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## The Question of Authority in Ivan Vyšens'kyj: A Dialectics of Absence

GEORGE G. GRABOWICZ

Even on the surface level, that is, on the basis of the available biographical and historical data and the operant historiographic and literary-critical formulas, Vyšens'kyj seems to be eminently paradoxical and as such seems to call for a restructuring, if not deconstruction, of these very formulas. He is now generally, and popularly, seen as perhaps the most important writer of the period of the renaissance of Ukrainian cultural life of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. He is certainly the only writer from the entire middle period of Ukrainian literature (save perhaps Skovoroda, who comes at its very end) who is given prominent play in the contemporary Ukrainian school curriculum or in popular editions—and yet in that very period he was largely unknown and ever more so peripheral; his works were only partially published, never republished, and basically unread; his contemporaries were quite oblivious to his passing from the scene, and hence we do not even know when he died.<sup>1</sup> By virtue of his individuality, his origins, his thematics, but especially because of his language and his talent, he is generally perceived as the first major Ukrainian writer—and yet, as such, he was a writer living in self-imposed exile and isolation from the very community he purportedly represented. A writer—to signal yet another presence/absence—who consciously and consistently saw dignity only in Church Slavonic, and warned against writing in the vernacular, the *prostyj jazyk*, and yet who precisely wrote in a bookish Ukrainian close to the latter.<sup>2</sup> The iconic portrayal of Vyšens'kyj in Soviet literary history, and this, sadly, involves not only academic mountebanks but serious scholars like I. Erëmin,<sup>3</sup> is of a progressive satirist, a fighter for social and national liberation, indeed a humanist; in fact, in the texts—as opposed to the ought-to-be reality of the interpretative formulas—he is, as Hruševs'kyj

<sup>1</sup> See M. Hruševs'kyj, *Istorija ukrajins'koji literatury* (New York, 1960), vol. 5, pp. 284–351.

<sup>2</sup> See George Y. Shevelov, “*Prosta Čadъ and Prostaja Mova*,” in this volume of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. his “Ivan Vyšenskij i ego obščestvenno-literaturnaja dejatel'nost',” in Ivan Vyšenskij, *Sočinenija* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1955), pp. 223–71.

was one of the first to point out,<sup>4</sup> a complete, even fanatical traditionalist and literalist, quite unmoved by the humanist and social implications of his religious convictions; in effect, a reactionary. Finally, he is paradoxical even in terms of the strictly non-evaluative, taxonomic schemes of literary periodization: he is manifestly in but not of his literary period. Already Dmytro Čyževs'kyj was at some difficulty to find a niche for Vyšens'kyj, shifting him on the basis of an intuitive and not altogether persuasive reading of his prose style from the Renaissance to the Baroque;<sup>5</sup> in recent Soviet Ukrainian studies there are various, even less persuasive attempts to identify Vyšens'kyj with the Renaissance or some naïvely hypothesized variant of humanism.<sup>6</sup> The issue, however, is not the inability of scholars to place Vyšens'kyj in the proper rubric; that is an all too common predicament for literary historians. The paradox in question is that precisely while not inhering in the literary process as defined by these rubrics, while belonging to the value and norm systems of neither the Renaissance nor the Baroque, he still substantially affects, one might even say determines, our understanding of that very process.

An integrated sense of Vyšens'kyj and his role in the cultural and literary process of his time clearly requires that we establish the context and basic parameters of his thought. In large measure this was done by Hruševs'kyj, who, in the fifth volume of his *History of Ukrainian Literature*, extensively examines, among other things, Byzantine and Slavic hesychasm, the role of Mt. Athos, and their profound impact on Rus' culture.<sup>7</sup> Recently, the specific question of Vyšens'kyj's closeness to hesychasm has again been broached in the West and in Soviet Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> The issues subtended here are several, from methods of mystic contemplation to stylistic and rhetorical praxis (e.g., the "pletienie sloves"); as I. F. Meyendorf has argued, some of these, like the question of hesychasm and humanism, or of "political

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Hruševs'kyj, *Istorija ukrajins' koji literatury*, 5: 350–51 and passim.

