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George G. Grabowicz (Cambridge, MA)

Ivan Franko and the Literary Depiction of Jews. Parsing the Contexts

Context is always important, but particularly so in an issue as fraught as this.¹ The basic context for the issue addressed here is the historical and social fabric of Ukrainian-Jewish relations in the course of the 19th and early 20th century and its reflection in Ukrainian literature. As much as our general focus is on Galicia, and the immediate context of Franko's life and work, the basic fact that he was writing in Ukrainian – and ultimately almost single-handedly implementing the monumental task of integrating western Ukrainian, Galician writing into modern Ukrainian literature, and with it the political goal of unification of the two Ukraines, i. e. of *sobornist'* – provides the broader context for his manifold activities, his reception and impact, and the literary dynamics at hand. Given this political and nation-building component, Franko is an intrinsically canonic figure, whose status is reinforced by the larger frame of Ukrainian nation-formation – and thus all the more resistant to revision.²

Historically speaking, and precisely from the perspective of the canon, it is the Ukrainian literary experience in the Russian Empire in the early 19th century, and for decades before and after that as well, that provides the basic frame for his own work, its poetics, strategies and so on. The totality of that work, in turn, brings up the broad range of his interest in issues pertaining to Jews and Jewish matters – as writer, translator, scholar and literary historian, political activist, publicist and

1 For the extra-scholarly and journalistic run-up to the conference and commentary during and immediately following cf. e.g., Vienna University's Press release, <http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2611368/> (access October 2014) and <http://www.mkoe.at/weg-ehrentafel-judenhasser-ivan-franko-geistiger-wegbereiter-holocaust> (access October 2014). Cf. also the response of the Franko Institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences: <http://ifnan.gov.ua/publish/3/525/> (access October 2014).

2 For the sake of perspective, and further context, one should add that there is also a socio-psychological moment at work here, in effect, a compensatory apotheosis of the writer and activist after years (if not decades) of abuse and ostracism by western Ukrainian (Ruthenian) society during his lifetime. The issue of collective bad faith and compensatory apotheosis has still not been adequately examined – but Franko was very much aware of it, and thematized it more than once.

polemicist;³ each facet, but especially their totality, affects and nuances our understanding of the man and the issues at hand. Finally, and not least of all, the question of anti-Semitism and its literary manifestations provides a frame that must also be considered in this context.

In terms of the larger social and political frame, as I had argued in an earlier study, the basic relationship between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities, or, specifically, their prime agendas, whether in the Russian or the Hapsburg Empire, was one of establishing cultural/religious and political identity and attaining collective rights and as such prioritized contacts and arrangements with the dominant political forces, or society, and not with each other, i. e., with other marginalized or subordinate groups.⁴ The notion of common cause, of seeing political and social reality not in zero-sum relations, and especially the notion of solidarity in the face of the dominant political forces was to appear only at the end of the 19th and basically only in the early 20th century.

* * *

Generally speaking, in the course of the 19th and into the early 20th century Ukrainian literary depictions of Jews and Ukrainian-Jewish relations appear through three stages and modes: the stereotypical-collectivist, the “realist” (ranging from a negative and hostile to a positive and accepting stance) and the political and “solidarist.”⁵ They constitute stages and in the overall process they appear in succession and establish a basic diachronicity, in effect marking an evolution of literary perceptions and articulations of this relationship. They are also modes, however, that in greater or lesser measure overlap and co-exist – and within this time frame, in effect both the 19th century, and even more so perhaps in the 20th century, they mark out the “levels” or implicit audiences in the literature – again, with particular reference to this relationship.⁶

The first stage and mode, which draws primarily on stereotypes and articulates an implicitly collective sense of the other is also essentially the most archaic and reflects not only a reliance on tradition, collective othering, and various folkloric or oral versions of historical events but also the distance and lack of

3 Cf. Кудрявцев П. Єврейство, євреї та єврейське справа в творах Івана Франка // Збірник праць єврейської історично-археографічної комісії. – Том II. / Під ред. А.І. Кримського. – Київ, 1929. Cf. also the considerable work done in this direction by Jaroslav Hrytsak, cf. his, *Prorok u svojij vitchyzni: Franko ta joho spil'nota*, Kyiv, 2006.

4 In the first part of this article I am drawing in large measure on my earlier paper on “The Jewish Theme in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Ukrainian Literature,” *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, Peter J. Potichnyj and Howard Aster eds., Edmonton, 1988, pp. 327–342.

5 Cf. *ibid.*

6 Cf. *ibid.*, *passim*.

interaction between the two societies as well as generalized grievances and perceptions of hostility. Central for this mode and expressed both in the oral *dumy* (dating back the 17th and 18th centuries and perhaps earlier) and in a critically important work that helps usher in the modern period of both Ukrainian literature and historiography, namely the anonymous *Istoria Rusov* (published in 1846, but circulating in manuscript already in the 1820s), is the topos of the Jew holding the keys to the Christian church. As presented in the *Istoria Rusov*, it epitomized the “unnatural” and hostile nature of the Jewish presence, essentially its collusion with the Polish persecution of Othodoxy. In effect, it was the stereotype at its most militant and incendiary.⁷

In this mode the Jew, as in Nikolai Gogol’s novel *Taras Bul’ba* (1835 and 1842), or Ievhen Hrebinka’s novel *Chaikovsky* (1843), Mykola Kostomarov’s drama *Pereiaslavskia nish* (1841), is either a spy or agent of the Poles; at the very least, an untrustworthy go-between or trickster.⁸ In his poem *Hajdamaky* (1841–1842) Taras Shevchenko basically follows the same pattern, although the role of the Jewish innkeeper Lejba is more nuanced – he is not monochromatic and he is also presented as a victim of Polish violence. Beyond this poem, moreover, in the overall fabric of Shevchenko’s poetry, the Jewish presence is not emphasized. In his prose, for example his last short novel *Progulka z udovolstvijem i ne bez morali* (1856–1858), the Jewish characters are presented with some irony, but hardly with hostility.

A much more substantive and even programmatic approach to this theme is found in the writings of Pantelejmon Kulish, made all the more important in light of his role as a leader of the mid-19th century Ukrainian literary revival. His early, highly Romantic poem *Ukrajina* (1843), which itself is stylized as a history told through the medium of oral lore, specifically the *dumy*, unabashedly elaborates on the “keys to the church” topos.⁹ Its underlying “historiographic” axiom is

7 Thus: “The churches of those parishioners who did not accept the Union [with Rome] were leased to the Jews and for each service a fee of one/five talers was set, and for christenings and funerals a fee of one/four zlotys. The Jews, unreconciled enemies of Christianity, universal wanderers and outcasts, eagerly took to this vile source of gain and immediately removed the church keys and bell ropes to their taverns. At every Christian need the cantor was obliged to go to the Jew, haggle with him, and depending on the importance of the service, pay for it and beg for the keys. And the Jew meanwhile, having laughed to his heart’s content at the Christian service, and having reviled all that the Christians hold dear, calling it pagan or, in their language, goyish, ordered the cantor to return the keys with the oath that no services that were not paid for had been celebrated”; *Istoria Rusov ili Maloj Rossii*, Moskva, 1846, pp. 40–41.

8 His role is also highly functional as an intermediary in the plot line; cf. a contemporary commentary: *Moskovskii vestnik*, “These [i. e., literary] Jews are in great fashion; they take their origin from Shakespeare’s Shylock and Walter Scott’s Isaac. He should be an omnipresent figure, to appear everywhere as a *deus ex machina*, to tie and untie all the knots of the plot.”

