learning to see (*sehen lernen*).²⁸

A close reading of these translations is a task for the future, which is all the more pressing and doable now that an anthology of the various Ukrainian translations of Rilke has appeared and in light of it Krawciw’s pioneering effort (which in this edition is presented rather skimpily) can be properly framed and contextualized.²⁹ What is apparent even at a cursory reading, however, is that the poetry that is produced here is somehow both remarkably faithful and remarkably powerful—providing an altogether new and joyful sense of the resources and subtlety of the Ukrainian language and with it a sense of the remarkable poetic resources at Krawciw’s disposal. At the root of this is the transcendent power of Rilke’s poetry, his ability to touch with seeming simplicity and objectivity the very core of our fragile existence, and to persuasively suggest that that core opens itself only to a poetic vision. Krawciw’s ability to capture these Rilkean poles of the profound and the simply objective is masterful—as in this well-known poem:

Todeserfahrung

Wir wissen nichts von diesem Hingehn, das

²⁷ Cf. e.g., his condemnations of Tychyna in his “Suchasnykam” (1924).

²⁸ Cf. Silke Passawalk, “*Die funffingrige Hand*”: *Die Bedeutung der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung Beim späten Rilke*, de Gruyter, 2002.

²⁹ Cf. Rajner Marija Ril’ke, *Temni plachi*, Bohdan, 2007.

nicht mit uns teilt. Wir haben keinen Grund,
Bewunderung und Liebe oder Haß
dem Tod zu zeigen, den ein Maskenmund

tragischer Klage wunderbarlich entstellt.
Noch ist die Welt voll Rollen, die wir spielen.
Solang wir sorgen, ob wir auch gefielen,
spielt auch der Tod, obwohl er nicht gefällt.

Doch als du gingst, da brach in diese Bühne
ein Streifen Wirklichkeit durch jenen Spalt,
durch den du hingingst: Grün wirklicher Grüne,
wirklicher Sonnenschein, wirklicher Wald.

Wir spielen weiter. Bang und schwer Erlerntes
hersagend und Gebärden dann und wann
aufhebend; aber dein von uns entferntes,
aus unserm Stück entrücktes Dasein kann

uns manchmal überkommen, wie ein Wissen
von jener Wirklichkeit sich niedersenkend,
so daß wir eine Weile hingerissen
das Leben spielen, nicht an Beifall denkend.

Досвід із смертю

Нам знати не дано про відхід той,
Що не займає нас. Й нема що свій
Являти подив нам, любов, ато й
ненависть смерті, що обличчя їй

страшною скаргою спотворене ж.
Ще світ цей повен роль, що їх ми граєм.
І поки ми подобатись бажаєм,
Хоч і противна всім—смерть грає теж.

Та як ішла ти, то крізь ту з ущелин,
Що нею ти відходила у вись,
Ввірвалась дійсність: зелень, справжня зелень,
і промінь справдешній, і справжній ліс.

Ми ж граєм далі. І слова, і жести
здіймавши іноді—з важким трудом
засвоєні; та вирване до решти

із п'єси нам життя твоє притьмом

нас може часом пошибом пройняти,
постигти дійсности предивним знанням—
і ми на мить в життя забагнем грати,
не думавши про оплески, признання.

Death Experienced

We know nothing of this going-hence
that so excludes us. We have no grounds
for showing Death wonderment and love
or hate, since it wears that age-old mask

of tragedy that hopelessly contorts it.
The world is full of roles—which we still act.
As long as we keep striving for acclaim,
Death also acts a part—though always badly.

But when you went, a streak of reality
broke in upon the stage through that fissure
where you left: green of real green,
real sunshine, real forest.

We go on acting. Fearful and reciting
things difficult to learn and now and then
inventing gestures; but your existence,
withdrawn from us and take from our piece

can sometimes come over us, like a knowledge
of that reality settling in,
so that for a while we act life
transported, not thinking of applause.³⁰

A more striking masterpiece, to my mind, is his translation of Rilke's acclaimed “Orpheus. Euridike. Hermes” (1904). Here one can only glance at a few fragments, such as the haunting opening scene of the underworld from which the trio comes and which in the dark is seen with utmost clarity—and which limns the poem’s sublime tension of the interpenetration of light and darkness:

³⁰ *Rechi j obrazy*, p. 24-25. Rainer Maria Rilke, *New Poems*, Selected and Translated by Edward Snow, New York, 2001, p. 95

Das war der Seelen wunderliches Bergwerk.
Wie stille Silbererze gingen sie
als Adern durch sein Dunkel. Zwischen Wurzeln
entsprang das Blut, das fortgeht zu den Menschen,
und schwer wie Porphyr sah es aus im Dunkel.
Sonst war nichts Rotes.

Felsen waren da
und wesenlose Wälder. Brücken über Leeres
und jener große, graue, blinde Teich,
der über seinem fernen Grunde hing
wie Regenhimmel über einer Landschaft.
Und zwischen Wiesen, sanft und voller Langmut,
erschien des einen Weges blasser Streifen,
wie eine lange Bleiche hingelegt.

Und dieses einen Weges kamen sie.

Це душ було родовище чудове.
Крізь сутінь жилами вони пливли,
мов тихі зложжя срібла. З-між коріння
бистрила кров, що до людей одходить,
і важко—мов порфір—багріла в пітьмі.
То весь був багор.

Скелі там були
І пуста пущ. Мости понад пустинням
І той великий, сірий, темний став,
Що над далеким дном своїм навис,
мов небо дощеве над краєвидом.
І проміж лук терпцю смутного повен
І тиші й миру—смугою блідою
Прослався шлях, як довга біль в далінь.

І шляхом тим надходили вони.

It was the soul's strange mine.
Like silent silver ore they wandered
through its dark like veins. Between roots
the blood welled up that makes its way to men,
and it looked hard as prophyry in the dark.
Nothing else was red.

Rocks were there
and unreal forests. Bridges spanning voids
and that huge gray blind unmoving lake
that hung above its distant bed
like rainy sky above a landscape.
And between meadows, soft and full of patience,
the pale strip of the single path,
laid down like a long pallor being bleached.

And on this single path they came.

And then this vision of Euridice at the moment Orpheus looks back:

Sie war schon nicht mehr diese blonde Frau,
die in des Dichters Liedern manchmal anklang,
nicht mehr des breiten Bettes Duft und Eiland
und jenes Mannes Eigentum nicht mehr.
Sie war schon aufgelöst wie langes Haar
und hingegeben wie gefallner Regen
und ausgeteilt wie hundertfacher Vorrat.
Sie war schon Wurzel.
Und als plötzlich jäh
Der Gott sie anhielt und mit Schmerz im Ausruf
Die Worte sprach: Er hat sich umgewendet—
Begriff sie nichts und sagte leise: Wer?

Це не була вже та русява жінка,
що іноді в піснях співця дзвеніла,
ні пахощі, ні ясен острів ложа,
ані теж власність мужо он того.
Розвіялась вона волосям довгим,
рясним дощовим ливнем віддалася
і запасом стокротним дарувалась.
Корінням стала.
І коли притьмом,
враз бог спинив її і з болем в озві
проказував слова: Він озирнувся—
не зрозумівши, прошентала: Хто?

She was no longer the blond wife
who echoed often in the poet's songs,
no longer the vast bed's scent and island,
and that man's property no longer.

She was already loosened like long hair,
and given over like fallen rain
and handed out like a limitless supply.

She was already root.

And when without warning
the god stopped her and with pain in his voice
spoke the words: he has turned around—,
she was puzzled, and answered softly: Who?

and finally the piercingly muted finale:

Fern aber, dunkel vor dem klaren Ausgang,
stand irgend jemand, dessen Angesicht
nicht zu erkennen war. Er stand und sah,
wie auf dem Streifen eines Wiesenpfades
mit trauerfollem Blick der Gott der Botschaft
sich schweigend wandte, der Gestalt zu folgen,
die schon zurückging dieses selben Weges,
den Schritt beschränkt von langen Leichenbändern,
unsicher, sanft und ohne Ungeduld.

