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Author(s): Myroslav Shkandrij

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*Myroslav Shkandrij*

## **A Change of Heart: Iurii Klen's "Adventures of the Archangel Raphael"**

ABSTRACT: Iurii Klen, one of the leading Ukrainian writers of the thirties and forties, produced perhaps his best short story "Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaïla" [Adventures of the Archangel Raphael, 1948] in the last year of his life. This article is an analysis in the light of a discourse within modernism concerning tradition, and argues that it is a key to understanding the writer's evolution. Although Klen rejected the militant Bolshevik avant-garde, during his years in Germany he was seduced for a time by fascist avant-garde attitudes and adapted them to a nationalist modernism before breaking with this current in the forties. Klen's story demonstrates a rejection of the radical social and cultural experimentation of Bolshevism and Stalin's rule. In its respect for the human values of the European heritage, it can also be read as a rejection of Nazism.

The term "modernism" has been used to describe not only Ukrainian writing that flourished in the first three decades of the twentieth-century as a reaction to nineteenth-century realism and naturalism, but also that of the post-Second World War emigration. However, is it possible to also speak of an interwar modernism? Were the nationalist writers, who in the twenties and thirties were also orientated towards "Europe"—albeit increasingly towards authoritarian or fascist regimes—also influenced by modernism?

In Ukrainian literature, this interwar generation is most commonly—but not, of course, exclusively—associated with the Prague school and the journal *Vistnyk* [Herald, 1933–1941], whose writings extolled heroism, cultivated myths and patriotism, and expressed fascination with what it viewed as the golden ages of Kyivan Rus' and the Cossack state of the early modern period. It is rarely emphasized that in many cases this writing also expressed a fierce anti-traditionalism. Its strategy focused only on certain periods and events from the past, which it referenced in order to criticize and in the hope of transforming the present. Its leading essayist and critic Dmytro Dontsov propounded the necessity of violence and compulsion in the name of building a nation-state. He demanded a break from the mainstream humanist tradition, which, he argued, was saturated with sentimentality, sweetness, and pity, and invoked Friedrich Nietzsche and Georges Sorel in urging that the new literature be infused with an irrational yearning, and the "barbaric" philosophy of myth and legend.<sup>1</sup> This new literature was to be dynamic, full of conflict and change; it was to portray the individual in revolt against established norms and peace-loving ideals. The

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<sup>1</sup> Dmytro Dontsov, *Natsionalizm* (L'viv: Nove zhyttia, 1926) 127.

national idea, he argued, was revolutionary.<sup>2</sup> In the twenties, Dontsov pointed to futurism, expressionism, and romanticism as examples to emulate.<sup>3</sup> Like the Italian futurists, he urged glorifying struggle, sport, and war. Writers should not be afraid to embrace ecstatic passion, and should constantly have before their eyes an “abstract” ideal.<sup>4</sup> Because Dontsov and other *Vistnyk* writers shifted their ground in later years and began attacking “modernism,” their debt to various aspects of this movement has gone unrecognized. Dontsov does not mention this term in his first two books *Pidstavy nashoi polityky* [The Foundations of Our Politics, 1921] and *Natsionalizm* [Nationalism, 1926] but, as is clear from the above, he expressed admiration for futurism and borrowed heavily from its ideas. The strictures he articulated in the twenties influenced much interwar literature, especially Ulas Samchuk’s *Mesnyky* [Avengers, 1932], *Vidnaidenyi rai* [Rediscovered Paradise, 1936] and *Kulak* [The Kulak, 1937]; Iurii Kosach’s *Trynadtsiata chota: Opovidannia* [The Thirteenth Company: Stories, 1937]; Vasyl’ Pachovs’kyi’s *Zoloti vorota: Mistychnyi epos v 3-okh chastiakh* [Golden Gates: A Mystical Epic in 3 Parts, 1937, complete text in 1985]. A reassessment of this literature is already occurring. Iryna Rusnak, for example, has described the above-mentioned works by Samchuk as heavily influenced by modernism and has proposed that his manner be described as “modernized realism.”<sup>5</sup>

The paradigms of modernist aesthetics can be linked to the emergence of both left- and right-wing movements. Both were influenced by Nietzsche and Sorel; both glorified rupture and renewal; and both made the connection between violence and creativity. When Mark Antliff wrote that “modern art was the mythic harbinger of a regenerative revolution that would overthrow existing governmental institutions, inaugurate an anti-capitalist new order, and awaken the creative and artistic potential of the fascist ‘new man’,” he could just as easily have been describing the militant Bolshevik current in literature.<sup>6</sup> In each case the enemy of the “new society” was identified as the rationalist Enlightenment, liberal parliamentarianism, and Western democracy—all of which were seen as corrupt, hypocritical, and ineffectual. In both cases the revolutionary, palingenetic myth (the idea of regeneration through violence) was set against “bourgeois” ideology.