9 Thus the totally formulaic conclusion of *duma* 10 dealing with the period of Hetman Sahaj-dachnyj (1616–1622), which also coincides with the repercussions of the Union of Brest of

evident: if the *narod* believed it and preserved it in its oral lore it implicitly becomes a historical fact. In some later works Kulish continues to rely on the stereotype and its mode of presentation, for example, in the unfinished drama *Koliji* (1860). And as editor of the journal *Osnova* (1860–1862) he publishes, under the highly revealing rubric of “z narodnikh ust” (from the lips of the *narod*, the *people*), a story “Zhydivs’ka djaka” (Jewish gratitude) by Mytrotfan Aleksandrovych which expands and melodramatically amplifies the stereotype – and uses the oral/folkloric mode as its own essential justification. At this very time, however, he is undergoing a considerable change of attitude as he begins to consider in a positivist key the question of Ukrainian-Jewish relations, in effect moving from the default mode of populism and the quasi-metaphysics of the *narod* to a rationalist historical and political perspective. In 1858 he organizes a letter of protest against anonymous anti-Semitic articles published in the journal *Illjustracija* and gets such fellow writers as Kostomarov, Marko Vovchok, M. Nomys (M. T. Simonov) and Shevchenko to also sign it with him.¹⁰ Both the Westernizers and the Slavophiles had expressed their indignation at these articles and in mobilizing several prominent Ukrainian writers to take part in this discussion Kulish, in effect, was also strategically highlighting Ukrainian literature and the Ukrainian cause as part of the all-Russian discourse. To this end, the collective letter allows the signatories to formulate in a more forthright way the fraught nature of Jewish-Ukrainian relations, first in the broader context of Jewish-Christian relations:

The Jews became, and could not help but become, sworn enemies of people of other religions who heaped abuse on their [Jewish] faith, their teachers, their temple schools and their sacred customs. Hampered everywhere by the laws themselves, the Jews unwillingly turned to slyness and trickery, and involuntarily sanctified by their religious teachings every unpunished evil which they were able to inflict upon the Christians. The Jews became fanatical in their hatred of Christians. However disturbing may be for us much of what we know of the Jews from reliable written and printed testimony, it can only serve as a measure of the evils to which the unfortunate descendants of Israel have been subjected for so long and so widely. On the other hand, experience proves very convincingly that the hatred of Christian nations toward the Jews has not led the latter

1596: “Отакеє лихо Ляхи на Україні виробляли! / Ще гірше як до Сагайдачного Україна тогді бідувала, / Тяжку наругу од Ляхів і Жидів віра християнська приймала / Проклята жидова церкви божі на орендї держала, / Горілку в церквах, як у шинку, продавала, / Сама проскури скверними своїми руками пекла, / Велику плату за них назначала, / Сама паски к Воскресенію продавала, / Жидівською рукою значок на їх клала. / Отаку-то наругу віра християнська од Ляхів і жидів приймала!” *Tvory Pantelejmona Kulisha*, Том 1, L’viv, 1908, p. 66.

10 Cf. Taras Shevchenko, *Zibrannja tvoriv u shesty tomakh*, (ZTST), Kyjiv, 2003, vol. 6, pp. 534–537.

to any good, and that only unhindered education and equality of civil rights can cleanse the Jewish nation of all that is hostile in it to the people of other faiths...

And then more specifically. For the Ukrainian voices raised in this issue, the letter continues,

[...] are of particular importance in this affair, for they express the opinion on the Jewish question of that nation which more than the Great Russians and the Poles has suffered from the Jews, and in days gone by expressed its hatred toward the Jews in thousands of bloody victims. The [Ukrainian] people could not delve into the cause of the evil, vested not in the Jews but in the religious and civil order of Poland. [They] [a]venged [themselves] on the Jews with such simple-hearted conviction of the justice of the bloodletting, that [they] even glorified [their] terrible feats in [their] genuinely poetic songs.¹¹

As much as Kulish continued to value folklore and oral traditions, he also embarked – precisely in the enlightened spirit of this collective letter – on a revisionism of inherited historical views and cultural attitudes, beginning with the unquestioning, populist justification of peasant rebellions and mass violence. A major focus of his critique, especially in his *Maliovana hajdamachchyna* (1876) are the *hajdamak* uprisings of the 18th century, particularly the last and most bloody of these, the *kolijivshchyna* of 1768 which served as the canvas for Shevchenko's *Hajdamaky*.¹²

In the following decades Ukrainian literature marks, at first quite tentatively, a shift to a more realist, in effect socially and economically focused depiction of Jews. An enabling historical development in the Russian Empire were the reforms of Alexander II (in 1859, 1861 and 1865) which partially opened the Pale of Settlement to different classes of Jews (respectively merchants, university graduates and medical professionals, and craftsmen) and brought them into contact with Russian society. This, of course, was not the case in Galicia and the Hapsburg Empire in general where different social structures and conditions were in play, but the writings of Franko, as we shall see, do become the main component in this development. At the end of the 19th century, as reflected in two short stories by Modest Levytskyj, “Shchastia Peisakha Leidermana” and “Porozhnim khodom,” or Tymofii Borduliak's short story “Bidnyi zhydok Ratytsia” (1899) Jewish characters are depicted with sympathy and as part of a general frame of shared economic tribulation and even more so shared common humanity.

In the first decade of the 20th century, for example in Hnat Khotkevych's drama *Lykholittia* and Volodymyr Vynnychenko's drama *Dysharmoniia*, both

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 222–223.

12 Cf. my *Shevchenko's "Hajdamaky": the Poem and its Reception*, Kyiv, 2013.

published in 1906 and still well before the world war, revolution and upheaval of values and attitudes that they generated, the depictions of Jews and Jewish-Ukrainian relations become considerably deeper and probing. In Khotkevych's work they postulate a solidarity that transcends ethnic and cultural biases. In the case of Vynnychenko – and fully in keeping with the overall complexity of his vision of Ukrainian affairs and their tragic intractability – his play is considerably more somber as it questions the very possibility of such solidarity in the face of massive communal and ethnic violence. In either case, however, Ukrainian-Jewish relations are presented with unprecedented insight and sensitivity.

* * *

Within this development, which spans decades and involves a rapid expansion of the Jewish theme in Ukrainian literature, Franko stands out in at least two ways. Above all for the sheer number of works that address this theme, but also for the intensity and acuity, and at times indeed harshness of his focus. In effect, no other Ukrainian writer of this period devoted so much attention to the relations between Jews and Ukrainians. If one goes beyond the bounds of literary creativity, and includes critical, historical and publicistic work this attention, of course, becomes even more pronounced. At the same time, however, it is nuanced and differentiated, both formally and in terms of its historical development. Thus, not all works in which Jews appear and relate to Ukrainians address this in a deeper or thoughtful way; sometimes, the Jews are merely part of an ambient social reality. For the most part they are presented through a realist poetics—although that is hardly consistent, and at times Franko is not only varying it with non-realist, in effect symbolist moments, but also consciously experimenting with or reformulating that realist poetics. In terms of the larger picture, the Jewish theme in Franko's fiction is couched in each of the three modes discussed above – the realist and analytical (with its central focus on economic relations), the political and solidarist, and, expected or not, the stereotypical as well. The fact that all three modes appear in his work is significant in its own right and also seems to be an exception to the apparent evolution of the Jewish theme that was discussed earlier. Franko also clearly sharpens and problematizes this theme in an unparalleled way.

When approaching Franko and his literary works one needs to address another, indeed essential contextualizing frame. As much as he is writing on the Jewish theme, and as many different works as he devotes to it, he is also at the same continuously involved in a range of other, non-literary activities – to which he is clearly devoting much attention. In short, along with writing fiction and poetry Franko, throughout his career, is intensely involved in publicistic and political work (for which indeed he is three times arrested and imprisoned), in

scholarship and translating, in various broadly phrased publishing and translating efforts and so on.¹³ (Not least of all, his literary activities are largely if not exclusively his basic source of income; he is clearly producing – and recycling – literary works, often in various languages, to make ends meet.) While this is not in the center of our focus here, it clearly modulates and contextualizes both the specific theme and his overall belletristic mode – particularly with reference to political and social values, ideas and ideology. The interrelation of these different facets of Franko’s creativity, as we shall see, is crucial to our understanding of both the entirety of Franko’s role as writer and thinker and the character of any constituent moment – specifically here his treatment of the Jewish theme. It will also become abundantly clear that for all the massive attention that has been paid to Franko in the frame of the Ukrainian literary and historical canon, some fundamental issues still have not been adequately formulated and addressed.