<sup>5</sup> See D. Čyževs'kyj, *Istorija ukrajins' koji literatury: Vid počatkov do doby realizmu* (New York, 1956), pp. 232–41, and his *A History of Ukrainian Literature: From the 11th to the End of the 19th Century*, trans. by Dolly Ferguson, Doreen, Gorsline, and Ulana Petyk, ed. and with a foreword by George S. N. Luckyj (Ukrainian Academic Press, Littleton, Colo., 1975), pp. 263–74. Cf. also George G. Grabowicz, *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 37–38.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. D. S. Nalyvajko and V. I. Krekoten', "Ukrajins'ka literatura XVI–XVIII stolit' u slov'jans'komu i evropejs'komu konteksti," *Slov'jans'ki literatury*, Dopovidi (IX Mižnarodnyj z'jizd slavistiv) (Kiev, 1983), pp. 27–64, especially p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> See Hruševs'kyj, *Istorija ukrajins' koji literatury*, 5: 351–52.

<sup>8</sup> See Ju. V. Pelešenko, "Deščo pro tradyciji u tvorčosti Ivana Vyšens'koho," *Ukrajins'ke literaturne barokko* (Kiev, 1987), pp. 131–43. Cf. also Harvey Goldblatt, "On the Hesychast Tradition and Ivan Vyšens'kyj," paper read at the 19th National Convention of the AAASS, Boston, November 5–8, 1987.

hesychasm," are quite distinct and *sui generis*, and mixing them with the hesychast religious mind-set as such only serves to confuse the issue.<sup>9</sup> (Attempts at somehow establishing a correspondence between Vyšens'kyj's alleged "activist civic stance" and "political hesychasm" seem to be particularly misguided.<sup>10</sup>) But the most central by far is dualism, the profound and intense way it models Vyšens'kyj's thought and expresses itself in his texts, and its aggressive articulation in Vyšens'kyj's asceticism.

Dualism, a radical separation and polar valuation of the worldly and the godly, the temporal and the spiritual, animates not only all of Vyšens'kyj's texts, but virtually every argument, seemingly every syllogism. More striking than the ubiquitousness, the total conceptual sway of this paradigm, however, is the passion with which it is held and the relentlessness with which it is propounded. The introduction and then the first chapter of his *Knyžka*, a collection of ten epistles, some in rudimentary dialogue (or catechetical form) sent by Vyšens'kyj from Athos to the Ukraine sometime between 1599–1601 (though never published), presents Vyšens'kyj's dualist world view with ineluctable force. The introduction, consisting of an invocation, a table of contents, instruction on how to read the book first in a collective setting and, alternatively, singly, also presents the basic parameters, the fundamental oppositions in which Vyšens'kyj's message and the world he perceives—and excoriates—is couched. The oppositions he sees are irreducible, unmediatable, and absolute: they are truth and lie (*istina i lož*), plainness and clever deceit, simplicity and philosophy, humility and pride, true Orthodox hope for salvation and the illusory glory of Latin scholarship. It is the first chapter, however, entitled "The Unmasking of the Devil-Ruler of the World and his Deceitful Snaring of this Quickly Passing Age," that shows this vision's all-encompassing, implacable purview. For the devil, according to Vyšens'kyj, literally rules and disposes of everything that is of this world, and everything that is of this world is his snare. The list is astounding: glory, luxury and wealth, all clerical and secular ranks, from pope and cardinal and bishop to parish priest, from king and chancellor and hetman to village elder—all are catalogued—but also all professions and trades, and beyond that any possession—a house, a plot of land, a wife. All will be given to you if you pay homage to the devil.<sup>11</sup> As striking as the scope, moreover, is the total absence of differentiation, of gradation:

<sup>9</sup> See I. F. Meyendorf, "O vizantijskom isixazme i ego roli v kul'turnom i istoričeskom razvitii Vostočnoj Evropy v XIV v.," *Voprosy istorii russkoj srednevekovoj literatury* (= *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury*, 29) (Leningrad, 1974), pp. 291–305.

<sup>10</sup> See Pelešenko, "Deščo pro tradyciji," pp. 133–335.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Sočinenija*, pp. 11–15.

desiring a bishopric and gaining it through a pact with the devil is the same as gaining a wife or a smithy in this same fashion—the list in fact is meaningful precisely because it is so all-encompassing. Not only that: it is also not a question of a pact in the fashion of a Faust or a Twardowski. As Vyšens'kyj's paratactic diction implies, the very fact, or act, of desiring—where the incantational “*esli chočeš pad, poklony my sja, ja tobě dam*” alternates with “*esli chočeš. . . ja tobě dam*”—is already a concession, a pact with the devil. And thus, too, the alternative he offers, the total rejection of this world—asceticism—as the only sure path to salvation becomes plausible solely within the operant paradigm: the things of this world, *in themselves*, are of the devil; in themselves, without reference to intent or instrumentality, they are snares that cannot but lead to perdition.