Not all interwar literature fits the requirements laid down by Dontsov in the twenties. By the thirties, the five leading nationalist poets—Ievhen Malaniuk,

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<sup>2</sup> Dontsov 101.

<sup>3</sup> Dontsov 126–127.

<sup>4</sup> Dontsov 160.

<sup>5</sup> Iryna Rusnak, “Zhyvyi dukh Ulasa Samchuka,” in *Kulak, Mesnyky, Vidnaidenyi rai*, by Ulas Samchuk (Drohobych: Vidrozhennia, 2009) 25, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909–1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 2.

Oleh Ol'zhych, Leonid Mosendz, Olena Teliha, and Iurii Klen—each developed their own style. Each also had a different, often complicated, relationship with Dontsov, who edited *Vistnyk* from 1933 to 1939, and who had also previously been the editor of *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* [The Literary-Scientific Herald, 1922–1933]. Klen's evolution as a literary figure began in the twenties with his adherence to Mykola Zerov's neoclassicism, which he embraced as a form of aestheticism. He then aligned himself with the ideals of *Vistnyk* in the thirties, during which time he celebrated Faustian voluntarism and urged the implantation of a new, dynamic spirit into the Ukrainian body as a kind of unavoidable radical surgery. Finally, at the end of his life—certainly by 1946 and 1947, but probably already in 1943, when he began writing his epic poem *Popil imperii* [Ashes of Empire]—he decisively rejected the *Vistnyk* group and returned to his earlier neoclassicism. In this final stage, Europe once again figured as the wisdom of ages and provided the distance required for a critique of contemporary political engagements. In recent critical literature an attempt has been made to completely identify Klen's writings with a Dontsovian inspiration.<sup>7</sup> Dontsov's views, as described in the above strictures, are clearly evident in Klen's work of the thirties, even though most poems maintain a high degree of neoclassicist restraint and a distance from the heat of contemporary events. However, it is also clear that at the end of the war Klen reassessed his collaboration with Dontsov, and in the postwar period joined MUR (Mystets'kyi Ukrain's'kyi Rukh) [The Artistic Ukrainian Movement], the organization that strongly criticized *Vistnyk's* entire tone and philosophical underpinning. Klen's change of heart is inscribed into his "Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaila" [Adventures of the Archangel Raphael, 1948].

Iurii Klen (1891–1947) was born into a family of German origin. His real name was Osval'd Burghardt. After spending some time studying in Germany, he finished Kyiv University in 1921. He had begun writing in Russian under the influence of the symbolists. When he joined the neoclassicists he began translating European classics into Ukrainian. Arrested by the Bolsheviks in 1921, he was released as a result of the intervention of the writer Vladimir Korolenko. This experience, during which he witnessed the execution of non-communists (who were shot in the prison corridor and dragged out in pairs), left an indelible mark and was recorded in one of his best poems, "Prokliati roky" [Cursed Years, 1937]. When in the early thirties widespread arrests began to take Klen's closest friends, including the great lyricist and fellow-neoclassicist Maksym Ryl'skyi, he immigrated to Germany, a privilege that he was allowed as an "ethnic

<sup>7</sup> See Oleh Bahan, "Iurii Klen: Neoklasyk chy neoromantyk?" and Petro Ivanushyn, "Natsionalistychnyi typ literaturnoi hermenevtyky (Na bazi poemy Iu. Klenu "Prokliati roky")," in *Tvorchist' Iurii Klenu v konteksti ukrains'koho neoklasytysizmu ta visnykivs'koho neoromantysizmu: Zbirnyk naukovykh prats'*, edited by Les' Kravchenko (Drohobych: Vidrodzhennia, 2004).