* * *

Tellingly, the Jewish theme is broached in Franko’s earliest prose piece, the short novel *Petriji i Dovbushchyky* (first published in 1875–76 when Franko was only 19 and just beginning his university studies and competing here for a literary prize, as he later put it – to make ends meet¹⁴). As artistically problematic and flawed as the novel is, it still clearly deserves our attention and we shall return to it later, but in a frame that involves a symbolic rather than a purely chronological dimension.

The emergence of the Jewish theme proper in Franko’s writings is usually seen in the very early stories and novels devoted to the Galician town of Boryslav and its radical transformation by the rampant capitalism of the new oil drilling and mining industries. This includes his cycle of stories *Boryslav*, subtitled “Kartynky z zhyttja pidhirs’koho narodu” published in 1877 in the journal *Druh* and later that year as a separate collection, and the novel *Boa constrictor*, published in installments in 1878 and then as a separate book in a much revised second version in 1884.¹⁵ A continuation of the story is found in the unfinished novel *Boryslav smijetsja* published in installments in the journal *Svit* in 1881–82.¹⁶ In all of these works the agents and implementers of capitalism are the Jews—in fact they are presented exclusively in that capacity.

13 Cf., Bohdan Jakymovych, *Ivan Franko—vydavec: knyhoznavchi ta dzhereloznavchi aspekty*, Lviv, 2006.

14 Cf. his *Postscriptum* to the second edition which appeared in 1913, Ivan Franko, *Zibrannja tvoriv u p’jattedesjaty tomakh (ZTPT)*, 22, Kyiv, 1979, pg. 486.

15 Cf. Ivan Franko, *ZTPT*, 14, Kyiv, 1978. For an overview of the textual emendations made by Franko between the two editions of *Boa constrictor* cf. *ibid.*, pp. 453–469. A third edition was written in 1905–07.

16 Cf. Ivan Franko, *ZTPT*, 15.

The three stories of *Boryslav*, “Ripnyk,” “Na roboti” and “Navernenyj hrishnyk” constitute an overarching morality tale: the inexorable destruction of “natural” and organic Ukrainian life by the encroachment of a heartless and exploitative capitalism. While admitting in his foreword to the stories some tangible benefits (the production of oil for local consumption and for export) the overall legacy of *Boryslav*, is that of a “quagmire into which the whole region [Pidhirja] is sinking and wasting countless lives of the nation’s citizens”; bearing witness to this becomes the writer’s imperative:

Довгі літа мав я спосібність придивлятися тій страшенній експлуатації, що, мов зараза, шириться щораз даліше, росте ураз із зростом нужди і недостатку в народі, і мав я спосібність оглядати й немало сумних-сумних наслідків її. Не говорю уже о жителях самого колишнього села Борислава, що з малими виїмками майже всі пішли по жебрах. Борислав висисає вздовж і вишир всі сусідні села, – пожирає молоде покоління, ліси, час, здоров’я і моральність цілих громад, цілих мас.¹⁷

The three stories proceed to illustrate this with growing intensity and pathos. The first of these, “Ripnyk” (The Miner) recounts the story of Ivan who leaves his parent’s home in the village, spends all their money, and his inheritance, carousing in *Boryslav*, gets with child the woman who loves him, but then spurns her to continue with his depravity, and only when she dies (literally freezing to death outside his door – while still cuddling her newborn) he realizes his sin and returns to his village with his child determined to right his ways. The second, longer story, “Na roboti,” (At work) departs from the rhetoric and mawkishness of the first as it introduces on the level of technique a collage of monologues of workers recounting back-breaking labor and of hallucinations resulting from prolonged exposure to noxious fumes in the mines. The realism that is putatively proposed here – the inhuman conditions in the mines, merciless exploitation of the workers – is continually pulled in the direction of phantasmagoria and a kind of allegorical symbolism. Through it, however, the underlying ideological proposition identifying capitalist exploitation with the Jews is made palpably clear and indeed given trans-rational, symbolic validation. Thus in the section “Dyvnyj son” (A strange dream) the worker sees a woman-apparition and the following exchange occurs:

- А знаєш ти, – питає, – що то таке на тобі, – тоті шнури?
- Ну, – кажу, – шнури, линви! Або хіба що?
- Дурний ти, – каже, – та й не знаєш? Сліпий ти, та й не видиш! То, небоже, – жидівські руки, жидівська хитрість, що тебе обпудала. От дивися, – ту тепер пусто скрізь, – а перше ту людей багато бувало. А знаєш, де вони тепер?

¹⁷ Ivan Franko, *ZTPT*, 14, 275–6, here p. 276.

He replies, of course, that he does not. And she then identifies herself as the spirit of the poisonous miasm of the mines, “Zadukha,” and shows him the bottomless pit where he and everyone else who works there is fated to die.¹⁸ In a later passage, she elaborates on the practical or realist incarnation of these fetters that keep him shackled to the mines by describing the wiles of the Jews who to maximize their profits collude to keep the workers impoverished, ever in debt and ever dependent.¹⁹

In the final and longest story, “The Sinner Redeemed,” the same cautionary tale is told in much greater detail and with a new twist: now the Ukrainian peasants themselves try to emulate the Jews and use their land to try to extract oil from it. After all, the Jews have only success when they engage in these ventures – why should the peasants not try it? But success does not come their way, as the narrator puts it at the outset:

Сто їх взялося відразу до копання. Лиш шість-сім прийшло до маєтку. А другі? Другі опісля копали знов на своїх ґрунтах ями, видобували кип’ячку і віск – для жидів. Чому ж воно так пішло? Чому щастилося жидам, а не щастилося газдам? Згадайте, коли мудрі!²⁰

In fact the story is doubly cautionary. The hero, the peasant (“gazda”) Vasyl Pivtorak is one of the richest peasant landowners in Boryslav, and he is clever and professes an unsentimental, realist attitude (“life is a struggle, eternal, ceaseless,” one must continually adapt to it, and so on) – and yet the entire story is a catalogue of disasters: two of his sons die in the mine and he has a falling out with the third; all his expectations as to his venture into capitalism turn out to be false (and in the process the Jews trick him in their dealings) and in the end he dies an utter pauper, his life and family destroyed. The very title of the story, his alleged “repentance” is but part of the self-serving, hypocritical and mendacious sermonizing of the Ukrainian priest – a parasitic character as much as any other. No structures, not capitalism, not the church with its tales of salvation and redemption and miracles, certainly not the law with its consistent collusion with the rich (i. e., the Jews), and also certainly not other peasants can offer any help or remedy. As Ivan, Vasyl’s last remaining and estranged son senses as he sits in a tavern, as always drinking away his money and numbing his consciousness: “the people whose voices he heard around him were just like him, wretched, homeless, without kith or kin and only with their babble trying to shake off the ceaseless

18 Thus: “You are stupid, you know, and you haven’t a clue. You’re blind and you don’t see. That, my dear, are Jewish arms, Jewish cunning that has entangled you.” *Ibid.*, pp. 295–6.

19 Cf. the section “Zhyttja ripnykiv,” *ibid.*, pp. 305–306.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 309.

fear and searing misery.”²¹ The answer why this is so is not given directly, but it is certainly implicit – and ambient.