Далеко ж перед виходом яснющим
стояв померкло хтось, чиє обличчя
непізнанням взялось. Стояв, дивився,
як ген на смузї стежки лукової
бог вісти смутен мовчки одвернувся
і німо йшов за постаттю тією,
що вже верталася тим самим шляхом,
в'язавши крок в довжіннь полотен смертних,
непевна, тиха, терпелива вкрай.

But there in the distance, dark against
the bright exit, stood someone whose features
could not be recognized. He stood and saw
how on the stripe of the meadow path
with mournful look the god of messages
turned silently around, to follow the shape
already returning on that same path,
its steps, constricted by long winding-sheets,

uncertain, gentle and without impatience.³¹

*

The impact of these translations on Krawciw himself and on his own poetry was profound. This is reflected not only by the external circumstances and in the visible realm—the care that went into the production of *Rechi j obrazy*, the recollection of his encounters with the master, the cathexis that surrounds the themes of this poetry (solitude, resignation, the muted presence of the transcendent, death itself) and even the fact that he so stresses the Ukrainian themes in Rilke, his sympathy for the poetic topoi of Ukrainian history and culture, and his, the eternal wanderer's, import for the Ukrainian exiles.³² It also reveals itself in a more immanent way—in the very way poetry comes to be defined for him—and in deeper processes and effects that become apparent only after much time. To be sure, one of these effects emerges already in his next collection of poetry, *Korabli* (1948), which is primarily a distillation of Krawciw's earlier work that winnows out a number of weaker poems, primarily the more rhetorical and overtly political, and ultimately reduces his earlier corpus by about a half. At the same time he includes in *Korabli* a number of new works—primarily sonnets from the ongoing *Glosarij* (eight in all—written in the fall of 1945) and alexandrines (six in all—written in 1945-47). The difference between these and the earlier poetry is striking. In effect, within the confines of this small book of selected poetry (some 120 pages in all) one sees the traces of a fundamental divide.

Much more striking, however, is the subsequent trajectory of Krawciw's poetry and the way this divide is articulated in the course of his remaining years, in effect, of his entire émigré experience in the US. The key moment here is the fate of *Glasiarij*, a collection of 67 sonnets that was ready for publication in 1949 (with 8, as noted, already published in *Korabli*), but which actually appeared—in the very design that Hnizdovsky

³¹ *Rechi j obrazy*, pp. 50-51, 54-55. *New Poems*, pp. 141, 145, 147.

³² Cf here the Drohobych publication on Ukraine in Rilke—note articles etc...

had prepared still in the MUR period—only in 1974, a year before Krawciw's death. As he puts it in the postscript to the collection (the only instance I know of where the much abused self-designation 'zamist pisljamovy' (instead of an afterword) is entire appropriate by reason of its brevity and succinctness),

[*Glosarij*] appears now after twenty five years. The author had hoped to publish these sonnets with separate commentaries and notes to each of them, but working in the gristmills of newspapers, journals and encyclopedias he never found the time to do so. He gives them over now to the judgement of his readers as they were written.³³

Glosarij, presumably, was delayed by the *force majeure* of the poet-as-critic, with visions of a full (historical? biographical?) commentary, overriding the voice of the poet. Fortunately, as if intuiting the end and with it various editorial incursions that in effect did take place, the poet finally prevailed. The *Glosarij* that thus appeared had both dates and both locations on its title page—1949-1974; Regensburg-Rutherford—and the intervening 25 years could, if one so wished, be elided as but a contingency, a small detour in the flow of poetic time. In the real world, of course, it was hardly that, but the fact that *Glosarij* emerges as the culmination of Krawciw's poetic effort is also unaffected by that eddy of time. In the larger order of things it returns him to that brief period of extraordinary poetic activity in 1945-48 and within it reveals the true tenor and achievement of his poetry.

Glosarij, is a collection of 67 sonnets styled as a dictionary of mysterious, misunderstood and forgotten words, with the poems themselves positioned as glosses, in effect, as comments to, illustrations of, elaborations or meditations on the terms-words that serve as the titles-topoi here. That interplay of title and text might appear at first as an echo of the early Tychyna cycle “Enharmonijne” (Enharmonics) in *Sonjashni klarnety* (Clarinetts of the Sun, 1918) where the impressionistic opaqueness and indirection of the text is counterposed to the basic reality of the titles: “tuman” (mist), “sonce” (sun),

³³ *Glosarij*, op. cit., p.[75].

“viter” (wind), “doshch” (rain). As such, Tychyna's minimalist and purposefully “obscure” or hermetic poems reactivate the form of a riddle, with the text the question and the title the answer. Little if anything of that is seen in *Glosarij*: the texts here are invariably complete and focused (as befits a sonnet), clear in their narrative, and the connection of title and text semantically direct. For the most part (perhaps entirely—depending on the reader) the terms are familiar, at times obviously so; what, might one ask, is obscure about “maty” (mother), “vid'ma” (witch), “bis” (devil), “rid” (ancestry), “dolja” (fate) “dusha” (soul), “zhovten” (October), “khlopec” (boy) and many other such words? Other terms: “Argo,” “Medea,” “lisovyk” (forest-devil), “chuhajstyr” (also a forest-spirit³⁴ “Lada” (figure or «goddess» of Spring in Slavic folklore) “vovkulaka,” (werewolf), and others like it are quite accessible to those who know Greek mythology and Ukrainian folklore. And “Solovky”, “Gonta”, “orda” (the horde), even “chajka” (gull) are accessible to anyone who knows Ukrainian history. (To make the connection plain, the epigraph to «Chajka» notes that it refers to a poem purportedly written by Hetman Mazepa.) At the same time, there are terms (words, references, names) that are not generally accessible even to the sophisticated reader—“iryca,” “Teklja,” “katora,” “ran',” “shumyl'ce,” “tyrlych” and so on—and only the poem, either through a direct bibliographic reference as in “Chajka”, or in “Teklja” where we learn that it is the name of a girl from a folkloric collection of Zegota Pauli³⁵, or through the text itself, amplifies the meaning.

What unites the seemingly obvious with the less than obvious, and the fully obscure and mysterious, is the poet's implicit belief that all of these terms/topoi have a hidden, deeper meaning. Nothing in this glossarium, the poet seems to be saying, not even “maty” and “rid,” is simple and directly given, and it is thus his higher, ordained task to seek and discern hidden meaning—for only poetry, through its evocations or indeed incantations (or songs, as he will call them) can reveal the sense of these words-that-are-more-than-words. In this process the high calling of poetry is itself laid bare and

³⁴ Known in Hucul folklore and appearing in Mykhajlo Kociubyns'kyj's *Tini zabutykh predkiv* (Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (1911).

³⁵ Cf. Zegota Pauli, *Piesni ludu ruskiego w Galicji*, vols. 1 and 2, 1839-1840.

the collection becomes in part an exercise in metapoetry and in part a celebration of poetry as such. (The two, of course, are always linked.) As he puts it in the dedication to his wife which also serves as the epigraph to the whole collection:

З яких же слів мережати, плести
Тобі пісні мої сьогодні, Ладо?
Котрого ж не торкнуся, заблестить
Клейнодом завороженого кладу,
живоцвітом розквітне—і мости
в минуле прокладе... навмань, без ладу...
І завжди, завжди гомоном дібров,
диханням рідних нив нам палить кров.