German.” Although he had made his debut as a Ukrainian poet in 1925 (all his previous work had been in Russian or German), it was in Germany that he secured his reputation as a Ukrainian writer. During the thirties he contributed regularly to *Vistnyk*, which was published in L'viv, then part of the Polish state. Mobilized into the German army in 1939, Klen served as a translator on the eastern front. He was demobilized in January 1941, taught in Germany and Prague, and then edited the journal *Litavry* [Kettle-drums] in Austria. “Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaila,” along with several other stories, was written shortly before his death in 1947.

A couple of essays, written in the same year as the story, provide a way of understanding the text. The first is called “Mid' zvenishchaia” [Sounding Brass].<sup>8</sup> The human being, according to Klen, has been placed on earth by God and given the capacity and freedom to create new worlds, but also the ability to destroy the existing one. The main challenge facing humanity is spiritual: without love, life is meaningless and hollow—the noise of “sounding brass.” The phrase is taken from the Bible: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13). Klen quotes Christ: what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his own soul? His concern is that humanity has lost all interest in love and personal salvation. The Nazi philosophy, he states, was built precisely on the absence of all love—on egoism and hatred. Hitler was driven by the idea that the more foreigners that could be destroyed, the more space would be left for Germans. The German leader viewed moral principles as “weakness and treachery.”<sup>9</sup> The second essay is entitled “Bii mozhe pochatsysia” [The Battle May Begin].<sup>10</sup> It is a contribution to the great postwar émigré debate concerning the nature and direction of Ukrainian literature. The writer feels that, having unlocked the secrets of the atom, “the human being now interferes in the world-making process, and has turned from a magical, Faustian individual into a demiurge.” Unfortunately, the dangerous technical possibilities at humanity’s disposal have not been accompanied by a corresponding growth in self-awareness, which can best be achieved by looking deeply into the long tradition provided by literature and art. Klen accordingly directs Ukrainians to study the European and Western tradition in all its fullness.<sup>11</sup>

In the eponymous story, the Archangel Raphael takes the body of a human being. He is impressed by the fact that human genius is capable of remarkable

<sup>8</sup> Iurii Klen, “Mid' zvenishchaia,” in *Tvory* (Toronto: Fundatsiia imeny Iurii Klena, 1957) 3: 214–217.

<sup>9</sup> Klen, “Mid' zvenishchaia,” 217.

<sup>10</sup> Iurii Klen, “Bii mozhe pochatsysia,” *Ukrains'kyi samostiinyk* 27 September 1953: 3; 4 October 1953: 3; 11 October 1953: 4–5.

<sup>11</sup> Klen, “Bii mozhe pochatsysia,” *Ukrains'kyi samostiinyk* 11 October 1953: 4–5.

achievements, such as unlocking the structure of the atom, penetrating to an understanding of primary forms, and reworking these into something entirely new. But the angel recognizes that in emotional terms humans remain selfish and naive. They have been presented with a crucial, hitherto undreamed-of capacity for transforming the world, because once the alchemy of recreating and recombining atoms into new form-structures has been mastered, matter itself can be reshaped. However, this brilliant achievement has also brought with it a terrible destructive power. The atomic bomb, which had shortly before been detonated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the horrors of the Second World War were no doubt on the author's mind. The narrator suggests that human beings need to examine anew the meaning and purpose of their existence on Earth.

A supreme power and leading cultural role belongs to the artist-creators. They are described in the following conversation between the two archangels, Raphael and Michael:

If a human being, walking alongside the archangels, had been gifted with their sight, their ability to see things that were invisible to the ordinary eye, this human being would have been astonished to see on the surfaces of large towns, alongside familiar towers, churches and spires, buildings that had never stood there and whose presence completely changed the external appearance and living memory of the town. These buildings differed from the others because of a kind of transparency, which seemed to allow light to pass through them, as though they were built of glass or formed from thick fog that gave off reflections with a phosphorescent glow.

These buildings were never built, but had been created in the fantasy of architects, who wanted to beautify the town with them. They were unrealized projects, materializations of powerful, brilliant ideas that had not been translated into stone and steel. Alongside buildings that could be touched as real objects, these seemed to be fantastic structures made out of patterns and dreams. The gaze of the archangels rested longer on these than on any others. As they were moving along the bare steppe, an entire city of such transparent-patterned buildings suddenly grew up around them, a never-achieved plan of some builder, worked out to the smallest details.