Given this fundamental frame, it is plain that various interpretations, such as the one about his putative progressivism, his focus, presumably, on the iniquity of feudal religious and secular authority (interpretations propounded at times by serious scholars, by such as Franko and Erëmin), are hollow and erroneous. If Vyšens'kyj does focus on the clergy, both Catholic and Orthodox, it is because their sin is most egregious to him—in the spiritual, not social or political sense—and they are thus closest to his line of fire. They are, however, only part of a totality—the world—that he categorically rejects and from which he chooses to absent himself. No one term captures this stance better than the epithet he applies so tellingly to his ultimate model, Christ—*mironenavistnik*, ‘world-hater’.<sup>12</sup>

This frame, too, fundamentally shapes and colors Vyšens'kyj's sense of, use of, and relation to authority. The question that one must ask first, however, is what are the hypostases of authority for Vyšens'kyj? And, still more basically, *why* authority? One answer to the latter is that authority is functional: it is both a central and a subtly ramified paradigm for examining Vyšens'kyj in his complex totality. As a paradigm attuned to both the content, the values of Vyšens'kyj's world view, as well as the strategies of its exposition, his writing of it, and beyond that his sense of himself and his

<sup>12</sup> Cf., for example, the following passage from his “Letter to the Bishops” (i.e., the initiators of the Union of Brest: the archbishop Мухажло Rohoza, the bishops Іпатіј Potіј, Kyrylo Terlec'kyj, Leontіј Pel'čyc'kyj, Dionysіј Zboryjs'kyj, and Hryhorіј Zaborovs'kyj) which is now Chapter 5 of the *Knyžka*:

А о прочих баснях прокурацких, в ваших книжках оголошенных, княжата бискупы, ни упражнятися на басни, вам отповѣдати не хочу. Скоро бо углянул есми у тое ваше писание, зараз познал есми мудрость ваших милостей рѣчицкую, а не божию, зараз познал есми учителя фантазии ваших милостей, свѣтолюбца, а не мироненавистника Христа, зараз познал есми мистра ваших милостей, славолубца, а не обещенного Христа, зараз познал есми ректора ваших милостей, саколубца, селолубца, злато- и сребролюбца, а не нишаго сирамаха, бездомника, не имущаго где главу подклонити, Христа. *Sočinenija*, p. 59.

role(s), authority is surely more resonant and productive than the notion of his “activity” (*dejatel'nost'*—even when justified as “literary-social activity,” as in Erëmin)<sup>13</sup> or his relation or putative typological closeness to “humanism.” As an idea, topos, and paradigm, authority resonates with other concepts crucial for an understanding of Vyšens'kyj: on the one hand tradition, with which it exists (not only in Vyšens'kyj but universally) in an alternatively symbiotic, alternatively antipodal relationship; and, on the other, authorship, *auctoritas*, which is the primal sense and import of the term for any writer, but which is especially germane and problematic for one like Vyšens'kyj whose conscious, ideological goals subordinate and deny the writer in favor of the roles of teacher, missionary, martyr, and prophet. Ultimately, within the force field of Vyšens'kyj's dualism, the idea of authority projects the more subtle graph of Vyšens'kyj's, the writer's, presence, or, more frequently, absence.

Authority, as a universal human phenomenon, can be defined in terms of various perspectives or disciplines, but the one I find most persuasive and functional for our purpose here is drawn on political theory and practice, which, as has been frequently demonstrated, is often intrinsically tied to the religious or specifically ecclesiastical sphere. Authority, first of all, must necessarily be distinguished from power, which is something much more basic and which need not confer or exhibit authority or legitimacy. Following Carl Friedrich we can speak of authority as reasoning elaboration, as the ability of adducing convincing reasons.<sup>14</sup> These reasons, to be sure, need not follow logic; as we see in Vyšens'kyj's case, to the logic of his arch-opponent, the Jesuit Piotr Skarga, he counterposes the authority of God, that is to say, of the Christ of the Gospels, and of primitive Christianity couched in an argument drawn on the dualist world view *and on experience*. To this we shall return. What is apparent at this point, however, is that authority must necessarily be articulated; it must be expressed in this or another fashion or modality. It is thus at its core a rhetoric. And nowhere is this more true than in the case at hand, for the historical and existential context, the essential issue of Vyšens'kyj's writings is polemic and persuasion, and the object of the enterprise is most momentous: it is nothing less than the battle of good and evil and the salvation of man's soul. As he puts it in the invocation to his *Knyžka*, “Ne o ličko ili o remenec idet, ale o čeluju kožu, se est o spasenie duš našix i da ne pogibnem i dočasne i večne ot Boga živa” (For at issue is not a piece of bast or a strap, but the whole skin, that