/Out of what words am I to weave/ my songs for you today, my Lada?/
Whichever one I touch will shine/ like a jewel from a mysterious treasure trove/
will bloom and cast bridges to the past/ haphazardly, every which way/ and
always, always stir the blood/with the rustle of forest depths and the breathing of
native meadows./³⁶

Inescapably, however, the role of the author is blurred here—or rather doubled, or even tripled. He is not only a creator, but a collector, a cataloguer, and through the epigraphs that introduce each of these sonnets and point to a textual source also a lexicographer and bibliographer; and, finally, a critic-exegete (and this role, in the guise of the complete commentator is what may have delayed the publication of *Glosarij* for 25 years). This self-inscription in multiple roles, and precisely in these roles, foretells, of course, the direction of Krawciw's future path, but also shows that already then (and indeed earlier) it was part of his practice and self-image. At the same time, it is only intimated here, all but concealed in the text (with the footnote, for example, transposed into the epigraph). The dedication, however, intimates yet another moment, i.e., both in the cited opening lines (“Out of what words am I to weave/ my songs for you today, my Lado?”) and the concluding dedication-proper: “Ладі моїй—усе ще під чужими зорями—на Різдво 1949 року” (To my Lada—still under foreign stars—Christmas

³⁶ *Glosarij*, p. [5]. Here and in the following the English translation is my own—GGG.

1949).³⁷ In effect, it inscribes the whole collection into the mode of intimate poetry: the collection becomes a gift, a Christmas present, from husband to wife. This, too, is a harbinger of things to come.

To all appearances, the dominant tone and ambience of *Glosarij* is folkloric, with a particular focus on folk demonology and the magic of the night world and the forest world³⁸; it inheres in the topoi already noted, as well as those like “Vodjanyk” (Water Spirit), “Domovyk” (House Spirit), «Trojzillja,» (magic herbs) «Rusallja» (celebrations of the mermaids), “Perelesnyk” (incubus), “Kupala” (midsummer night revelry), and others. Along with the range of the documented folkloric, Krawciw is also elaborating or coining his own, for example “Moroka” (the Spirit of troubles, akin to the “zlydni”) or “Mavs’ka nich” (akin to the “kupala” and echoing “maj’ska nich”). In all, and in its time and place, i.e., the period of MUR and of the intense rediscovery of all things Ukrainian after the dark night of the 1930s and the war years, this may well be seen, as Jurij Sherekh (Shevelov) observed, as yet another instance of a general reaching out for organicity (cf. his notion of an “organic” or “national” Ukrainian style) and simply authenticity.³⁹

Krawciw’s “folklorism” has a very specific cast, however. For one it is strongly marked by the erotic. In some poems this inheres in the very term/topos, such as “Barvinok” (perrywinkle—with its connotation of betrothal and marriage), “Perelesnyk,” “Mavs’ka nich,” “Kupala,” “Lada,” “Uroky” (Enchantments), and others; in other

³⁷ There is also something of a tension here, for the inscription of the “intimate” Christmas present also invokes the altogether public name of his earlier collection of poetry: *Pid chyzhymy zorjamy* (Under Foreign Stars, 1940). Cf. below.

³⁸ As a leading member of Plast, the Ukrainian scouting organization in the 1920s (and beyond), Krawciw was probably present at the founding (in 1922) and certainly from the early years was a member of the “kurin” (company) of older scouts (“starshi plastuny” and “seniory”) called the “Lisovi chorty” (Forest Devils).

³⁹ Cf. “Ukrains’ka emihracijna literatura v Evropi, 1945-1949,” first published in *Ovyd*, 1953, now vol. 1, *Porohy i zaporizhhja*, pp. 232-233. Shevelov is referring here to the collection *Korabli* (1948), which does have 8 sonnets from the future *Glosarij* (the cycle “Iz Glosarija”)—and these are, in fact, the only such “folkloric sonnets” in the collection. The whole of *Glasarij* would only substantiate this judgment.

instances, even a neutral or innocent topos, such as “vesnjanka” (Spring song), or “Pljasanka” (dance), or a topos from the night world (lisovyk) leads to the erotic embrace. Thus the conclusion of “Pljasanka”:

І схилитя розплетеним розмаєм
на руки мужа зморена і трудна,
в солодкий радо здаючися бран.⁴⁰

[And she will lean, with disheveled hair,/ tired and heavy, on the man’s arms,/ gladly submitting to the sweet captivity];

or “Lisovyk”:

Обмарений, лягаєш поміж квіттям,
вбачавши прибажно в березій кожній
уроду гожу, білі груди мавок...

Згори ж, з-під брів хвилястих верховіття
підморгує тобі зеленокожий
кудрявий бог спокусливо й лукаво.⁴¹

[Dazed, you lie among the flowers,/ seeing in each birch nubile beauty,/ the white breasts of mermaids, And from above, from under the brow of the undulating tree tops/ the green-skinned, curly-haired god/ winks slyly and seductively.]

But from the first, this eroticism is interlaced with the demonic and the world of darkness. Here, again, it may be immanent and stem from the thematically given, as in the mythical story of Jason and the Argonauts (“Argo”), or the balladic tale of “Teklja,” who (echoing Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* or Donizetti’s operatic heroine) kills the man she is forced to marry and prefers a horrible death (being buried alive) as long as she is buried with her lover.⁴² More often, however, it appears as a general, non-thematic openness to the darkness of the heart, of human passions, and of fate—and here the impact of Rilke is most telling and adumbrated by the fact that Krawciw was writing

⁴⁰ *Glosarij*, p. 51.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴² Elab here re the original in Zegota Pauli...

some of these poems of at the very time, i.e., in October-November 1945, that he was intensively translating Rilke. This openness to the darkness of things defines the ontology of *Glosarij*, the sense that as much as light and beauty, sexuality and fecundity, love and family exist, all of them are shadowed by darkness.

The poem “Blud” (“Error”—literally, the state of being totally lost) stands out in the whole collection by placing the darkness at the center of the self. The folkloric merely contextualizes the trope, i.e., in the epigraph: “Як кого нападе блуд, нехай згадає в який день було Різдво, візьме землі з-під ніг і посипле собі на голову. «З українських приказок» Номиса.” (If someone were to fall into Error let him remember on what day Christmas came, take some earth from under his feet and sprinkle it on his head. “Ukrainian sayings” by Nomys.)

Взялися блудом дні мої й дороги,
все глибше у чужу вгрузавши твань,
лиш пригадом далеких поривань
князь-місяць сновидає круторогий.

Йдуть вивертом ворота і пороги
і думи розтікаються навмань:
за круг заклятий за незриму грань
не виведуть колеса ні остроги.

Даремне, сповнений тривоги до краю,
вгадати рвусь: вівторок чи субота
святилися різдвяними святками.

Дарма навпомацки сліпий шукаю
за крихтою хоч глини хоч болота—
то ж всюди, скрізь тут—не земля, а камінь.⁴³

[My days and roads are lost in error/ as I sink still deeper into foreign muck/ and
as he lurks, the horned moon/ only reminds me of my distant goals./
Gates and thresholds pass in a blur/ and thoughts fly out in all directions/ and
neither wheels nor spurs will help break out/ from the cursed circle and through
the invisible boundary./

⁴³ *Glosarij*, p. 11.

Filled to the brim with fear, I seek/ in vain, to know: was it on Saturday or Tuesday/ that we were sanctified by Christmas day./ In vain, I blindly grope/ for at least a clod of clay, a clod of mud/ But everywhere, around me I find not earth, but stone.]

The existential angst that informs the collection is projected for the most part by the collective not the personal frame—and its signposts are the traumas and long stretches of darkness that make up Ukrainian history. Through such poems as “Gonta” (echoing the bloody time of the hajdamak uprising of 1768 and the atrocious cruelty of its leader’s execution by the Polish authorities), as “Orda” and “Jasyr” (the centuries of Tatar raids and its thousands upon thousands of victims), “Kotora” (on the curse of fratricidal strife going back to early Rus’), “Neryst” (“enmity” or “rancor” which is cast here as a Shevchenkian meditation on the morass of émigré life—which also closely echoes “Blud”), and “Solovky,” a meditation on the fate of Ukraine’s leaders perishing on that prison island at the hands of Russian despotism from the time of Kalnyshevs’kyj in the late 18th century to Stalin’s time, that history is presented—rather perhaps intuited—as a fate that accompanies that people, that defines the Ukrainian essence of things. The opening poem “Argo,” which in *Korabli* was still “Argonavty” (the Argonauts) in fact encapsulates the *fatum* of that land and sets the tone for the whole collection:

В яснї далїнь Кольхїди-України
ти через море негостинне й чорне
синїв Геллади не зряджай Язоне,
за руном золотим! У тїй далїні

тебе обмарять ночі солов’їні,
данням любовним зможуть гожі жони
ї шлях заступить племя необорне
залїзнім проростом зубів зміїних.