"Look," said Michael, "those wonderful chimeras bear witness to the eternal human striving. Even what has not been created by hand, but only by human imagination, exists like the real, the immovable, and acts as a prophecy to God concerning their yearnings, aspirations, and drive for the unattainable..."<sup>12</sup>

Klen encourages the reader to think in terms of the long perspective of human history, especially as it is available to us through the Greco-Roman classics and the Judeo-Christian tradition. The great writers of the past enable us to see beyond the chaos and disillusionment of the present day, and to establish a framework for interpreting human history. They provide something akin to the Archangel Raphael's steady, celestial perspective. This European experience

<sup>12</sup> Klen, "Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaila," in *Tvory* 3: 64.

is not a form of mystical escapism, not a search for the Holy Grail, but a promise of understanding based on the collective experience of the best minds. The writer here reaffirms his faith in the importance of this past for an awareness of present and future developments, and he attempts to articulate these beliefs in his fiction. However, the passage can also be read as a genuflection to the Dontsovian precept that the “best people” have to lead by providing visions of a future that is as yet invisible to ordinary individuals. The never-before seen structures made out of patterns and dreams recall the imperative to create the radically new, not by imitating nature, but by bending the material world to the designer’s will. This is precisely what Dontsov, writing in 1926, admired about futurism: it gave free reign to the creative ego.<sup>13</sup> In this same passage Dontsov dismisses vulgar, provincial taste (his term is “Provencale”) by suggesting that it cannot see into the future but can only appreciate the already visible, repeated forms that conform to the already established laws of “mellifluousness.”

Klen’s views have roots in the Christian literature of the Middle Ages. The Archangel Michael describes people in this way: “unfinished, unperfected, ever changing, sometimes lifted by impulse to inaccessible heights, sometimes, dragged into the abyss by the whirlpool of the Fall, they speed in the stream of a ceaseless becoming.”<sup>14</sup> However, their greatness lies in the fact that they continually strive for self-perfection. “Is it not strange,” says the Archangel Raphael, “that out of all the creatures made by the Lord, it is given only to human beings to die, that only human beings are defined by the struggle for change, for self-perfection, the desire to create their lives out of falls and flights, and to transfer from one generation to another the aspiration for even higher flight, for even greater falls?”<sup>15</sup> There are therefore two paths available to humanity, says Michael, to “become the universe’s shame or to justify its secret hopes.”<sup>16</sup> When Raphael takes the bodily form of the Soviet citizen Vertoprakh, he sacrifices some of his omniscient perspective in order to understand the time-bound human world. He experiences all the wretched details of earthly existence, its physical pains and biological impulses, its vulgarity and egoism, and the sordid personal and political ambitions that lead to the shameful manipulation of others. Paradoxically, his attempts to do good lead in almost all cases to evil. However, he does succeed in bringing love into the world, and this selfless feeling redeems his time on earth; it is his greatest triumph and his legacy.

The brutishness that Klen describes is a consequence of humanity’s loss of the higher perspective once provided by religion, the Christian worldview, and the tradition of European humanism. His story is built on a Christian framework, which includes the Last Judgement, heaven and earth, and the promise of

<sup>13</sup> Dontsov, *Natsionalizm* 127.

<sup>14</sup> Klen, “Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaila,” in *Tvory* 3: 59.

<sup>15</sup> Klen, “Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaila,” in *Tvory* 3: 61.

<sup>16</sup> Klen, “Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaila,” in *Tvory* 3: 62.

salvation in the next world. Life on earth, when governed by this higher perspective, holds out the promise of decency, generosity, and mutual respect. Only these will provide the preconditions for the observation of legal and social forms. The narrator, who seems to speak for the author, wishes to drive lust and passions into a place where they can be controlled and tamed, in much the same way that Raphael tames the dissolute, polluted, and unruly body of Vertoprakh. On the other hand, the Soviet citizens that the Archangel meets care nothing for faith, civilization, or spiritual values. They are ruled by material interests and carnal passions, and their behaviour is only kept in check by fear of political authorities. Like Raphael, the narrator stands above this maelstrom of personal and political passions; he views the world through the lens of eternity, or at least through the distancing perspective that European literature and spiritual faith provide.