<sup>13</sup> *Sočinenija*, pp. 223–71. Cf. also H. Žytec'kyj, “Literaturnaja dejatel'nost' Ioanna Vyšenskogo,” *Kievskaja starina* 29 (1880): 494–532.

<sup>14</sup> See Carl J. Friedrich, *Tradition and Authority* (London, 1972), pp. 45–56.

is to say the salvation of our souls, and that we not perish now and forever away from the living God).

As articulation, authority is also in large measure the articulation of values. For Vyšens'kyj, apart from the content, i.e., the nature and range of the values he expresses, there is prominently the question of the context, the ever-shifting nature of values. And again this is quintessentially the case here, for what gives Vyšens'kyj's writing its dramatic energy and its extremist fervor is the sense he surely has that the ground is shifting, that it is slipping from under his—and Rus'ian—feet, that they are losing ground to an entirely different, western set of values. The matter may indeed be put more pointedly: Vyšens'kyj's context and the context of Rus' is precisely the clash of values of two societies, of Rus' and of the elite of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. More precisely still, it is a clash of values within Rus', between its traditional forces and those who have begun to share the values of and seek parity with the elite of the Commonwealth. Vyšens'kyj the writer reflects the interplay and historical fate of these forces: his ability to articulate traditional values gives him authority while the rapid decline of those values among the Ruthenian elite in the first decades of the seventeenth century—as epitomized by Peter Mohyla and the curriculum of the academy he founded—leads to the loss of authority, dramatically highlighted by Vyšens'kyj's absencing himself from Ukrainian society through his self-imposed exile to Mt. Athos, and, following this, his disappearance for more than two centuries from the literary consciousness of his compatriots. As I should like to argue, however, this disappearance was hardly as total as it may at first seem.

The actual question of authority in Vyšens'kyj, I submit, can be treated under four separate rubrics: as a textual, or putting the matter somewhat broadly, as a canonical model; as a moral, behavioral, or, ultimately, existential model; as spokespersonship; and, finally, as *auctoritas*. In various ways and in different times these tend to overlap; I differentiate them more for heuristic reasons and do not imply autonomy to any of the four; they certainly are not consciously separated by Vyšens'kyj. What is most telling, too, is that in the latter two rubrics, which pertain to the person or better still the persona of Vyšens'kyj, that is to say his roles as spokesman and author, authority tends to deconstruct itself, with denial replacing assertion.

One aspect of authority that I have not included in this scheme is the one that most readily comes to mind—the authority associated with position and privilege, with hierarchy and power. I exclude it not so much on theoretical grounds, by reason of the previously noted distinction between authority and power, but because this is precisely a non-issue or non-category for

Vyšens'kyj. For him, as we see throughout his writings and, emblematically, in the catalogue of the devil's snares in the first chapter of the *Knyžka* which begins with a list of the church hierarchy, the authority of bishops and cardinals, priests and popes is illusory and anti-Christian if it is seen as inhering in the office and not in the actions of the man. Vyšens'kyj's thought tends to be radically anti-hierarchical and anti-establishmentarian, as we see, for example, from this passage from the third chapter of his *Knyžka*:

Lěpše bo vam bez vladky i bez popov, ot diavola postavlenyx, do cerkvi xoditi i pravoslavie xraněti, neželi s vladkami i popami ne ot Boha zvannymi, u cerkvi byti i s toe sja ruhati i pravoslavie popirati. Ne popy bo nas spasut, ili vladkyi, ili mitropolity, ale věry naše tajstvo pravoslavnoe s xraneniem zapovědej Božix—toe nas spasti maet.

[Better for you to go to church and preserve Orthodoxy without bishops and priests, appointed by the devil, than to be in church with bishops and priests not called by God and thus mock it and trample Orthodoxy. For it is not the priests who will save us, or the bishops or metropolitans, but the Orthodox mystery of our faith and the keeping of God's commandments—this is what is to save us.]<sup>15</sup>

And while one can argue that the sharp point of the argument has as its subtext the historical reality after 1596—the implied object here, of course, is the Ruthenian clergy who accepted the union with Rome—the general thrust of Vyšens'kyj's thinking, plainly expressed in his texts, is distinctly anti-hierarchical. For him, the authority there is an absence.