Franko’s major continuation of this inquiry in the novel *Boa constrictor* (1878), also does not give the answer directly, but instead presents a new and more extensive examination of the basic problem – as the author sees it. The earlier Boryslav stories had anatomized the fate of the victims, with the last of them, “Navernenyj hrishnyk,” suggesting that victimhood is perhaps the “natural” Ukrainian order of things. (For other than through some transcendent “fate,” why should someone as successful in all things as Vasyl Pivtorak, begin, like Job, to suffer disaster after disaster as soon as our attention is turned to him? And this “naturalness,” or inevitability, or fate is in the air – and is reinforced by the “natural,” implicitly traditionally Ukrainian, i. e., folkloric/oral mode of the narrative.²²) Now, the novel (formally a *povist*, i. e., short novel) provides a detailed look at the life, deeds and especially the making of a capitalist, a boa constrictor. The story of Herman Gol’dkremer, the Jewish capitalist, is also, as is now generally asserted, an articulation of Franko’s then current fascination with naturalism, especially as practiced by Emile Zola.²³ A number of the features usually associated with the naturalism of his rendition were already in play in Franko’s Boryslav stories – the general sense of pessimism and an implacable fate hanging over the setting, or specifically over the victims; the ambient sense that the degraded environment, the unremittingly bleak landscape and destitution of Boryslav, have a determining influence on the events and characters in the drama; and the presumption – given the often outlandishly unrealistic, melodramatic, mawkish and, in short, pot boiler plot more a conceit than actualized presumption – that the author is presenting us with an objective picture of

21 *Ibid.*, p. 367. One reading of this predicament – which has become conventional and is often repeated on the internet—is that Franko is depicting the collapse of a “natural,” patriarchal order; thus Tamara Hundorova: “‘Ripnyk,’ ‘Na roboti,’ ‘Navernenyj hrishnyk’ are stories that in almost a serial way anatomize the collapse of a traditional patriarchal way of life and of the ‘natural’ peasant character, and particularly the moral laws of friendship (‘pobratymstvo’), family ties, the law of the father, and religious faith which are their bases.” *Franko ne kameniar / Franko i kameniar*, Kyiv, 2006, pp. 39–40. A closer reading might find this to be somewhat problematic – especially, as can readily be shown, regarding the question of religious faith, and its structured carrier, the Church. The larger issue still remains: what is the nature of the “good life” that is being destroyed and that Franko clearly so passionately decries. Cf. below.

22 Thus e. g., “Василь Півторак був свого часу один із найзаможніших газдів на весь Борислав. Поля у нього було достатком, худоби, і хліба, і шмаття, – ба й грошенят готових дешо-денешо найшлося. Прцьовитий, ошадний, любив порядок,—тож і все йшло у нього і порядком і статком”; *ZTPT*, 14, pp. 307–308. The diction is indistinguishable from that of Kvitka or Marko Vovchok – i. e., of one or even two (literary) generations earlier.

23 Franko’s interest in Zola is reflected in several articles written at this time, cf. especially “Emil Zola, zhyttjepys,” published in *Svit* in 1881; cf. *ZTPT*, 26, Kyiv 1980, pp. 109–114. Cf. also Tamara Hundorova, *op. cit.*, the chapter on “Naturalizm,” pp. 36–95.

objective reality. The other key element that is clearly a mainstay of Zola's fictional world and is now introduced by Franko quite directly is the issue of heredity – with its corollary of degeneracy. Accompanying that, in turn, and already evident in the earlier stories is an augmented awareness of Darwinism and its projection of “the survival of the fittest.”²⁴ (The degree to which this interest in Darwin and evolution impacts his understanding of social reality, in effect translates into some acceptance of social-Darwinism is an open question, although one may assume that Franko's basic democratic and humanist bent, and the decisive influence on him of Drahomanov would temper such proclivities; cf. below.) At the same time the naturalist features predating and first activated in *Boa constrictor* coexist with a range of traditionalist, particularly populist and melodramatic moments that make Franko's fictional work, as is often the case, highly eclectic – and highly flawed.

The conflation of the two, the naturalist (cum-Darwinist) on the one hand and the sentimental on the other, is evident in the way the eponymous *boa constrictor* – i. e., the capitalist Herman Gol'dkremer – is prefigured and introduced at the very opening of the novel. It comes by way of a detailed, page-long description of a painting that hangs in Herman's Boryslav office and which has a special fascination for him and which he is wont to contemplate – of a python in a Bengali forest crushing in his coils a gazelle (and as the narrator cannot resist in informing us, it is most likely the mother of the other gazelles that are depicted as scattering – all of them now doomed to be orphans, alas). The namby-pamby of this Bambi-avant-la-lettre detail (and literature – like science and Darwinism – is in the details) is telling; more telling still is the drawn-out attention the narrative pays to this allegory – imputing literary (symbolic? pragmatic? existential?) validity to a sentimental and kitschy trope.

Much of the plot of *Boa constrictor* – to the extent it deals with the workings of the adult Herman Gol'dkremer, the capitalist, his making of deals, his machinations with his workers, etc. – revisits themes and topoi we already saw in the Boryslav stories and does not bear repeating. What is interesting, however, is the focus on the young Herman, his childhood and early years, which constitutes a significant departure for Franko's treatment of the Jewish theme. In short, within the frame of his childhood and youth Herman becomes much more real and altogether human; in fact, at this stage, quite sympathetic. In fact, through this sketchy depiction of Herman's youth, not just he, but the larger Jewish environment is introduced here in the guise not of exploiters or parasites, but of poverty, and of common humanity. Apart from his destitute beginnings, the depiction of which, and especially the death of Herman's mother from cholera, is

24 Cf. his articles, “Mysli o evoljuciji v istoriji ljudskosti,” (*Svit*, 1881), *ZTPT*, 45, Kyiv, 1986, pp. 84–90 and *passim* and “Shcho take postup,” (*Postup*, 1903), *ibid.*, pp. 300–348.

brought out in stark naturalist images, the basic emphasis is on the still more fundamental contrast between city and countryside – to which the young Herman is taken by Itsyk Shubert who takes him in when his mother dies. Itsyk's pleasant and supportive nature and the change from the fetid environment of the town to the openness and freshness of the countryside is nothing short of life-giving:

[...] малому Германові, що на своїм віку не зазнав ні ласки, ні вигоди, ні пестоців, аж тепер відкрилася нова, ясніша сторона людського життя. Уже само життя на чистім, – здоровім воздуху було для нього великим щастям. Він, що довгі літа, перші свої літа, душився в затхлім, нездоровім воздуху перелюдненого, нехлюйного передмістя, тепер повними грудьми, розкішно надихувався чистого сільського воздуху, аж йому кров живіше грала в тілі і світ крутився, мов п'яному.²⁵

With Itsyk, the young Herman works as a rag picker, travelling the byways of the Pidhir'ja region²⁶ collecting rags and eking out a living. For all the privations, the subsistence existence and the constant haggling of their trade, their dealings with the peasants are described without a hint of enmity: the Jews and peasants are shown as part of a larger and implicitly organic whole. Thus when later in the story Itsyk is mortally injured in an accident during a storm the peasants solicitously bring him back to his house and give him the first aid they would to any member of the community – and commiserate at his demise.²⁷

This idyllic picture of healthy and organic co-existence is not only set in the countryside – it is also in the past, which Herman recollects in his musings on his childhood and early years that occupy the first part of the novel. In the present, and in the city, the relations between the Jews and the Ukrainian deracinated peasants are thus melodramatically cast in the mold of a Darwinian struggle for survival imposed by a primordial and ruthless capitalist system, a Manichean jungle where the prominent (indeed only) players are the naïve and heedless gazelles and the cold and calculating boa constrictors. In turn, organicity and the healing power of nature are replaced by a landscape of trash, degradation and corruption.