Ти може й цілий вернешся в Гелладу,
здолавши чарами догонь чужинну,
ї грїм і зудар зловорожих скель.

Та замість руна привезеш ти зраду:
вродлива бранка вб’є дїтей, дружину,

тебе ж розчавить власний корабель.⁴⁴

[Into the shimmering distance of Kolkhida-Ukraine/ do not send forth, O Jason,
across the black and uninviting sea/ the sons of Hellas/ for the golden fleece. In
that distant land/
you will be dazzled by the nights of nightingales,/ comely women will sap you
with gifts of love/ and a resilient tribe will block your way/ with iron sproutings
of the dragon's teeth./
You may perchance return to Hellas in one piece/ and overcome with magic the
pursuing horde,/ and the thunder and clashes of malevolent rocks.
Instead of a golden fleece you'll bring back treachery:/ the lovely slave will kill
your children and your wife/ and you, you will be flattened by your own ship.]

*

Glosarij, the height of Krawciw's poetic achievement, was not repeated: few poets are fated to repeat their chefs d'oeuvre. The combination of classical elegance and self-restraint so characteristic of Mykola Zerov and the Kyivan neoclassicists that he was then cultivating on the one hand, and on the other the world of Ukrainian folkloric and regional (largely Carpathian) linguistic inspiration and behind that the collective voice of the people, the *narod*, (echoing such precursors as Svidzins'kyj and Shevchenko), was not fated to recur—certainly not with such intensity and organic melding. As one looks at the larger context—both the synchronous translating that he was then doing from Rilke, *and* the nature of the poetry that he wrote subsequently—one may even postulate that this collection also marks the beginning of a partially conscious, but far-reaching retreat from poetry, that is, the high poetry that was synonymous with Rilke. At the very least, this is reflected in the way the message of its darkness, its fatedness, and early demise is encoded into its fabric, and becomes its core feature. Thus the lead poem of the collection makes clear that the search for the golden fleece will end in disaster, and that Jason is fated to be crushed by his own ship. (And this shadow, one should note, falls on the still seemingly optimistic ambience of *Korabli*, giving that romantically charged topos a very different cast. For in fact “Argo,” (“Argonavty”) first appeared in that collection as a prefiguring of *Glosarij* [“Iz Glosarija”] and was dated “October-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

November, 1945. In so doing, Krawciw also rewrites the recent acmeist and triumphalist legacy of Jurij Klen's *Karavely* [1943].) The perspective of implacable fate and defeat in fact informs much of the *Glosarij*, from "Argo," "Gonta," and "Orda" to "Solovky," "Chajka" and "Jasyr," and serves as a constant counterweight to the poet's efforts to recapture in language, customs and collective memory the life-force of the collective. Thus when we encounter despondency and despair in such poems as "Blud" and "Neryst" there is no surprise: they, too, seem fated. Not least of all, the poet's sense of self is constantly tugged in several directions as he parcels out the creative act with the critic and the bibliographer. The symbolic recurrence of the topos of being torn, like Orpheus, into many pieces, and of images of brutal execution ("Chuhajstyr," "Gonta," "Medea," "Vid'ma," "Teklja"); is also not coincidental.⁴⁵

What becomes evident from the larger trajectory of Krawciw's life, is that this poetry was accompanied and enabled by the inspiring after-glow of Rilke's great poetry with which for a while the poet had become one; it was a poetry sheltered, so to speak, under the lee of that great ship.⁴⁶ With it gone, when no longer in that company—more concretely, perhaps, without the awesome, all-demanding task of meeting its sublime standards and, above all, its universal addressee—the world of "Blud" and "Neryst" took over. Poetry was left to fend for itself, to survive as best it could in an ever more inhospitable climate. The *Glosarij* of the time of its writing did, of course, steel the author for much of the work that was still to come—it was, after all, a *profession de foi*—but not for poetry; it could not maintain that temper under new circumstances, especially not if the poet himself had conceded his despondence, in effect, his defeat. The following collections only confirm this.

⁴⁵ In the case of "Teklja" and "Medea" this is the horror of being buried alive. One may note here that Ivan Franko, whose immense involvement in civic and community matters tended to overwhelm his ability to find the time and psychic space to create poetry was also given to depicting this customary state of affairs as one of being buried alive; cf. GGG/Walenrodyzm Franka.../.

⁴⁶ NB K's translation of R's *Werkleute sind wir...* cite... AND do here the answer to Ostap Tarnawsky—i.e., that he thinks all of K's poetry—from beginning to end—is rilkean. It certainly is not—and he (OT) is simply misreading—passing of the desired?!/ for the real.../elab./

*

A year or two into his stay in the US, Krawciw published a collection of poetry, *Zymozelen'* (Philadelphia, 1951), that was partially an echo of *Korabli* (of its fifteen sonnets, one had appeared in *Korabli* as well as six of its ten alexandrines) and partially a brief attempt at accessing the poetry of *Glosarij* which was to see light only some 23 years later. Notably, too, the poems “Blud” and “Neryst” are both first published here—and nothing so reflects the mean-spirited and tawdry circumstances of émigré life, and the poet’s despondency within it, as do these baleful pictures. That both poems, and the collection itself, were published by the very publisher (the émigré right-wing and obscurantist newspaper *Amerika*) where Krawciw was then working and being exploited (beggars, after all, can’t be choosers) also enables some measure of poetic justice (although one can hardly assume that the publishers read the allusion). Thus, “Neryst”:

Усотаний у твань і баговиння
мізерних слів і мислей цвіль і слизь,
в безвивідь буднів грузнеш. Глухо скрізь
і меркнуть блідо крижаним промінням

Колишні зорі. Сміття і плавиння
збирається на плесах і в розріз
йдуть ночі з днями і недобра гризь
нам роз’їдає дружбу і сумління.

Пручаєшся, в обридлій рвешся сіті,
як визволу, немов рятунку ждавши
ковтка ясного, чистого повітря.

Та всюди глуш і тиша мертва в світі,
бридня зненависти й підозри завжди—
і ні звідкіль «Ні хвилі ані вітру»...⁴⁷

[Sucked by the swamp and mire / of empty words and moldy, sleazy thoughts you
sink/ still deeper into the daily grind’s dead end. No voice is heard/ and shining
on with dim and icy rays/

⁴⁷ Bohdan Kravciv [Krawciw], *Zymozelen. Sonety j oleksandryny*, Filadelfija, 1951, p. 15.

are former stars. Rubbish and flotsam/ gathers on the surface and night opposes
day/and vicious squabbles corrode both trust and consciences alike./
You tear and struggle at the disgusting nets/ waiting as if for freedom/ for a gulp
of air that's bright and pure./
But deadly silence rules the world/ and ugly hatefulness and always the mistrust/
and from no quarter can be heard "the sound of waves or wind"...]⁴⁸

*

Krawciw's next collection, *Dzvenyslava* (Jersey City, 1962, takes a very different tack—although the course itself was already signaled in 1949, that is, in the dedication to *Glosarij*. In effect, it is a full retreat from a harsh external reality into the intimacy and safety of family poetry as the 15 sonnets of the wreath (sonnet redoublé) are dedicated to his daughter on the occasion of her wedding.⁴⁹ While technically accomplished, the tenor and fabric of this poetry, its circumscribed circle of addressees, its essentially laudatory and sentimental mode, sets it fully apart from the earlier public, "high" poetry—and to judge it by the criteria of the latter is to misunderstand both genres and modes. To place them side by side (and indeed place the family poetry before *Glosarij*, on the basis simply of publication dates—as both the editor of the *Collected Works* and his Lviv imitator are pleased to do) is to misread and distort the poet's legacy.⁵⁰

The verse that Krawciw will continue to write will basically conform to this new, circumscribed key—some more obviously, some less so; some of it will appear still during his lifetime, for example, the selection "Osinni stansy" (Autumn Stanzas), dated Fall 1972-Spring 1973 and published by *Suchasnist'* in its July/August, 1974 issue, or the "Novi stansy" (New Stanzas) dated July-November, 1974 and published by the same

⁴⁸ As the obligatory epigraph makes clear, the citation, "The sound of waves or wind," i.e., «Ой нема, нема ні вітру, ні хвилі/ Із нашої України» are the opening lines from Shevchenko's "Hamalia" (1842) which depicts the lament of Cossack prisoners in Turkish captivity.