Real authority, to turn to the first of my rubrics, is in Christ's message, and it is expressed only through a restricted set of sources or texts: the Gospels (by far the most frequently cited), the Acts of the Apostles (predominantly Paul), and the writings of the church fathers (cited less frequently, selectively, and, as we will see, at times imperfectly). These are the only texts that he cites and at times paraphrases, and in effect they constitute the only authority for him. Their validity and importance is inseparable from their message; they admit no ambiguity; in a sense they are taken not as texts requiring interpretation (although Vyšens'kyj, in fact, does interpret them) but as self-evident, revealed precepts. Consistency between and within them is assumed, but certainly not tested, most evidently because the model of behavior Vyšens'kyj sees them as projecting is so clear and monolithic for him. Apart from this content of their authority, they are buttressed by tradition and the collectivity that implies. In fact, for Vyšens'kyj

<sup>15</sup> *Sočinenija*, p. 24.

the authority of the church resides both in its implementation of Christ's precepts and in its collectivity. The truth of Orthodoxy—and it must be stressed that for Vyšens'kyj *istina*, 'truth', is both *the* cardinal concern and the single most explicit, discrete conceptual equivalent of moral authority—is thus the completion of Christ's initial law and mandate, its continuation in tradition (with an attendant powerful bias against innovation), and the enobling, authenticating feature of community-collectivity. Just as innovation (on any level, but particularly doctrinal) invariably leads to error and heresy, so also does separation from the collective, or, quite simply, the emphases on the role, the rights, the autonomy of the individual. This, again, is not merely a polemic device to be used against those bishops and others who had broken with Orthodoxy, with the *narod*; it is deeply embedded in the totality of his thoughts. And when the individual in question is Vyšens'kyj himself, Vyšens'kyj the writer, the injunction against individualism assumes a new complexity.

But what is the *content* of authority, the second rubric I mentioned? It is Christ's message in its simplest form, the message of the Gospels, with a particularly insistent focus on humility, poverty, and a general uncompromising rejection of the values, the snares of this world, which include among them the self. One of the citations Vyšens'kyj uses most insistently to convey this point is from Mark 8:34: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me"; or in the same vein in Luke 14:33: "thus any one of you who will not renounce everything he has cannot be a disciple of mine." As conceived by Vyšens'kyj, the true expression of these messages is the ascetic ideal. In fact, as becomes clear from innumerable passages, illustrations, and invocations, the authority of Christ and of his Church is incarnate in and rests on the monastic ideal, not abstractly, but literally, through the continuing, everyday existence, prayer, and self-denial of the monks. Through this feat—and Vyšens'kyj consistently uses the term *podvig* to describe their, and his, life—the faithful, the Rus' nation, are kept in existence. As he puts it repeatedly: "Ili ne vědaete, bědnici, esli by ne bylo istinnyx inokov i bohohodnikov mezi vami, už by davno, jakož Sodoma i Gomora župelom i ohnem v Ljadskoj zemli este opopilěli" (Do you not know, you wretches, that if these were no true monks or those who deny themselves for God among you you would have long ago perished by fire and brimstone in the Polish land).<sup>16</sup> Or again: "Věru mi imi, esli by vas inoki pred Bohom ne zastupali uže byste davno s vseju potěxoju svoeju mirskoju izčezli i pohibli" (Believe me, if there were not monks to intercede for you before God

<sup>16</sup> *Sočinenija*, p. 25.

you would have long ago, with all your worldly goods, died and perished).<sup>17</sup>