These archetypal moments, adumbrated by Darwinian and Marxian readings and ideologems, and even more by the thinking of Mykhailo Drahomanov, merge into Franko's version of naturalism, in which he openly invokes the practice and authority of Emile Zola, the foremost literary practitioner of that

25 Ivan Franko, *ZTPT*, vol. 14, p. 381.

26 I.e. the foothills of the Carpathians where Boryslav and Drohobych are located.

27 Thus for example: “При помочі селян, котрі почали увиватися, немов тут ішлося про рятунок їх наймилішого свояка, перемило рани, і тоді аж можна було розглянути, що таке покалічено у Іска.” *ZTPT*, vol. 14, p. 391.

style.²⁸ Along with an emphasis on the bleakness of the setting and on the unchallenged power of capital and its suborning of all aspects of social life, there is, as noted, also the focus on heredity and, inevitably, degeneracy as well. Thus the story of Herman's life seems to follow a pattern of double determinism: on the one hand by virtue of his cleverness and business instinct, and strategic moments of good luck, he is almost fated to become a financial success, a millionaire. At the same time, just as in a morality tale, his personal life turns into a nightmare: his marriage – which from the beginning he saw as a way of improving his finances and swelling his business – quickly becomes loveless and his wife, Ryfka, who in her youth was attractive and vivacious, if neither well-educated nor talented, turns into a harridan. His son, Gotlib, even as a child, is an unruly, vicious, good-for-nothing, a degenerate:

Готліб відмалу переминався поволі в якогось кобольда, в якогось духа-мучителя, котрому все на заваді, все в дорозі і котрий все старається змести і знищити, до чого може тільки руку приложити. Стіни в його покої повні були дір, виверчених в мурі ножиками, а тут-таки в тих дірах, виднілися ще поламани вістря ножиків. Слуги і служниці мали з ним істе пекло: ніколи не дав їм спокійно перейти попри себе, щоб не швякнути батогом, не вдарити каменем, не бризнути болотом.²⁹

Later, when he is older, his major plot function is to demand money from his father, as he does in a fit of rage at the end of Chapter II.³⁰ The full meaning of his degeneracy, however, is revealed at the very end of the novel. In a dream Herman sees himself transported into that primordial jungle scene, i. e., the setting of the boa constrictor which he so often contemplated in his study. He sees the running gazelles, takes a few steps and then feels himself seized by that very python; his coils wind around him, crushing him to death; his end is near. But with a superhuman effort he breaks free – and wakes to see that it was Gotlib trying to suffocate him. When he throws him off and in a daze asks what this is all about, all Gotlib can do is curse and demand “money!” “now!”: “Прокляття на тебе, прохрипів ідіот. –Грошей хочу, давай сюди!”³¹ Gotlib's role as incarnate come-uppance for Herman's life in the service of mammon is about as obvious as this melodramatic attempt at parricide. To make totally sure that the reader does not miss any of the symbolism here Franko provides a final vision in which Herman sees the boa constrictor for what it really is – the all-powerful, crushing coils of money, silver and gold:

Га! Що за думка блисла на раз у Германовій голові! Се не вуж, се безмірно довга, зросла докупи і оживлена чарівною силою зв'язка грошей, срібла, золота блиску-

28 Cf. fn. 23.

29 *Op cit.*, ZPT, 14, pp. 402–403.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 406–407.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 432.

чого! О, так, се певно так! Хіба ж весь блеск, що б'є в очі від вужевої луски — хіба ж се не блеск золота і срібла? А сесі різнобарвні латки на нім, хіба се не різні векслі, контракти, банкноти?... О се, певно, се не вуж його обводив своїми велетними звоями а його власне багатство! А як злобно, як люто глядить на нього зацарована потвора! Вона певна сбоеї добичі, вона знає, що її металевими перстнями, її горючому блескові ніхто не уйде! Вона знає що найнапевніше не уйде їй Герман, бо він на дні пропасті, він жертва розпуки, в—й вона, вона завела його сюди.³²

At this epiphany Herman roars like a wounded beast (“Він заревів, мов ранений звір, аж вікна задзвеніли від його реву”) and rushes out of his house, to wander the streets pursued by pangs of guilt at his deeds, especially the mysterious disappearance of one of his workers, Ivan Pivtorak. Finally, at the outskirts of the city he comes upon some huts where his miners live in abject poverty, peers into the one where a widow is lit, and, lo and behold, sees the widow of Ivan talking with his friend and from their conversation realizes that Ivan was murdered for his wages and that Herman’s foreman, Moshko, is the likely perpetrator. Overcome by guilt, Herman throws a handful of silver coins through the window and flees the scene.

In a second redaction published in 1884 as a separate book, along with editing some of his egregious over-writing, Franko adds a short final passage where in a jaded tone he informs his readers that in the end nothing really changed, Herman did not become a good man and remained a cold and scheming speculator. And Moshko was not found out for his murder, despite attempts at legal recourse by Pivtorak’s widow and friend; for no court can help the oppressed – they must do so for themselves.³³

In a still later, considerably longer and revised third version published in 1907, the plot is significantly changed: Franko introduces Herman’s Jewish partner Volf who helps him get a start in business, and opens an adventure subplot of a run-in with Jewish gangsters who kill Volf and try to frame Herman, amplifies on Herman’s wife Ryfka and her madness, and especially expands on the character of Herman’s son, here called Duvidko. His degeneracy is not simply asserted as in the earlier versions, but dramatized as when (after reading crime novels like *Rinaldo Rinaldini* or those of Eugene Sue) he tells his father that he wishes to torture people and listen to their moans or, near the end, when he acts out his sadism as on a whim he sets his father’s mine worker’s barracks on fire – and causes the death of a number of workers – just for the thrill of it. For his part, Herman, unexpectedly dies in a mine blast set off by his bitter Jewish rival Itsko Tsanshmertz (who is also killed by the blast).

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 434–435.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 468–469.

In all three versions the melodramatic tone and content, and the pot-boiler plots, are all-too-obvious. (The last version, to be sure, shows considerably greater control and mastery of the plot – even as it introduces lurid and sensationalist details – thus at the end the blast that kills Herman also blows up Itsko and projects his head, as a kind of canon ball, from his mine shaft into that of Herman.³⁴) One might wonder whether the author is toying with the reader, or injecting a subtle form of self-parody (as for example with the reference to *Rinaldo Rinaldini*, which clearly impacted Franko's own *Petriji i Dovbushchyky*) – were it not for the consistency with which he skirts, or indeed slides off into, bad writing: the infantile-sensationalist plots, the lack of any psychological depth to any of the characters, the constant preaching, the unabashed sentimentalism and so on. More specifically, and to the same point, one can see that the constant recycling of stories – not just by re-writing them in different versions, but also recasting them in other languages, i. e., Polish and Russian³⁵ – and the sheer mass of the production (which also results in many unfinished works), as well as the straitened circumstances of Franko's life at the time, clearly point to fiction writing that is at times generated by economic rather than artistic exigencies; by hack work, in short. The fact that this issue has not been confronted in a straightforward manner in the critical literature is a problem – and directly impacts the theme in question.

Both the first (1878) and the second (1884) versions of *Boa constrictor* already suggest that the task the writer is setting for himself is not just to represent reality-as-it-is, but to also show it as it ought-to-be – whether for ideological or moralistic reasons or, indeed, for pot-boiler effect. The caricature, or cartoon, nature of Gotlib is a case in point. Another is the ending of the first version of *Boa constrictor*, i. e., Herman's attempt at expiation by throwing the money (the "silver coins") through the window – which is then thematized and overwritten in the second, 1884 version. The case of Franko's "continuation" of the novel in his unfinished *Boryslav smijetsja* will make this amply clear. But already in *Boa constrictor* it is apparent that the picture of city life, and within that the workings of capitalism, and along with that the world of the Jews and of his main character Herman – are only faint approximations: Franko does not know this world well at all. In large measure he knows (and certainly empathizes with) the world of his Ukrainian characters, and when the context is the village and the countryside – then also the world of the Jews that live there. But the city he shows is also seen through this perspective, and while it may intimate the tensions that exist across the Ukrainian-Jewish divide it does not come to grips with the Jewish world – even while claiming to depict it. At most it does so as a simulacrum, an ap-

34 Cf. *ZIPT*, vol. 22, p. 207.

35 Cf. fn. 47.

proximation; at worst, through a set of stereotypes. Its overall depiction of Jews is not guided, however, by an innate or essentialist sense of confrontation or hostility, rather it grounds this opposition on the economic sphere – and on an archetypal contrast of city and countryside. For his immediate, pragmatic purposes his version suffices perhaps: it tells his implied Ukrainian audience a cautionary tale, “unmasking” as it were the inner world of the capitalist and revealing its joylessness, and the delusion that wealth and power can be an end in themselves. Herman’s epiphany in the first version and his demise in the third seem to provide a symbolic victory over the seemingly all-powerful python, but the larger issues, including moral ones, were not really confronted or even well articulated.