⁴⁹ NB *Dzvenyslava*, Jersey City, 1962 is a private edition—published by Krawciw himself (nakladom avtora).

⁵⁰ To be sure, in purely technical terms the form of the sonnet redoublé is of some interest. In this somewhat *recherché* mode Ostap Tarnavskij preceded Krawciw by some ten years: cf. his *Zhyttja*/?/ of 1952.

journal (of which Krawciw was also for a time editor) in its January, 1975 issue⁵¹; some will await inclusion in the posthumous first volume of the *Collected Works*. The collection now titled *Kvitolit* on the basis of a conjecture by Bohdan Boychuk, the editor of the *Collected Works*,⁵² was named “Strofy i stansy” (Strophes and Stanzas) by Krawciw (a more modest and traditional, or perhaps simply retrospective title, but also hardly as precious as “kvitolit”) and was submitted to *Suchasnist’* for publication in 1974, shortly before his death⁵³. The other collections were posthumously reconstructed by Boychuk from Krawciw’s archive, i.e., “Tavtorymy” (Tautological rhymes), a second part of “Stansy” (Stanzas) written in July-November, 1974, a collection entitled by Krawciw “Osinni strofy” (Autumn Strophes—not the same as the published “Autumn Stanzas,” but also not essentially different), “Virshi dlja Nil” (Verses for Nil, i.e., for his wife), several pages of fragments and a small selection of explicitly family verses (“Rodynni virshi”).⁵⁴

This not inconsiderable late corpus, comprising—from the sonnet wreath *Dzvenyslava* of 1962 to the very last poetry he wrote in 1975—*more than half* of Krawciw’s total poetic output (!) does call for a few concluding comments. For one, as already noted, it is framed in its preponderance as family poetry or verse, and the category Boychuk entered only at the very end of vol. 1 of the *Collected Works*—i.e., that of “Rodynni virshi,” could easily and with good conscience, have included all of it; the benefit of such a discrimination would have only worked to the advantage of the corpus and the reputation of Krawciw as poet. Some further qualifications are also in order. The “Tavtorymy,” for example, are not expressly family verse. These are distichs whose sole point and effect is either the rhyming of the same word with a different meaning or a play with homophony. Their effect is mostly ironic and comical, at times caustic and

⁵¹ Cf. *Suchasnit’*, July-August, No. 7-8 (163-164), pp. 3-6 and January, 1975, No. 1 (169), pp. 3-6.

⁵² Boychuk, to be sure, chooses “Kvitolit” from an earlier, draft version in Krawciw’s manuscripts. Cf. *Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 346. This practice is repeated in the 1993 Lviv edition thus making it altogether likely that this name will remain.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

expressly satiric, with émigré reality and pretensions the express butt of the joke—but they do not pretend to serious poetry. For example, «Парубок» (The Bachelor):

Жінок мав безліч у забав бездонні—
І старість мав: без сина і без доні.⁵⁵

[He had innumerable women and bottomless pleasures—/ And an old age without son or daughter.]

or «Холуйство» (Sycophancy):

У виструнчені рівно станувши ряди
Ревли вождеві враз: Наказуй і ряди.⁵⁶

[Lining up stiff into straight ranks/ They roared at once to their leader: Command and rule.]

This is the humor that one expects to find on the last page of the official paper of the Union of Ukrainian writers in Kyiv, the *Literaturna Ukraïna* (Literary Ukraine); arguably, this is also the kind of humor one can share around the family dinner table. Krawciw wrote over two hundred of sych «tavytorymy»; clearly, he found the wordplay interesting. And yet the avatar of this play can also be found in the seminal Rilkean period, as in his translation of Rilke's concluding “Schluss Stück” (End Poem) from the cycle *Die Stimmen* (Voices) in *Das Buch der Bilder* (Book of Images), 1906:

Der Tod ist gross.
Wir sind die Seinen
Lachenden Munds.
Wenn wir uns mitten im Leben meinen,
wagt er zu weinen
mitten in uns.

Thus «Кінцівка»:

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

Смерть є велика.
В неї в полоні
ми і наш сміх.
В час, як живемо, здається нам—вповні,
смерть плачем повнить
нас же самих.⁵⁷

Very different questions are posed by the strophes and stanzas of what is now called *Kvitolit* and in the “Stansy” (1974)⁵⁸. They basically constitute a kind of a diary, where, for example, the “Stansy” of *Kvitolit* are dated day by day for long stretches of time (i.e., from October 1, 1972 to May 2, 1973, and the “Stansy” (1974) are dated June 21, 1974 to November 26, 1974, with here and there some pauses or lacunae. This exercise of writing a poem a day that seems to echo Stendhal’s injunction to write “twenty lines a day, genius or not” was realized to high effect by the American oulipist writer Harry Mathews who saw it “as a method for overcoming the anxiety of the blank page.”⁵⁹ For Krawciw’s it may have had a similar purpose, given his silence for long periods, and his complaint (cf. the postscript to *Glosarij*) of never having the time to write poetry. The poems themselves are not merely rote, some are indeed interesting, but they do not contain the high poetry that Ostap Tarnavs’kyj espies there.⁶⁰ Tellingly, Krawciw himself calls attention to their retrospective, autumnal and sentimental nature, for example in “Uroky” [Lessons]:

В далекий ранок, що будив нас півнями,
Поривом юности виводив до воріт
І мчав на хвилях річкової піняви—
Керуєм, без упину пізніх мислей літ.

У спогади вникаємо знеможено,
Сантиментальні вірші пишемо й листи,
Пожовклим листям бродимо—й неможемо
У круг той чарівливий стежки ізнайти.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Rechi j obrazy*, p. 87.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Collected Works*, vol.1, pp. 273-300.

⁵⁹ Cf. Harry Mathews, *20 Lines a Day*, Normal, Il, 1988, p.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ostap Tarnavs’kyj, *op cit.* pp. 36-37.

⁶¹ *Collected Works*, I, 208.

15 листопада 1972

[Into that distant morning that awoke us with cockcrows/ and with youth's stirrings led us to the gates/ and sped us on the waves of foaming rivers/ we ceaselessly direct the flight of our late thoughts.

Enervated we sink into our memories/ and write our sentimental verse and letters/ and traipse through withered leaves—and never/ find the magic center of our path. 15 November, 1972.]

Although articulated near the end of his life, this positioning of his poetry within a space of limits, doubt and fatedness (*pryrechenist'*) harkens back to feelings expressed decades earlier in “Blud” and “Neryst”. Presumably, it is precisely to counter them that he finally decides to resurrect *Glosarij*—fully commented or not. External causes may have also cast a shadow. One of them may have been the already noted article by the leading critic of that period and in the late 1940s, the *de facto* ideologue and guru of MUR, Jurij Sherekh (Shevelov). In a retrospective overview and assessment of the literature written in the emigration in 1945-1949—which is also the first history of MUR and one of the several apologias for it that he was to write—he discusses the various poets of the period and at the very end also turns his attention to Krawciw.⁶² His assessment is not expressly negative—he calls Krawciw's poetry both interesting and promising; and even as he notes that Krawciw is influenced by Maksym Ryl's'kyj (for many an exemplary neoclassicist), he also claims that Krawciw surpasses him in this modality.⁶³ But Sherekh's larger assessment of neoclassicism as a spent phase, as something invariably imitative and epigonic is also prominently asserted in this and various other articles of this time.⁶⁴ Probably more discouraging in this overview was Sherekh's readiness to pair Krawciw with Jar Slavutych, in fact to discuss him only after he deals with the latter. And yet for anyone who knew poetry, and Sherekh certainly did

⁶² Cf. “Ukrains'ka emihracijna literatura v Evropi, 1945-1949,” *Ne dlja ditej*, 1964.

