

With the infectious enthusiasm of unchained patriots and ideological zealots, Ukrainian writers in the 1920s were creating competing organizations for literary activity and devising competing strategies for what Soviet Ukrainian literature should be. The new age and new ideology required a new literature. In the excitement of the moment, both artistic and political extremists were losing sight of the aesthetic and intellectual dignity of literature in favour of its social and ideological function. Eventually this tension produced a public debate on the state of Ukrainian literature.

The catalyst and chief figure in this debate was Mykola Khvylovy, a devoted communist who took issue with the notion that literature and culture should appeal to and serve the interests of the lowest common denominator of the Ukrainian proletariat. Ukrainian literature, argued Khvylovy, should aspire to the highest level, it should build on the traditions of European civilization. This "Olympian" view was promulgated and developed in three series of pamphlets, which Khvylovy published in 1925–1926. In the last series, he introduces the further idea, that Ukrainian literature and culture, in order to achieve all that it can, must orient itself directly on European models and in no case on Russian literature and culture. This radical suggestion produced the greatest difficulties for Khvylovy and clearly signalled the essentially political nature of the debate.

The aesthetic and political ideas advocated by Khvylovy found institutional substance in the literary organizations that he formed with his supporters, specifically, the *Vilna akademiia proletars'koi literatury* (Free Academy of Proletarian Literature) or VAPLITE. Khvylovy's contest with the spokesmen of popular and popularizing literature and with the government's defenders of ideological purity was not only a battle of ideas, but a war among competing institutions, which all claimed to be the true vanguard of the new Soviet Ukrainian literature. The politics of these institutional skirmishes offers fascinating insights into the dilemmas of Ukrainian national identity.

Shkandrij's meticulously researched work tells the story of these intellectual, institutional, and political battles objectively and with great insight. Shkandrij carefully analyzes Khvylovy's arguments, notes their strengths and weaknesses, traces their origins, and calculates their political effectiveness. He is also objective, although somewhat less detailed, in his treatment of Serhii Pylypenko, Khvylovy's primary opponent in the initial stages of the discussion. There is a wealth of detailed information, both in the text and in the useful notes and bibliographic appendices, on the activities and publications of the various actors, both individual and institutional, in this debate. The story encompasses not only print literature but also the other arts, including cinema, painting, and theatre. Shkandrij also includes a discussion of a number of related issues, including the internal rupture in the Communist Party of Western Ukraine in 1927–1928, and the response to events in Soviet Ukraine among the Ukrainian right-wing political groups in Western Ukraine. The volume includes an index which would have been more useful if it included all proper nouns rather than only personal names. Shkandrij might also have done better to use the Ukrainian names of publications (*i.e.*, *Literaturnyi iarmarok* instead of *Literary Fair*) and organizations (KPZU for CPWU, Communist Party of Western Ukraine).

Shkandrij's work, along with that of George Luckyj, in whose footsteps he follows, and with that of Oleh Ihnytzkyj, whose views he occasionally challenges, gives the student of Ukrainian cultural politics in the 1920s an enormous wealth of information and analysis concerning this vital period in the history of Ukrainians in the twentieth century. For the reader who is interested in nationality policy and cultural politics, this work is indispensable. The reader whose interest in Ukrainian literature of the 1920s is in the works themselves, however, must still wait for a detailed study of this period.

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*Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s.* Myroslav Shkandrij. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992. Pp. xii, 265. \$24.95 (Can.) (Cloth).

The literary discussion that took place in Ukraine in the first decade of Soviet rule is a remarkably useful introduction to the issues of Ukrainian national identity within the Soviet Union. The complex events, succinctly outlined in the initial chapters of Shkandrij's work, that led to the establishment of a Soviet Ukrainian republic in the 1920s, left a legacy of unresolved problems and dilemmas. Ukrainian culture, deliberately suppressed in the Russian empire, was enjoying an extraordinary rebirth in the years following the 1917 Revolution. The newly-created state was looking to establish its legitimacy in Ukraine and to implement its ideological principles in the cultural arena. The circumstances should have augured a happy marriage of national development and government policy. But for the Soviet government in Moscow, like its Tsarist predecessor in St. Petersburg, Ukrainian national identity was too much to bear.