Boryslav smijetsja was serialized in the journal *Svit* in 1881 and 1882 and left unfinished after the 20th chapter when *Svit* stopped appearing after September 1882. Franko’s archive shows plans for seven more chapters.³⁶ In various respects (and echoing the practice of Emile Zola) it continues the earlier *Boa constrictor* by presenting the same core characters – Herman, Ryfka and Gotlib – and introducing a cast of new ones.³⁷ It continues or alludes to some plot lines from the earlier work (the killing of Ivan Pivtorak, Ryfka’s madness, etc.). Most importantly, however, it introduces the theme of workers rights, agitation and strikes and thus attained a highly prioritized role in the Soviet Ukrainian critical canon. By virtue of this theme the Ukrainian-Jewish opposition is cast as a confrontation of labor and capital – although the ethnic and implicitly essentialist divide also remains.³⁸ For its part, the introduction of new Jewish characters, specifically the capitalist Leon Hammershlag, allows Franko to differentiate and nuance that setting, in effect to humanize it through the liberal and enlightened attitudes of Leon, but it’s overall profile remains largely the same as in *Boa constrictor* even while particular moments – more details as to Ryfka’s mad behavior (her scandalous treatment of Leon when he visits their home),

36 Cf. *ZTPP*, vol. 15, pp. 499–500.

37 In a letter to A. Wislicki, the editor of *Przegląd Tygodniowy*, Franko speaks of *Boryslav smijetsja* as “the second part” of *Boa constrictor*; cf. *ZTPP*, vol. 48, p. 466; cf. also Mykola Lehkyj, “Shche odna zahadka frankovoho tekstu”, *Visnyk lvivs’koho universytetu*, Serija filolohichna, 2010, Issue 51, pp. 10–16. In this same letter one can see Franko speaking about his honoraria, i. e., yet again confirming how his writing was also a means of making a living.

38 A particularly telling moment in the novel when one event is given both an “ethnic” or essentialist and a “class” interpretation is when the ritual of laying a sacrificial object (here a bird) at the foundation of a building is given this commentary, purportedly coming from the Ukrainian workers themselves: “Случай з Бенедьом щемів іще всім унутрі, ба і весь той дивний жидівський обряд закладин дуже їм не сподобався. Хто вигадав живу пташину замурувати? Ніби то принесе щастя? А втім, може, й так... Адже добре то якийсь вигадав: панам весілля, а курці смерть”; *PZTP*, vol. 15, p. 268.

Gotlib's own frenzied schemes to extract money from his father and his openness to criminal acts – amplify on the earlier work.

On the surface and plot level the novel's major innovation is its thematization of the workers' response to the oppression of capitalism through two radically different courses of action: of revenge for injustice, and resorting to violence and crime, as exemplified by the brothers Andrus' and Sen' Basarab and such characters as Derkach, Stasjura, Projdevolja, and others on the one hand and on the other the main hero, Bened'o Synytsia who articulates the cause and course of worker self-organization and self-reliance – but not violence.³⁹ As much as this theme and plotline is central to the work and to its critical reception it does not introduce fundamentally new moments into Franko's depiction of Jews and Jewish-Ukrainian relations: as critics have observed, Jews continue to be defined through the overriding issue of capitalist exploitation, but also implicitly through their ethnicity.⁴⁰ For its part, Franko's actual understanding of capitalist exploitation also requires rethinking.

The dominance of the plotline (with its genuinely or quasi-marxian ideologems⁴¹) and its subsequent interpretations tend to blur two important developments in Franko's approach to his fiction. One is the fact that this novel also introduces Franko's discovery of the "idealist" component of his "realist" agenda, in effect his realization that in the social frame, in "social reality," "the real," not only may, but should contain elements of the "typical" or "ideal" – and thus show the "true direction" or "development" of society. This, in effect, is what he articulates in his letter to his colleague and then friend Mykhajhlo Pavlyk where he speaks of his need to articulate an "ideal realism."⁴² As his later practice

39 Cf. Chap. 4 where they begin articulating their plans; Chap. 13 for the depiction of the robbery of one of the capitalists, Itsyk Bauch; Chap. 14 for the beginning of the strike, etc.

40 Cf. e.g., Alois Woldan, Die "Hölle von Boryslav" – Arbeiterelend in Galizien, in: *Literatur im Kontext: Ein gegenseitiges Entbergen*, hg. von Herbert van Uffelen/ Wynfried Kriegleder/ Ewald Mengel/ Alois Woldan, Wien 2010, 67–82.

41 Thus in his piece on "Marxism" in the Ukrainian Encyclopedia John-Paul Himka argues that, "Drahomanov, Pavlyk, and, later, Franko developed radicalism as an alternative to Marxian socialism." cf. <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CM%5CA%5CMarxism.htm>.

42 "Тай ще одно щодо самого реалізму. Штука хитра, але далеко не позитивна. Який реаліст Доде і, на око, так дуже на документах стоїть, а більша часть його типів – скривлені, вїймовкі, нетипові люди. [...] А мені здається, що замість тратити силу на студіювання тисячі дрібниць (мало значущих і мало характеристичних) à la Золя і Флобер, ліпше б нам робити так, як реалісти німецькі, як Шпільгаген у своїх кращих творах. [...] Звісна річ, реалізм не такий яркий, як у французів, але не о то йому йде, щоб змалювати не само, що так скажу, тіло сучасного чоловіка і сучасної суспільності, але думки, змагання, боротьбу. Се є реалізм ідеальний котрий приймає реалізм як методу, а ідеалізм (не ідеалізування людей, але представлення людей з їх добрими і злими боками, а главное – представлення типів, котрі б уособляли в собі думи і змагання даної доби, – представлення розвитку суспільності) – яко зміст, яко ціль" [ZTPT, vol. 48, p. 331]; cited in Mykola Lehkyj, "Shche

would show, this would devolve on his depiction not so much of *reality* as *ought-to-be-reality* – and as such anticipates the canonized practice of Soviet socialist realism (without, of course, implying support for the attendant censorship, regimentation, mendacity and so on).⁴³ To this we shall return.

The second, more general moment is that Franko is increasingly predisposed to link literary and publicistic writing, in effect to establish a kind of synergy of genres. Thus at the same time as he is publishing in *Svit* his novel *Boryslav smijetsja* he is also publishing in that same journal in the course of 1881 a long piece entitled “Mysli o evoluciji v istoriji ljuds’kosti” which attempts a broad overview of the human condition, but also specifically focuses on the exploitative and destructive nature of capitalism.⁴⁴ More to the point, just a year or so before he begins serializing *Boryslav smijetsja* in *Svit*, he publishes in 1880, in Polish, in the Lviv newspaper *Praca* (in which from 1878 he was a coworker), a long, serialized untitled piece (under the rubric “Korrespondencya. Drogobycz”) that describes in great detail the emergence of the oil and paraffin industry in Drohobych and Boryslav, their specific, real, owners, Lejsor Hartenberg & Co., Selig Lauterbarch and Hersh Goldhammer, and their inhuman exploitation of workers and the horrific conditions of the workplace.⁴⁵ The correspondence of detail between this reportage and the Boryslav stories is striking. And it ends with an appeal that is clearly a herald of the fictional work that will soon come to flesh out his argument:

Але ви, браття – дрогобицькі робітники – невже ви не відчуваєте своєї недолі, невже вічно думаєте гнути шию і терпляче схилятися, невже власні злидні не переконали вас, що сучасне “покірне телятко” не ссе не тільки двох маток, але й жодної.⁴⁶

* * *

Franko’s subsequent fiction focusing on the Jewish theme can arguably be said to develop both the search for an underlying “general” or “ideal” type and a search for an “ideal” solution – even if it is in the realm of “ought-to-be-reality.” The

odna zahadka frankovoho tekstu,” *Visnyk l’vivs’koho universytetu, Seria Filolohichna* 2010, Vyp. 51, pp. 10–16. Cf. also Tamara Hundora’s discussion of Franko’s “idealism” in Chap. 1 of her *Franko ne kamenjar/ Franko i kamenjar*, Kyiv, 2006, pp. 20–35.