In effect the monk and the ascetic life become the pillar of moral authority and the fulcrum of moral action. Among others, two moments need to be noted. One is how radically Rus' and this ascetic version of Byzantine Christianity are identified. The other is the way in which the apologia and apotheosis of the monastic and ascetic model come to establish and aggrandize the authority of Vyšens'kyj—the ascetic and monk—himself. This leads to the third, personal and individual, aspect of authority in Vyšens'kyj, that of his role as spokesman for and to his nation. The issues that are subtended here are several, and each quite central by virtue of the light they shed on the Ukrainian cultural and political renaissance in the early seventeenth century, but here I will confine myself to just the salient points. In actual, real terms, Vyšens'kyj's contacts are primarily with the *bratstva*, the confraternities; his epistles are basically directed to them and, in some measure, at least initially, he is attuned to their structure; this has already been investigated and deserves further attention.<sup>18</sup> In the broader conceptual terms that are of primary concern for me here, it is more than apparent that *vis-à-vis* Rus', Vyšens'kyj sees himself as teacher, spiritual leader, and prophet. In numerous individual formulations and in the unmistakable tenor of his total oeuvre, Vyšens'kyj, consciously assuming the style of St. Paul, casts himself as a new missionary to a land that has become newly heathen. Six hundred years after Rus'-Ukraine had been Christianized—and this is not merely rhetoric, but a paradigm of Vyšens'kyj's thought—it requires a new apostle. His recent translator, Valerij Ševčuk, paints this picture in bold strokes:

From Athos [Vyšens'kyj] sends thundering epistles written in the style of Paul the Apostle, bids them be read at confraternity meetings, even spells out how they should be read, sends emissaries from himself (especially a certain protohegumen Sava), teaches, scolds, waxes wrathful, orders, offers moral advice, excoriates the social order, the gentry, the clergy—in a word senses his close tie to the *narod*, and also behaves like a leader, a helmsman [that, by the way, a neat Soviet aperçu—G.G.G.] of that *narod*. “The Lord is with us and I am always with you,” announces Vyšens'kyj, not altogether humbly. . . .<sup>19</sup>

The real picture is rather more complicated than this paradigm would suggest. The moral authority on which Vyšens'kyj draws comes from the Church, from Orthodoxy, but also and primarily, as we have seen, from its

<sup>17</sup> *Sočinenija*, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Ja. D. Isajevyč, *Bratstva ta jix rol' v rozvytku ukrajins'koji kul'tury XVI–XVIII st.* (Kiev, 1966).

<sup>19</sup> Valerij Ševčuk, “Ivan Vyšens'kyj ta joho poslannja,” Ivan Vyšens'kyj, *Tvory* (Kiev, 1986), p. 7.

monastic, ascetic life. This—*inočestvo*, the *inok*—is repeatedly portrayed as a form of suffering, and he within it is no less than a martyr. Characteristically, the entire complex, from the prime source, Christ (whom he calls *obeščeščennyj*, ‘humiliated’, and *niščyj siramaxa, bezdomnik*, ‘a wretched, houseless beggar’),<sup>20</sup> to the Orthodox faith (whose authority and validity stem precisely from the fact that it is weak and persecuted—i.e., by the Turks—while Rome is triumphant and hence heathen) and finally to Vyšens’kyj himself, is defined through negation and absence. In the persona of Vyšens’kyj as spokesman, however, this absence becomes even more pronounced and resonant for he draws his authority not only from his place in the spiritual order of things, his role as an ascetic monk, but from the physical place itself, the holy mountain of Athos to which he absents himself. Apart from the ideological there is, of course, the practical, functional reason for this: there he is one, on the holy mountain, among the chosen, the elite of the faith; in the Ukraine he would be in the hubbub of the real world, in the midst of political and religious strife, one among many. Vyšens’kyj’s choice of “splendid separation” (the phrase has particular resonance for those acquainted with twentieth-century Ukrainian political ideology), his choice of authority through isolation, was obviously fated to negate that authority: at first his countrymen and followers tried to dissuade him, urging him to return and engage himself, and when he did not budge, soon turned away and forgot him. Vyšens’kyj’s attempts to justify his course are a leitmotif in his later writings and deserve special attention. A particularly poignant moment is his last written work, the “Pozoryšče myslene” of 1615/1616, which is an elaborate, and so evocative for the modern critical temper, willful, and persistent misreading of a text: he attacks a Ukrainian translator (Havrylo Dorofijovyč) of one of the writings of Ioan Zlatoust, “On Priesthood,” for supposedly distorting the church father by having him condemn those who put their personal salvation “on top of the mountain” above their task of helping their “dying brethren.”<sup>21</sup> But Zlatoust did say this, and Vyšens’kyj’s furious effort to disprove this becomes a remarkable argument of absent authority. Still more poignant, however, is his rejection—in favor of transcendent authority—of the real bond that animated his actual authority as spokesman, that is, his bond with the *narod*. In his “Epistle to Domnikija” he says the following to those who request his return and remind him of his bond with the *narod*: “Sija slovesa istovyja basni sut’, niže otvėta dostojni: ni bo az s narodom zavėty