Klen draws on medieval Christian anthropology, which saw human nature as located somewhere between the angelic and the bestial. Saint Augustine used the angel-beast contrast to describe the human being; Pascal and many later Christian writers also took it up. According to this view, human beings are pulled between their desire to rise up toward ever-greater perfection and the animal-like temptation to surrender to their lower instincts. Such a contradictory nature defines the Raphael-Vertoprakh duality. The existence of a heaven, to which Raphael is eventually recalled, suggests the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. The dual perspective simultaneously incorporates the ugly and confusing details of daily life and the supreme metanarrative of the Fall and the Resurrection. The tragedy of the human condition, the reader is made to feel, lies in the fact that it has lost sight of this metanarrative. Michael says:

Timelessness exists only for us. The past, the present and the future are always before our eyes and we do not differentiate between them. People, captured by the stream of becoming, pass everything through the aperture of the present; they soar between the two non-existences. They see only a tri-dimensional space, being tri-dimensional themselves.<sup>17</sup>

At another level the story is an amusing socio-political satire. It exposes the general slovenliness of Soviet life, and reveals the state's paranoid fear of its own citizenry, which leads it to suspect conspiracy in even the most harmless events. The story also contains hints of the *Vistnyk* philosophy. For example, Raphael makes a decision to enter Vertoprakh's body with surprising suddenness: "he said to himself that if he considered the consequences of his actions too long he would never dare perform the deed, because reflection paralyzes action and makes life questionable."<sup>18</sup> Action, not reflection, was the *Vistnyk* motto; life had to be changed. There is, however, also a suggestion of

<sup>17</sup> Klen, "Pryhody Arkhanelhela Rafaila," in *Tvory* 3: 60.

<sup>18</sup> Klen, "Pryhody Arkhanelhela Rafaila," in *Tvory* 3: 66.

the limitations attached to such voluntarism. After all, Raphael's good intentions lead to much suffering and disaster, and he cannot alter the underlying laws of causality to which all life is subordinated. Still, in the long run, the fact that he changes the life of one individual and leaves a legacy of love offers hope that eventually human nature and society may be improved.

A writer steeped in the literature of the past, Klen accepted the achievement of former civilizations. Culture was for him a completed achievement as much as a task for the future. He therefore tended to focus on the constant and unchanging, the search for lessons to be learned from antiquity and recurring cultural forms, and he was suspicious of claims that a human and spiritual metamorphosis could be brought about in response to the pressures of history and new ideas. He saw destiny not as an apocalyptic and transforming moment, but as a slow process of gaining self-awareness, one that involved understanding the past, the road already travelled. Only then, he felt, would humanity become aware of its own nature and change its behaviour.

Klen's story demonstrates a rejection of the radical social and cultural experimentation of Bolshevism and Stalin's rule. In its respect for the human values of the European heritage, it can also be read as a rejection of Nazism. However, as Antliff and recent issue of the journal *Modernism/Modernity* have demonstrated, radical nationalist and fascist views had their attractions both for modernists and traditionalists. While living in Germany, Klen appears to have been seduced by the style and rhetoric of fascist politics. It is an aspect of his life that is not well known and rarely discussed. The view of Klen as a European humanist and a defender of universal values is contradicted by Hordii Iavir, the pseudonym under which he wrote reports from Germany for *Vistnyk*. They begin with a record of his impressions when listening to Hitler's pre-election speeches in 1932–1933 and the powerful effect these had on the population. He concludes: "Those who read abroad about the 'brutality of nationalists,' the 'mocking of the people,' the 'repression of Jews,' are incapable of imagining the true picture of German reality."<sup>19</sup> He filed essays on Stephan Georg as an aristocrat of the spirit and on Oswald Spengler's cult of the will. He defended the politics of Germany, Italy, and Japan as the only countries capable of standing up to Bolshevism by using ruthless, "Bolshevik" methods. In this last article he says: "The Faustian tension and irrepressible yearning, as the spiritual force of the German individual, has entered into the works of its wonderful art. The forces of the medieval individual are at work even today. The liberal individual with his rationalism is foreign to us. The slogan "freedom, equality, and fraternity" are empty and groundless. For us the freedom of the separate individual rests on the

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<sup>19</sup> Hordii Iavir [Iurii Klen], "Z nimets'kykh vrazhin' (Reportazh z Nimechchyny)," *Vistnyk* 11 (1933): 817.