43 In fact, late Soviet Ukrainian literary criticism argues, with all apparent seriousness, that the roots of socialist realism – purportedly a world-wide phenomenon, coterminous with Emile Zola and others, and not a Soviet aberration—is to be found in Franko’s *Boryslav smijetsja*; cf. D. S. Nalyvajko, ““Boryslav smijetsja” Ivana Franka v porivnjal’no-typolohichnomu aspekti,” *Ivan Franko – majster slova i doslidnyk literatury*, Kyiv, 1981, pp. 332–362, esp. pp. 333, 360 and passim.

44 Cf. esp. Chap. 9, *ZTPT*, vol. 45, pp. 124–134.

45 Cf. [“Fabryka parafinu j cerozynu u Drohobychi”], *PZTP*, vol. 44, pp. 52–65.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

works in question form a series of sketches or vignettes of various Jewish characters written in the late 1880s and early 1890s. In the order of writing these are the short stories “Hava” subtitled “Obrazok z zhyttja pidkarpats’koho narodu,” and first appearing in Polish in 1888 and then also that year in Russian in the Kyivan *Kievskaja starina* (the Ukrainian version also appeared that year as a separate booklet);⁴⁷ “Hava i Vovkun” (1890); “Hershko Goldmacher” (1890); and in a different key – but belonging to this series of sketches, “Do svitla,” also in 1890. The short story “Chysta rasa” (1896) provides an ironic counterpoint to the whole search, so to speak. And though appearing in 1900, the novel *Perekhresni stezhky* also fits into this series, in fact providing a sui generis “ideal” culminating take on the subject.

By Franko’s own account, and as reflected in their narrative structure, the short stories “Hava,” “Hava i Vovkun” and “Hershko Goldmacher” were conceived as parts of a projected, but ultimately unfinished novel, “Ne spytavshy brodu,” on which he worked in the mid 1880s until in 1886 he basically gave up the idea; subsequently he published the segments as separate short stories.⁴⁸ As one can see from such stories as “Na loni pryrody,” “Henij,” “Borys Hrab” and others, the focus was not just on the Jewish characters but on a cross section of society, in effect including Polish and Ukrainian characters and on their interaction in a multi-ethnic Galician community. For this reason, too, the Jewish characters of these stories become somehow markedly “typical” – and this is reinforced by the fact that they are not exclusively defined by economic power, as Leon Hammershlag or Herman Gol’dkremer in *Boryslav smijetsja*.

In the story that is chronologically the first, “Hershko Goldmacher,” the eponymous hero has dramatic ups and downs: a village tavern keeper, he is first rich, manipulating the local landlord at his will, then poor, as the peasants turn on him and burn his place. His sons Hava and Vovkun grow up as urchins and vagabonds. But Hershko again begins to thrive – this time by managing a gang of thieves and everything goes well for a while until the local peasants take the law into their own hands and start killing the thieves – and Hershko too. The story ends with Hava and Vovkun striking out on their own.

“Hava” traces the early years of the older son. With no schooling or inheritance he makes his living by his wits – whatever it takes, he survives, and makes a small profit, and turns it into a larger profit, and then into still further profit, until at the end of the story he is a small, but successful capitalist – a petty operator, but clever enough to fool and manipulate the locals into working for him and allowing him to make money on them. The world in which he operates is totally binary: he is clever and the gentile is stupid, and in every situation – not

47 I.e., in *Kurjer Warszawski* and *Kurjer Lwowski*; cf. *ZTPT*, vol. 18, p. 467.

48 *ZTPT*, vol. 18, p. 479–482.

many, not most, but in *every situation* – he can outwit and manipulate him. In effect, this appears as a kind of predestination or fate.

In “Hava i Vovkun” the two brothers are reunited again – and again they are out on their luck: Vovkun never was good at making money, but Hava was, and yet he lost it all. They are now back in the countryside having been forced to leave the city – and they are still intent on making their fortune, again. As Vovkun says to Hava as they look over the countryside from a high promontory:

Гляди вниз! Бачиш ті ліси чудові, не тикані ще вирубом, ті полонини, ті стада волів і овець, що по них пасуться, мов плавають, у зелені? Все це мусить бути наше! Не віриш? Вір або не вір, а я тобі кажу, що так воно буде, і не за десять ані за п'ятнадцять літ а за рік або два!⁴⁹

The scary part of the story is that this may not be a vain boast: the dynamic and evidence of the earlier stories, especially of “Hava,” and before that of the Boryslav stories, is that in a confrontation with the peasants, or the city proletariat who only yesterday were peasants, the Jew will always outsmart them. The story ends with just that as the two brothers are turning a small shooting accident into an opportunity to insinuate their way into the manor house of the local Polish landlord and presumably start a new project of manipulating and outwitting the locals. Their parasitic nature seems altogether apparent, and all but explicit.

But the pattern of depictions, or the “national character,” is not all that consistently displayed. In “Do svitla,” a story told in the form of a skaz by an unidentified inmate, the action takes place in a prison and the Jewish character, Jos'ko, who is thrown into a cell with the other prisoners, turns out to be very different – not only in that he, a Jew, is now also a victim, unjustly accused and persecuted, but in that he has noble aspirations – not to make quick money, to turn a shady deal, but to learn, to study. In a pattern that is all too predictable, his fated role of victim plays itself out as he is shot dead by a guard for standing too close to the cell window, which he did because he wanted to be close to the light – so he could read. We also learn at the very end that he was found innocent and was to be released that very day.

The sentimental thrust of the story is telling, particularly since it is put at the author's service, so to speak, of justifying the Jewish character, of stressing his common humanity. Also telling – although at first glance hardly politically correct – is the narrator's emphasis on Jos'ko's physical appearance, on the fact that while to all appearances a Jew, he does not behave as a Jew:

І бачите, ще одна несподіванка в тім хлопчиськові! Постать на скрізь жидівська, аж відразлива, а в натурі його бачилось, що нічого, ані крихітки нема жидівського. Тихий послушний, без жодної дрібочки тої жидівської самохвалби, до гвірки

49 ZPT, vol. 18, p. 170.

неохочий, але коли йому було казати що зробити, то звивався як іскра. Було щось таке натуральне, хлопське в цілій його поведінці. Як не було що робити—а що у нас в казні за робота!—любив сидіти в кутику мовчки, скорчений, обчепивши руками коліна та опершись бородою о коліна, тільки очі йому блищать з темного кутика, як у цікавої мишки.⁵⁰

This dissonance between the position of the author, whose story generally argues the positive nature and common humanity of Jos'ko, and that of the unidentified but emphasized narrator, whose voice recounts the story that articulates the author's will, but does so as if reluctantly, as if against his prejudice as to what the Jewish characters are supposed to be ("Постать на скрізь жидівська, аж відразлива..."), is perhaps most telling. In a sense, it seems a planned counterpoint, almost a thematization of cognitive dissonance, where the nature of who and what Jos'ko was and existentially is, has a hard time getting through, and comes through, in fact, against the reflexes and "common sense" that accompany this narrator like they would any other "normal" narrator with all his prejudices; in effect, it is realized through an aporia.⁵¹