<sup>20</sup> *Sočinenija*, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> See especially the section entitled “Otvėt Skarzė na zazrost’ grekov,” in “Začapka mudraho latynnika z hlupym rusynom.”

zavěščal, niže otvěty tvoril, no niže naroda znaju, niže besědoju s nimi obščixsja i poznaniem zraka'' (These words are a veritable fairy tale and unworthy of an answer, for I made no pact with the *narod* and gave no answers and I know not the *narod*, I do not commune with it and do not know it by sight).<sup>22</sup> If one accepts the syllogism, which not only the Romantics did and the Soviets still do, but which, structurally, Vyšens'kyj also did, that "vox populi vox Dei," that the people are Christ, then this is Vyšens'kyj recapitulating Peter's denial of Christ.

The final issue of authority here (wherein we see Vyšens'kyj's symbolic atonement for the above denial) is that of Vyšens'kyj as writer, the question of his *auctoritas*. While this is clearly contiguous to his role as spokesman, it is nevertheless distinct and, in light of contemporary theoretical—deconstructive—concerns, the basic distinction of the spoken and the written word, immensely interesting. For Vyšens'kyj is quintessentially a writer in spite of himself, one whose ideology, values, and rhetoric are profoundly at odds with the psychological and elemental urge to write as such. This opposition can seemingly express itself only in paradoxes, the most obvious of which is that of language, for precisely the language he chooses—to communicate, to establish his authority as writer—is a bookish Ukrainian which he theoretically devalues in favor of a canonically dignified (but in effect not functional for his purpose) Church Slavonic. Characteristically, Church Slavonic is valuable and holy precisely because it is not known, not ordered, and lacking grammars; it is, however, conducive to the creation of saints and miracles. No less paradoxical is his understanding of the written work. "In theory," that is within his dualist, ascetic world view, there is no room for the writer as individual, as one who creates, who establishes new values and new constructs; his oft repeated ideal is nothing less than *molčanie*, 'silence'.<sup>23</sup> He is quite explicit, too, in his rejection of western literary models, of rhetoric and plays, of Aristotle and Plato, as he puts it. (And one must note that attempts to qualify this, as I myself did,<sup>24</sup> on the basis of a passage in his "Epistle to Domnikija," where he seems to tolerate these western models if they are made subordinate to traditional church schooling in liturgy and so on, seem now to be basically unpersuasive; this was only a brief tactical concession—in tone and conceptualization he remains militantly opposed.) No less eloquent is

<sup>22</sup> *Sočinenija*, p. 168.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, "Pozoryšče myslennoe," where, again citing Christ's "Kto xoščet vslěd meně iti, da otveržetsja sebě i vozmet krest svoj i poslěduet mi," he immediately adds: "sež' est', v molčanii um iměti, iskusitisja podabaet," *Sočinenija*, pp. 212–13.

<sup>24</sup> See Grabowicz, *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature*, p. 35.

his version of what the ideal Slavic Orthodox book should look like. He describes it in his “Začapka mudraho latynnyka z hlupym rusynom” (A Debate between a Wise Man of the Latin Rite and a Stupid Ruthenian): it—the book—is to be called a “Sbornik” and should contain all the knowledge and mysteries relevant for the Orthodox faith: the teachings of Christ, the apostles, and the church fathers, and all other church knowledge, arranged by day according to the liturgical calendar.<sup>25</sup> Even more telling is the metaphor with which he introduces it:

ohoroda blahočestiju, zastupajučy vsjakyj blahočestivij pomysl aby ne vyxodil od vnutr' pravoslavnye mysli na dvor za ohorodu samomnėnoju dumoju, hdě zver' eresi živet i slaboumnyx na svoju prelest' vosxiščaet i požiraet.

[it would be a fort for righteousness protecting every righteous thought so that it not leave by way of individual thinking the center of Orthodox thought and go beyond the perimeter where lives the beast of heresy who captures by his snares and devours those of feeble mind.]<sup>26</sup>

A more conservatively, or stereotypically medieval, articulation of the book is hard to envision, and, given the humanist perspective, the fort here is nothing so much as a prison.

And yet in practice Vyšens'kyj's writing is quite different; it is hardly imprisoned. While his rhetorical range is modest (if muscular) and his intellectual and imaginative horizon unquestionably narrow when compared to his Renaissance contemporaries, his assertion and development of an individual *voice* is unquestionable. If authority—or *auctoritas*—is primarily a discovery of the self, and in terms of the written word, of the voice, then Vyšens'kyj clearly succeeds, and in so doing becomes the first modern Ukrainian writer. The passion of his voice, its discursive subtlety, its wit and irony and bluster and even plaintive dissimulation, breaks through not only the distance of time and of dogmatic strictures but his own enervating absence of faith in his effort.