link to family, ethnoscience [rodomy], people."<sup>20</sup> The annexation of Austria in 1938 is greeted by the author as a new dawn for Europe and perhaps the world.<sup>21</sup> Two articles that Klen signed under his real name Osval'd Burghardt deal with the brutalities of Bolshevism, including the use of torture and concentration camps. They link Jews very directly to the worst atrocities of the regime. "Tsarstvo satany" [Satan's Empire] is an account of the reports given by five hundred "ethnic Germans," most of whom spoke only Ukrainian or Russian, who had been expelled from the Soviet Union. When asked what percentage of the interrogators were Jews, "most replied ninety percent."<sup>22</sup> The article "Bol'shevyts'ka spadshchyna" [The Bolshevik Legacy] makes the point that the "army of commissars, lesser commissars and their lackeys was in large degree recruited from this race [the Jews]."<sup>23</sup> It goes on to say that Jews have "monopolized" the leading positions in the state, while talented Ukrainians have been pushed aside.<sup>24</sup>

These articles make it clear that Klen not only appropriated the vogue for elitism, voluntarism, and the cult of ancient traditions, but also welcomed the anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and anti-Semitic policies of Nazi Germany. This makes an explanation of his politics as driven by conjunctural factors (in other words, motivated by anti-Bolshevism) much less convincing. Particularly surprising is his glorification of German expansionism, which, he must have known, held fatal consequences for the rest of Europe, including Ukraine. When, on the eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Samchuk met a uniformed Klen in a Berlin café, the latter spoke of Germany taking the wrong course: "conquest instead of liberation."<sup>25</sup> When asked whether Ukrainians could hope for anything, he replied that he was doubtful: "As you can see, this is a call for space, a delayed conquistadorism... Of course, we will get something... But never what we need."<sup>26</sup> Samchuk detected an ambiguity in Klen's attitude. His comment on this meeting was that Klen's "German blood and Ukrainian spirit, or rather heart, are now in great contradiction. He suffers because things have worked out this way, but he has no answer for why they did so."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Hordii Iavir [Iurii Klen], "Amaliekytiany, amorytiany i gibeonity (Dopys z Nimechchyny)," *Vistnyk* 12 (1937): 878.

<sup>21</sup> Hordii Iavir [Iurii Klen], "12 bereznia (Dopys z Nimechchyny)," *Vistnyk* 4 (1938): 289.

<sup>22</sup> Osval'd Burhardt [Iurii Klen], "Tsarstvo Satany," *Vistnyk* 4 (1938): 304.

<sup>23</sup> Osval'd Burhardt [Iurii Klen], "Bol'shevyts'ka spadshchyna," *Vistnyk* 2 (1939): 94.

<sup>24</sup> Burhardt [Klen], "Bol'shevyts'ka spadshchyna," 96.

<sup>25</sup> Ulas Samchuk, *Na bilomu koni: Spomyny i vrazhennia*, 3 ed. (Winnipeg: Volyn', 1980) 19 [The original is not paginated—M.S.].

<sup>26</sup> Samchuk 19 [The original is not paginated—M.S.].

<sup>27</sup> Samchuk 19.

Whatever the real case, Klen's support of Germany and his poetic glorification of conquest and conquerors—so evident in his collection of poetry *Karavely* [Caravels], published in Prague in 1944—were soon disabused. Some insights into his life as a soldier-translator on the eastern front have been published. They reveal his attempts to deal humanely with people and to mitigate the cruelty of some German officers. It appears that he was removed from the front partly because of this, and also because he contracted pleurisy. In 1943 he began writing his great tragic epic *Popil imperii* [Ashes of Empire] which remained unfinished at the time of his death and was only published in 1957. When he began this work, his mood was one of retreat from authoritarianism and dreams of conquest. At this time he saw himself in the figure of Archimedes, who in Syracuse made geometrical drawings in the sand, oblivious to events around him. When he warned a drunken Roman soldier not to touch these drawings, he was cut down by the latter, who had no understanding of their worth.<sup>28</sup> Klen's epic poem deals with the long suffering of Ukrainians throughout history, but it also describes the murder of Jews during the war. This makes him one of few contemporary writers who attempted to describe both the cruelties of Stalin and Hitler, the Gulag and the Holocaust.