⁶³ Thus: “Bohdan Krawciw (in the collection “Ships”) developed this manner not without the influence, perhaps, of Maksym Ryl's'kyj, but in this he is more consistent than his putative teacher,” *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁶⁴ Cf. //re passé nature of neoclassicism...cite//

(and indeed even tried his hand at translating Rilke), it was clear that Slavutych was a hack, a *grafoman*.⁶⁵ The implied dismissal of Krawciw's poetry is hardly concealed.

The other external cause was more objective and harder to ignore. This was the poetic context itself, in effect, the emergence in the mid-1950s of the so called New York Group of poets—Bohdan Boychuk, Bohdan Rubchak, Jurij Tarnawsky, Emma Andsijevs'ka and a few others—all of whom Krawciw knew, and supported in his various capacities as editor and literary elder, and whose poetry, by all indications, he genuinely admired. Their reciprocal esteem was reflected (implicitly) in their collaboration in the journal *Suchasnist'*, and later, more directly, in the anthology *Koordynaty*, and then explicitly in the posthumous *Collected Works*. Mutual esteem and affection aside, neither he nor his younger fellow poets could ignore the sea change occurring in Ukrainian émigré poetry which dramatically separated the past from the present. In the face of their unalloyed modernism, their openness to urban and erotic themes, a new heady intertextuality and a cosmopolitanism free of émigré complexes—and indeed, for the most part, of the experience of trauma—not only his poetry, but that of more established colleagues like Malaniuk, with their poetics of interwar neoclassicism or of (Visnyk-style) national pathos, was rapidly being consigned to history. Becoming an anachronism, suffering Teklja's fate (to harken back to his and Frankos' phobias), was not something that Krawciw was disposed to accept. With a decisiveness that from the distance of time may appear prescient, but which in reality was more a function of survival and a sense of duty mixed with unending demands on him, he was already embracing a different role.

*

In the interwar period Krawciw had been no stranger to journalistic and editorial work. His reentry into this mode in the last third of his life, from the 1950s to the early

⁶⁵ NB /elab that this was something that Sherekh-Shevelov was wont to do...//as to Slavutych as hack—cf. below K/s allusion to writers who order/zamolljajut' recenziji—and Slavutych's habit of doing so in post-independence Ukraine—cf. Rozumnyj...

1970s, is accompanied by both new range and depth, as well as some new departures. While virtually none of his prewar critical and journalistic writings are now readily available, many (if not all) of his later writings are, and while they show, as does his poetry, eddies, detours and recapitulation, they also demonstrate a progressive movement from journalism and various quotidian publications to ever more insightful criticism and finally moments of significant scholarship. This facet of his life's work—which already occupies two volumes of the *Collected Works*, but could probably add two more—has received much less attention than the poetry, and the commentary that has appeared has been superficial.⁶⁶ The result is not only ignorance about a major facet of Krawciw's life's work, but also a blank spot in the cultural history of the diaspora—which, as future events would show, will become a major factor in Ukraine's political revival in the late 20th century. Krawciw's criticism was a major voice in this camp and a clear influence on the discourse of the revival of the 1970s and 1980s, and of post-independence Ukraine; and it is impressive both for its range and its intense pace.

Just a few months after arriving in the US in October, 1949, Krawciw was at work on an article for a commemorative edition of the *Igor Tale*, the *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of its publication in St. Petersburg in 1800⁶⁷. In keeping with the tenor of the whole, his “Мітологічний світ «Слова о Полку Ігореві»” [The Mythological World of the Tale of Prince Ihor's Campaign] presents a popular, but cogent exposition of the topic—reflecting the perspectives and the state of knowledge at the time. The problem here is not just that this edition, one of the first such projects of the “new emigration,” had a political agenda: to show the flag, and present the “Ukrainian Epic of the 12th century” in defiance of the Russo-centric and Soviet-backed world of slavistics where the *Igor Tale*, by the very nature of things, was simply a “Russian” or at best an “old-Russian” monument. The deeper, all-but metaphysical problem was that from the outset, whether for the Russians or the Ukrainians, the *Igor*

⁶⁶ Cf. vols. 2 and 3 of the *Collected Works*.

⁶⁷ *Слово о полку Ігореві. Героїчний епос XII віку. Ювілейне видання в 150-ті роковини першого друку 1800-1950*, Видавництво «Київ», 1950; *The Tale of Prince Ihor's Campaign. Ukrainian epic of the 12th Century. Jubilee Edition. 150th Anniversary of the First Publication 1800-1950*, «Куріум» [Philadelphia], 1950, 91 pp.

Tale was first and foremost, a national project, indeed a paradigmatic “national text” (and thus, by its nature, a national mystification), where collective validation and teleology—and with them antiquity, heroism, the canonically weighty Epos, and so on—are the desired value and effect, and the traditional scholarship that surrounds it is invariably contingent, i.e., designed to validate these goals and values, in short, to assert not sceptically assess its claim to authenticity—and thus in essence a form of window dressing.⁶⁸ In this respect this jubilee edition is comparable to the various other popular-scholarly editions published by the Soviet and then the post-Soviet Russian and Ukrainian literary establishments. As in all of them, the *Igor Tale* is presented *sub speciae* of its purported patriotic message—as is explicitly argued by the editor of the project, the artist, poet and translator Jaroslav Hordyns’kyj.⁶⁹ Krawciw’s own effort at placing the various, often murky and disputed references to pagan deities in the context of Indo-European mythology draws on a broad range of sources. As a popular and somewhat belletristic account it is as informative as it is entertaining; its synthesizing and speculative thrust follows in the footsteps of such prominent scholars as Golubinskij, Hrushevskyj, Vernads’kyj, Jakobson and others (many of whom were also in thrall to the *Igor Tale*). And the overall frame and pathos of the mythological draws, of course, on Krawciw’s earlier work on *Glosarij*.

Two major contributions that Krawciw undertakes in the course of the following decade move in a very different direction—the reconstruction not of an estheticized, very distant and largely imagined poetic past, but one that was real, recent and wrenchingly traumatic, in effect, the period of totalitarian terror in the first half of the 20th century. The anthology *Obirvani struny* (Broken Strings), published in 1955 jointly by the Shevchenko Scientific Society and the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences in the US,⁷⁰

⁶⁸ my NP and NM...

⁶⁹ Thus cf. S. Hordyns’kyj’s article.. pp. -62 ... NB too that the editors of the *Collected Works* do not really know (here, as before), what they are doing, and highlight this writing while possibly leaving out more important essays.

⁷⁰ *Обірвані струни, антологія поезії поляглих, розстріляних, замучених і засланих 1920-1945*, Вибір, передмова й довідки Богдана Кравцева, Наукове Товариство ім. Шевченка в Америці, Нью-Йорк, 1955; (*Broken Strings, An Anthology of Poems of Ukrainian Poets Killed or Deported Between 1920 and 1945*; Selection, foreword and

constitutes perhaps the first such anthology commemorating the Ukrainian poets who perished in this period, principally at the hands of the Soviet regime.⁷¹ It precedes by four years the more famous and influential anthology *Rozstriljane vidrodzhennja* (Executed Renaissance) of Jurij Lavrinenko⁷² and by just one year the groundbreaking study of George S.N. Luckyj (Юрій Луцький), *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (1956), and is one of several works that initiate the process of studying and documenting the Soviet deprivations against Ukrainian literature and culture that appeared in the 1950s and 1960s and played a major role in stimulating the birth of modern Ukrainian Studies in the US and Canada in the late 1960s and 1970s.⁷³ In comparison with *Rozstriljane vidrodzhennja*, Krawciw's anthology is clearly the more rudimentary: its scope is narrower (focusing only on poetry), while at the same time its time frame is more diffuse (covering the Soviet period up to the end of WW II); its bibliographic apparatus and its notes are more modest. Its conceptualization of its task and purpose is more openly martyrological (although that mode also defines Lavrinenko's work).⁷⁴ At the same time, its broader focus allows the author to include writers who may have otherwise remained forgotten.

notes by Bohdan Krawciw, Shevchenko Scientific Society in the U.S.A., New York, 1955).