Vyšens'kyj, to conclude, can serve as a resonant and at times poignant synecdoche of the legacy of the Christianization of Rus'-Ukraine. He dramatizes the conflicts that ensued when after six hundred years that Byzantine legacy was finally forced to confront a more dynamic western one. Still more to the point, he dramatizes how after those six centuries, with its original inspiration dried out, that Orthodox culture, through Mohyla and his achievements, was obliged to turn to its rival and confront him on his ground.

<sup>25</sup> *Sočinenija*, p. 177.

<sup>26</sup> *Sočinenija*, p. 177.

In this process, however, Vyšens'kyj was not a player, but an obstacle, and a formidable one at that. It was he who not only propounded irreconcilable struggle against all "latin" innovations, "wisdoms," "philosophies," and so on, but also total separation from this western—and, in reality, surrounding—world. No one, perhaps, was more sensitive to all the perilous implications of this separation than Ivan Franko. Although Vyšens'kyj attracted him with his spiritual power and as model of a prophet, Franko also saw

how dangerous and morally injurious was this program of separatism, which immediately put the Ruthenians outside the pale of civic life and civil competition in the area of common interests, which taught them to conceal their real thoughts, to say and do one thing and think another, whereby in time the mask became part of the face, so that a person no longer knew what is authentic and true in him and what is masked, which meant that in the end true, sincere thoughts and feelings died away, and character was demoralized. The results of this process are all too obvious: Rus' lost faith in itself, it lost the sense of its own dignity and that natural, live solidarity which holds together every living society and constantly renews it, doubling its strengths; Rus' became accustomed always to look to others, to beg, to curry someone's favor, to bow and scrape without need, to measure life and social matter with the short rod of personal utilitarianism. Everything in it that was more vital, imbued with spirit and desire for a broader civic life abandoned it, without the least feelings of guilt, for it seemed that it was abandoning a *sect*, not a *society*. The separatism that was to have been the salvation of Rus' damaged it morally and materially, and perhaps could have killed it entirely if its full implementation would have been possible. But such an implementation was not possible. In a living social organism one cannot cut off, isolate one part from the others so that no exchange of vital fluids is possible. Despite its separatism Rus' received from Poland both schools and scholarly books, reading material and literary models, and it reworked them in its own fashion. This was its salvation, in fact, it was the sign of its vitality and a guarantee of its further development.<sup>27</sup>

The larger picture of the history of Ukrainian literature is also illuminated by the case of Vyšens'kyj. On the one hand, retrospectively, he is a man clearly of the Middle Ages who paradoxically ushers in modern Ukrainian literature and the soon to become rich and interesting Ukrainian Baroque; in so doing, he sheds light on that puzzling and troubling period of almost three hundred years, between the end of the thirteenth and the end of the sixteenth century, when there was a virtual silence in Ukrainian literature. We may surmise that that silence, as Vyšens'kyj's case may suggest, resulted not from a *passive* but from an *active* distrust of writing, of the individual leap it entails, precisely in the spirit of the then dominant dualist tenets. On the other hand, looking forward into Ukrainian literary history,

<sup>27</sup> Ivan Franko, "Ivan Vyšens'kyj i joho tvory," *Zibrannja tvoriv u p'jatsdesjaty tomach* (Kiev, 1981), vol. 30, p. 127.

Vyšens'kyj points to a deep recurring structure in Ukrainian culture and literature. This two hundred and fifty-year-long absence from Ukrainian literature, between the time he wrote his last work and when he was first published in 1865, may not be as total as it at first appears. For in a way his spirit of denying the visible, seemingly all-powerful world for the sake of a higher, transcendent reality was fated to be reborn, with different accents, in the two following centuries—in each case in the dominant Ukrainian writer of his time. In the eighteenth century it was the mystic poet and peripatetic philosopher Hryhorij Skovoroda, whose luminous sense of inner reality is summarized in his own words as “the world pursued me, but did not capture me”; and in the nineteenth century it was the outstanding Romantic poet Taras Ševčenko, whose vision of a reborn Ukraine, of redeemed mankind, and of a holy *communitas* came to have such a profound impact on Ukrainian cultural and political life.

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