With these facts in mind, Klen's participation in MUR in 1946–1947 and his postwar works can be seen as a rejection of the *Vistnyk* period. In the immediate postwar years MUR conducted a fierce polemic with Dontsov and his supporters. While Dontsov continued to castigate democracy, liberalism, and parliamentarism, Iurii Sherekh, MUR's leading critic, argued that contemporary Ukrainian literature was developing, as it had always done, within the European tradition of human values.<sup>29</sup> MUR publications, such as the flagship journal *Arka* (1947–1948) examined Ukrainian literature against the background of European developments. Sherekh and Iurii Kosach excoriated Dontsov and the *Vistnyk*ites for breaking with humanism, and in doing so severing Ukrainian literature from its own mainstream and from world literature. Dontsov, in their minds, was not a “traditionalist” at all, in spite of his attempts to appropriate this epithet. They viewed him as the architect of a radical departure from the mainstream.<sup>30</sup> Several critics responded to these charges. Throughout 1947–1948 every issue of *Orlyk*—and other journals sympathetic to the *Visnyk*ites—carried criticisms of MUR. It is noteworthy that in these responses Klen is always identified as a member of MUR and is no longer counted as a member of the *Vistnyk* camp or a supporter of Dontsov.

<sup>28</sup> Iurii Klen, “Pro henezu poemy ‘Popil imperii,’” in *Tvory* 2: 332.

<sup>29</sup> Iurii Sherekh [Shevel'ov], “V oboroni velykykh (Polemika bez osib),” *MUR. Mystets'kyi ukrains'kyi rukh: Zbirnyk III* (Regensburg: Ukrains'ke slovo, 1947) 18.

<sup>30</sup> Iurii Kosach, “Vil'na ukrains'ka literatura,” *MUR. Mystets'kyi ukrains'kyi rukh: Zbirnyk II* (Munich-Karlsfeld: Prometei, 1946) 48–49.

Our best indication of Klen's attitude at this time can be found in his "Pryhody Arkhanhela Rafaila." It suggests a return on the part of the author to a millennial perspective, a disappointment with efforts to rapidly transform humanity, and some degree of contrition concerning his own role in the world's iniquity. The story can be read, like Dostoevsky's *Idiot*, as the portrayal of a character who attempts to live a good life in circumstances that inevitably entangle him and bring about disastrous consequences. Raphael, like the Prince in Dostoevsky's novel, takes on Christ's role of suffering. Clearly autobiographical, the story captures the author's feelings of disorientation at the time.

Klen began by supporting the ideals of Christian humanism and of cultural education based on a knowledge of classical authors. He moved in the thirties and early forties to extolling heroic myths of conquest in line with Dontsov's desires, and ended by reaffirming an outlook of Christian tolerance and classical restraint. As a German, who had first been educated in Russian and Western schools and had later assumed a Ukrainian identity, Klen presents a fascinating case-study in identity politics. He was first a Russian poet, then a translator into Ukrainian and from Ukrainian into German and Russian. For example, he translated Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Tempest* into Ukrainian. After he immigrated to Germany, his name was removed from the translated text and there is little information on the stage history of these texts.<sup>31</sup> Throughout his life Klen acted as an interpreter between cultures and identities. Much of his literary career was devoted to translating great literature into Ukrainian, and to explaining Ukraine's cultural identity to German and Russian readers. One constant remained his Lutheran Christianity (he always remained a member of this church). Another was his reverence for European classics—especially Stefan Georg, Rainer Maria Rilke, Goethe, and Russian writers of the Silver Age—although these were for a while combined with a political enthusiasm for German expansionism, and still more oddly with an anti-imperialism that recognized Ukraine's cultural potential and its drive for independence.

His liminal status is also evident in the way he straddles the divide between a radical, "engaged" nationalism and a cerebral, disengaged aestheticism. Although Klen vehemently rejected the militant Bolshevik avant-garde, during his years in Germany he appears for a while to have been seduced by fascist rhetoric and the radical nationalism of Dontsov's *Vistnyk*, before finally breaking with this current in the forties. The puzzles of the writer's evolution are reflected in his biography, identity choices, and literary works.

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<sup>31</sup> Liudmyla Siryk, "Iurii Klen—poet i perekladach," in *Tvorchist' Iurii Klena v konteksti ukrains'koho neoklasytsyzmu ta visnykivs'koho neoromantyzmu: Zbirnyk naukovykh prats'*, edited by Les' Kravchenko (Drohobych: Vidrozhennia, 2004) 321.