⁷¹ Of the 41 poets included here, all but two were victims of the Soviets; the two exceptions, who died at the hands of the Nazis, are Oleh Olzhych and Olena Teliha.

⁷² Юрій Лавріненко, *Розстріляне відродження. Антологія 1917-1933, Поезія—Проза—Драма—Есей*, Instytut Literacki (Paris), 1959.

⁷³ In his on the whole carefully researched overview of the historiography of this topic, Serhii Bilokin does not mention *Obirvani struny* and in fact begins with Lavrinenko's *Rozstriljane vidrodzhennja*. Cf. Сергій Білокінь, «Історіографія державного терору й тероризму в СРСР: проблеми систематизації й періодизації. Повоєнні закордонні видання (1945-1991)», <http://bilokin.myslenedrevo.com.ua/terror/idtt3.html#Ref111>. In fact, chronologically the first to broach this topic was Viktor Pertov (cf. Віктор Петров. *Українські культурні діячі УРСР—жертви большевицького терору*, written in the late 1940s, but published only in 1959 by Prolog).

⁷⁴ The fact that Krawciw does not attempt to provide a theoretical and historiographic frame for his work is all to the good: the requisite concepts and distance were not in place yet. Lavrinenko's *ad hoc* choice and conjectures to the contrary (“vitajizm,” “klarnetyzm,” “neo-Baroque” etc.—and above all the very paradigm of “rozstriljane vidrodzhennja”) present more problems in the long run than they provide answers or insights.

Bearing witness to the past and to the victims of unprecedented oppression, and then ceaselessly responding to Soviet efforts to conceal the crimes and rewrite history becomes, in short, a central and defining task for Krawciw for the next decade and more. In *Na bahrjanomu koni revoljuciji* (On the Crimson Horse of Revolution; 1960), a small book published by the publishing house Prolog, and intended for dissemination within Soviet Ukraine, he provides in a series of biographical and statistical sketches an overview of the hundreds of writers murdered or imprisoned and a whole literature radically censored and altered, and ultimately eviscerated and lobotomized. But bearing witness and documenting crimes and deprivations soon evolves into a larger concern for taking stock of cultural and historical processes and preparing the groundwork for future efforts. Beginning thus with *Obirvani struny* and *Na bahrjanomu koni revoljuciji* Krawciw continues throughout the 1960s and early 1970s to write article after article, sometimes two or more a year, where virtually every major facet of Ukrainian literary and intellectual life under the Soviet regime is examined and discussed—for example, the state of Ukrainian Studies relating to the early period of Ukrainian literature (“Udar v osnovu”, 1961); the state of Ukrainian bibliography (“Bibliohrafija u vykryvlenomu dzerkali”, also 1961); Ukrainian literature in the Soviet Ukrainian Encyclopedia, 1962; the Fifth Convention of the Ukrainian Union of Writers, 1967; and the Sixth, in 1971; the state of Russification in Ukraine, 1972; the rolling back of the period of “the Thaw” “Pid praporom pohromnyctva” (1973) and many others.⁷⁵

As much as they draw their polemical edge from the cold-war setting and the collective experience and trauma of the Ukrainian emigration, Krawciw's writings are also progressively moving towards a new understanding of the tasks ahead. Significant in this connection is his focus on those developments in Ukrainian society under the Soviets which serve as harbingers of change and the promise of rebirth: de-Stalinization and the Khrushchev “thaw,” and above all the new Ukrainian poetry of the 1960s, the so called “shistdesjatnyky.” To the latter he devotes both a number of articles, and two anthologies: *Poety chumats' koho shljaxu*, 1962 and *Shistdesjat' poetiv shistdesjatykh*

⁷⁵ Cf. vol. 3 of the *Collected Works*.

rokiv, 1967.⁷⁶ Individual poets also draw his attention—prominently among them Ivan Drach, the then leading (most often discussed, and “most promising”) young Ukrainian poet (cf. “Protuberanci sercja i credo Ivana Dracha”). At times, the very fact of reprinting writers who were destroyed and works that were censored—as in the case of Hryhorij Kosynka and particularly the poem *Slipci* (The Blind Bards) of the outstanding 20th century Ukrainian poet Mykola Bazhan—becomes in itself a contribution to the new, emerging canon of Ukrainian literature.⁷⁷

Throughout this period Krawciw was also contributing numerous articles on Ukrainian literature and culture to the *Encyklopedia ukrajinoznawstwa* edited by Volodymyr Kubijovych, and published by the Shevchenko Scientific Society (1955-???) and later also contributing to and serving as editor of the English language *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia* (dates???)⁷⁸.

A major focus of Bohdan Krawciw's literary criticism was the national poet, Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861). He addressed this topic with great intensity in the early 1960s, as he worked on a major émigré publication project—the fourteen volume *Complete Edition* of Shevchenko's works that appeared in the US in 1959-1963.⁷⁹ While based largely on the pre-war Warsaw edition of Shevchenko's works (1934-1939) under the editorship of Pavlo Zajtsev, along with Oleksandr Lotoc'kyj and Roman Smal'-Stoc'kyj, and following its overall conceptualization of Shevchenko's legacy and of Shevchenko studies, its methodology and even design and layout⁸⁰, the new edition did attempt to include new studies and to update its research—and, above all, sought to counter the accumulating and aggressive distortions, censorship and propaganda in Soviet editions of Shevchenko, including academic editions. In a larger sense, of course, it was also a project for maintaining and projecting national identity—even in the face of, indeed

⁷⁶ The introductory articles for each are included respectively in vol. 2 and 3 of his *Collected Works*.

⁷⁷ *Slipci* brochure /refs./

⁷⁸ *Encyklopedia ukrajinoznawstwa* /refs/ and *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia* / refs/.

⁷⁹ *Повне видання творів Тараса Шевченка*, Друге доповнене видання, Видавництво Милоли Денисюка, Чикаго, 1959-1963; *Taras Shevchenko, Works*, Mykola Denysiuk Publishing Company, Chicago, 1959-1963.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Повне видання творів Тараса Шевченка*, Український науковий Інститут, Варшава, 1934-1939.

especially because of, massive political adversity. Krawciw's role in this effort was significant. Apart from contributing a number of articles,⁸¹ he was editor of three of the edition's fourteen volumes, i.e., vol. IV, the poetry of the years 1857-1861 as well as variants of earlier poems (1962); vol. XII, which is an anthology of Shevchenko's poetry translated into various languages—much of which goes beyond the original Warsaw edition of 1938 (1963); vol. XIII, which is an anthology of critical writings on Shevchenko, from Kulish to contemporary non-Soviet criticism (1963), and, finally, he authored the introduction to vol. XI (also 1963) which includes studies by Dmytro Antonovych and Pavlo Zajtsev on Shevchenko's art. During this time Krawciw also published in the journal *Suchasnist'* several articles on the Soviet treatment of Shevchenko and Shevchenko Studies which combine, as in his other critical writings in this period, fundamental bibliographic and source studies with an indictment of the Soviet destruction of Ukrainian scholarship in general and of this field in particular.⁸²

What remains unknown, however, is that Krawciw also worked on Shevchenko—with the same intensity—in the interwar and into the war period, from the late 1920s to the early 1940s. In a large manuscript folder (actually the book bindings of a German-Polish dictionary) that is part of the Krawciw archive at the Ukrainian Research Institute there is material, all of it handwritten in an extremely dense hand on longitudinal (4"x13") folded strips of poor (now totally yellowed and brittle) paper, most often utilizing the back of various official blanks (most often of the Polish railroad office in Stanislawow⁸³) that shows work on a large Shevchenko project, by all indications a book, which includes a biographical sketch of Shevchenko's life, «Життя Тараса Шевченка» (which in one of its two drafts is subtitled «У 120-літні роковини народження», i.e., referring to 1934); sections and voluminous commentaries on many of the major poems, numerous extracts (presumably for future citation) from critical studies; material for an

⁸¹ Cf. vol. 2 of the *Collected Works*.

⁸² Cf. «Кобзар'» під цензурою» (1961), «Шевченкознавство в соцреалістичній дійсності» (1961), «Остракізм у шевченкознавчій бібліографії» (1964) and «Доля українського шевченкознавства в УРСР» in *Collected Works*, vol. 2, pp. 151-156, 157-2, 173-190 and 191-205.

⁸³ I.e., Polskie Koleje Państwowe Dyrekcja w Stanislawowie

index of historical figures, places and so on; drafts and plans for dealing with subsections (e.g., Shevchenko's historical poems) and so on. Included among this material are notes for a talk or speech on Shevchenko that are not dated, but which from internal evidence, i.e., quotations from a well-known poem, «Шевченко», by Jevhen Malaniuk (1930) also suggests the period of the 1930s. The book or monograph on Shevchenko never materialized—not only because of the vagaries and instability of the times during which it was being worked on, but also, one may assume, from a shifting sense of the addressee: from an initial popular exposition and an emphasis on national pathos to ever greater scholarly contextualization and nuance. One may also assume that much of the passion and many of the insights accumulated here were accessed again in Krawciw's Shevchenkiana of the early 1960s.

*

Bohdan Krawciw's criticism of the last period of his life, from the late 1960s to his death in 1975, shows a clear turn to scholarship as against publicistic work and to a fundamentally analytical, intellectual and ultimately academic frame of reference—even while not abandoning his basic engagement with crucial, national issues. This also corresponds, as was noted at the outset, to his growing involvement with the Ukrainian Research Institute established at Harvard in 1972, and specifically his work there as Research Fellow in 1973-1974. To be sure, an analytical and scholarly frame and a dispassionate, or at least not principally polemical cast to his criticism was evident already in a number of earlier studies—in the various Shevchenko articles of the early 1960s, in his overview of the critical literature devoted to Jurij Fed'kovych, or his introduction to Leonid Mosendz's novel *Ostannij prorok* (1961) in which he directly addressed the issue of the moral vacuum at the core of the nationalist leadership.⁸⁴ But in that period (the 1950s and early 1960s), and even more so before that, his writings were principally polemical and often drew on pathos and on rhetorical effect. Now there is a palpable shift as the latter mode is basically abandoned—suggesting the emergence of a different discourse and a different reader. In effect, in the space of a decade, beginning with the appearance of *Suchasnist'* in 1961, or slightly more, if one focuses on the student-led

⁸⁴ Cf. his *Collected Works*, vol. 2, pp. 268-280 and 316-345.

campaign that was initiated in the mid-1950s to fund a Chair of Ukrainian Studies at a leading American university, the tenor of Ukrainian émigré life was changing and an audience attuned to new intellectual standards and a much more sophisticated and optimistic understanding of the issues facing Ukrainians both in Ukraine and the diaspora was rapidly asserting itself. The enabling sociological and demographic factors aside, there was also the basic ability and readiness on the part of Krawciw to engage in this new intellectual discourse. The works produced in this relatively short space of time—the already mentioned publication of Mykola Bazhan's magnificent and all-but forgotten poem *Slipci* (1969); a year earlier his retrospective study of the poetry of Jevhen Malaniuk, where the lyrical and not the civic and bombastic are at center stage; a similarly focused study of the lyrical poetry of Ivan Franko (which was published posthumously, but which by all indications is also from this period); his excellent study of the Renaissance in Ukrainian literature (1974), and (anticipating our final frame and the subject of the present book) his equally excellent overview of Beauplan in Ukrainian historiography (also published posthumously in 1977), and last, but certainly not least, his editing (with a final note) of Volodymyr Svidzins'kyj's *Medobir* (1975)⁸⁵—are among the best criticism that Krawciw was to write and fit comfortably within any short list of the better work done in the area of Ukrainian Studies of that whole period.

Krawciw's critical strength then and before was in scrupulous source studies and bibliographic work entirely open to the comparative frame—to which he added a fine ear for literature, particularly poetry. His last works, however, are also informed by an openness to revisionism, the first promise of which we can already see in his 1961 introduction to Mosendz's *Ostannij prorok*. Its sequel, so to speak, is his introduction to Mykhajlo Sosnovs'kyj fundamentally revisionist *Дмитро Донцов. Політичний портрет* (Dmytro Donzow. A political portrait) where the study of the chief ideologue of Ukrainian inter-war nationalism is presented as something that must be subjected to objective scrutiny and not obscurantism or mythmaking.⁸⁶ His essay on literary criticism in the Ukrainian diaspora, «Літературознавство і літературна критика в діаспорі»,

⁸⁵ Volodymyr Svidzins'kyj, *Medobir. Poeziji, Suchasnist'*, 1975.

⁸⁶ Cf. Mykhailo Sosnovs'kyj, *Dmytro Dontsov. A Political Portrait*, New York-Toronto, 1974 (Михайло Сосновський, *Дмитро Донцов. Політичний портрет*, Нью Йорк-Торонто, 1974), «Передмова», pp. 111-13.

which was first presented as a paper at the Seminar in Ukrainian Studies at HURI in December 1972⁸⁷ is openly critical of the remnants of the earlier nationalist establishment and actively anticipates and welcomes a new beginning, from new quarters.

For Krawciw, too, this remained not only a hope, but a course of action, an investment in the future—as he willed his remarkable library and archive to Harvard's library and to HURI. Several generations of students were to become beneficiaries of his foresight and generosity. I remember to this day (a phrase used before) the summer day in 1974, in Rutherford, New Jersey, when Bohdan Krawciw presented me with a rare 1940 copy of the Lviv edition of the poetry of Svidzins'kyj—which despite the book's minute size (32 mo) immediately expanded for me several-fold the available poetic corpus of this rare poet. (*Medobir* came a year later.) This, too, was an investment in the future, for the recent complete edition of the poetry of Volodymyr Svidzins'kyj was in no small measure generated by that generous gesture.⁸⁸

*

That Krawciw was also a passionate, driven map-collector, and that his unique, and basically priceless collection, assembled over the course of his entire life in the New World would now find a fitting home at Harvard University should also come as no surprise. The perspectives provided by his poetry and his criticism brings that commitment—to tirelessly search and collect, and ultimately to will it to serve a larger audience and purpose—into clear focus. Collecting the multiform cartographic representations of Ukraine became a form of naming and reconstituting his homeland—image by image. The bibliographer and scholar in him saw further references to the object of his life's study. But they were also things of beauty, complete in themselves, both signs and icons. Like the rare words in his masterful *Glosarij*, researched with much effort, but also contemplated with a sense of esthetic distance, like Rilke's transcendent images and things, the maps of Ukraine, from so many different periods and perspectives, became emanations, constantly recurring objective correlatives of a

⁸⁷ Cf. *Collected Works*, vol. 2, pp. 467-488.

⁸⁸ Cf. Volodymyr Svidzins'kyj, *Tvory u dvokh tomakh*, Krytyka, 2004.

transcendent vision of his country—reconstituted in discrete images and texts, always recurring and never exhausted. There were as many maps as there were perspectives, and history had seen to it that these would be many. Even such that seemed to deny that Ukraine was there. But it was there, and the activity of collecting was a constant search for a lost homeland for which the discovery and acquisition of each map was visible, ineffable evidence that it existed—and gave tangible proof to his poetic and critical intuitions. As with the poet's drive to create and the critic's need to analyze and redress the existing state of affairs the collector in Krawciw could not but reach out and acquire each new and surprising map of his Ukraine—and by making it his own to reinforce the bond between them. And then, cognizant of his impermanence, his fatedness, make sure that it would finally be passed on so that others could also see in the sweep of the whole collection what he saw. The recognition of that inevitability must have been a prime motivation for him.

Milton, Mass.

May 9, 2010