A direct thematization of this – of the notion of race and of national character as not just a prejudice, but as a hoax, an aporia writ large – is the story "Chysta rasa." In it the narrator, who sounds very much like Franko, the author, tells of an encounter on a train ride from Budapest to Galicia in the summer of 1895 during which he has occasion to listen to a fellow traveler, a stately Hungarian nobleman, rich and self-assured, traveling with his young and handsome adolescent son, hold forth on various things, not least of them race. (The Jewish theme is very much in the center of the story, there is a Jewish character that ends up taking part in the trip in precisely this compartment through a benign but self-serving gesture of the Hungarian; the notorious ritual blood libel case and trial of Tiszaeszlar of 1882–1883 is alluded to; and even the different status, the pecking order of Jews vis à vis the Hungarians above them and the Ruthenians/Ukrainians below them is all brought out, but this is the background not the central focus of the story.) The focus is straightforward: the Hungarian nobleman holds forth on race, or more exactly on racial purity – and, naturally, its desirability – and his argument is pointed and deadly. There are superior and inferior races. Take the Jews, he says, pointing to his fellow traveler, a poor Jew whom he has just

50 *ZIPT*, vol. 18, p. 104.

51 Thus too cf. the beginning of part 3, where the narrator tells how the inmates first came to see Jos'ko in the daylight: "Тільки другого дня ми могли добре оглянути новака. Аж смішно мені стало, що а міг учора підразу не пізнати в ним жида. Рудий, з пейсами, ніс витягнутий, як у старого яструба, постава скорчена, хоть на свої літа зовсім не марна, і доброго росту. Поглянувши на нього, бачилося, що на десять кроків чуєш запах жида. А вчора, коли ми його натрапили напотемки і тільки слова його чули, зовсім того не було можна доміркуватися!"; *ibid.*

befriended by paying for his ticket, but also just threatened to throw out of the train (like he did his pipe) because he, the Jew, didn't want to right away smoke the cigar the nobleman had offered him instead of his stinking pipe: they are a used up race ("Ся раса пережила вже своє. То стара, зужита проржавіла раса... Є в ній зароди цивілізації, та нема того розмаху, тої сили росту, що в нашій мадярській."). Yes, the Hungarian race is an up-and-coming race – "...се найважливіше. Широкий розмах, енергія!" For look, he continues, pointing through the window at Ukrainian peasants trudging by the track – for they can't pay for the train ticket:

Прошу поглянути на он тих дикарів. – Поперед вікна вагона знов мигнула компанія русинів, мов ключ сірих журавлів у лету на південь. – Тут один позирк вистарчить щоби зрозуміти, що се знов інша раса, дика, непосібна до цивілізації, вимираюча, мов американські індіани при зближенні європейців. До тих руснаків ніякий поступ не доходить, їх ніякий розвій не доторкається, над ними страчена всяка культурна робота. Вони мусять вигинути тай годі.

That is the core of the Ukrainian predicament: to be cast as an ultimately "other, wild race, incapable of civilization, fated to disappear, like the American Indians at the approach of the Europeans." And then the narrator adds, he must have known what he was talking about, but I didn't ("Він сказав се так рішуче, безапелційно, що я й не думав сперечатися з ним. Він мусив се знати, а я не знав").⁵² While the Hungarian keeps holding forth on how the Hungarian race should not even think of mixing its blood with an inferior race, no Magyarization of the Rusyns, thank you, he also waxes eloquent about his servant Janos ("отсе расовий маляр! Чудо не чоловік. ...душа в тобі росте, кріпшає віра в велику будучину нації, що може видавати такі одиниці")⁵³.

For all practical purposes the story could end here. For today's reader it would be enough. But Franko is writing for his reader – before political correctness and not knowing yet of the Holocaust. So Franko provides a pointe: at the end of the story he reads in a Hungarian paper in Lviv of a gentlemen by the same name as his fellow traveler on the train who was robbed and abducted by a gang of thieves of unknown nationality, whose ringleader was a certain Janos. No trace of victim or robbers had been found.

One may question the realism of the story: in its pragmatics it is a cautionary tale, almost a moral allegory. But its realism is also not to be doubted: were there no robberies and murders in Hungary of the kind described here? And did not many of such victims hold precisely the views espoused by the noble gentleman? The real question, but also a rhetorical one, is how could the author, Franko,

52 *ZTPT*, vol. 20, p. 22.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

having shared this with the reader, be considered a believer in superior and inferior races?

The issue of “ideal realism” – as both oxymoron and as a plausible narrative strategy – is summarized in the novel *Perekhresni stezhky* (1900), which may also be considered Franko’s most developed, and “mature” statement on the Ukrainian-Jewish relations. (It certainly comes closer to the end of his work on it, and it follows by some years his dramatic break in 1897 both with the Polish community, i.e., the “Ein Dichter des Verrates” imbroglio regarding the role of Mickiewicz, and his clash with his own Ukrainian community with “Nie Kocham Rusinów” also in that year. His readiness to speak his mind on controversial issues would seemingly have ripened also with respect to the Jewish-Ukrainian question.) In itself, the novel may also be considered the closest Franko comes to writing his “ideal” social novel, in effect finally touching all the bases he had wanted to touch. But that, alas, is no compliment and literally a mixed achievement. While written with much improved narrative skill, certainly much better than his debut piece, it remains a pot-boiler, mixing symbolic autobiography (one’s own unrequited earlier love; one’s self-projection as a Ukrainian activist pained by the obtuseness of his own people, especially the ever-suspicious and conservative peasantry, and with even a detour into the language question, i.e., why write in Ukrainian?), with extensive social commentary and intrigue (with much attention to class warfare, but no less to the obtuseness of the local bureaucracy and the local petty bourgeoisie) and above all with the ever-present sensationalism and lurid melodrama (again the long-lost love; the former tutor and now false friend and out-and-out sadist, who is that love’s brutish husband; her killing of that brute, with *both* a mallet and cleaver – and in a raging storm at that; robbery; and then her suicide-drowning assisted by the degenerate and homicidal servant Baran) and much more. Within this mix, the “serious” issues, as I have argued elsewhere, cannot but be affected by the totality, they are only as strong as the fabric that binds them together.⁵⁴ This is particularly true of the Jewish character Vagman who appears here as a kind of anti-Boa constrictor, a rich Jew, a usurer in fact, who outraged by the iniquity of the Poles, which led to the death of his son, now wants in revenge to economically help the Ukrainian peasants bring down their common enemy, the Poles. As interesting and fraught as his discussions with Resselberg, his fellow Jew, and now town mayor, may be on the Jewish question in general and specifically on the animosity that non-Jews have towards them, seeing them as parasites, and so on, they are all still part of the perfervid fabric of the novel – and as such are constricted and ultimately vitiated by it.⁵⁵ The “ideal realism” postulated by Franko many years earlier is now

54 Cf. my “The Jewish Theme in Ukrainian Literature,” pp. 337–338.

55 Thus, e.g., Vagman’s exhortation to Resselberg: “...нарід нас уважає своїми найбільшими

brought up short by his own eclectic, ad hoc and contradictory artistic practice. The work of fiction cannot fulfill the tasks placed upon it and as an esthetic entity basically collapses under the weight of its disparate unassimilated and distorting elements. This pattern – because it is hardly an isolated issue, it is in fact a context – brings into sharp focus a major aporia in the critical tradition, in effect, of consistently turning a blind eye to Franko’s various artistic failures. It almost seems that a major consequence of the “*kamenjar*” paradigm, of “Franko-the-hewer-of-the-rock,” the “giant of labor” (*veleten’ praci*), etc., which informs not only the popular and populist discourse but is fully integrated into the critical and indeed the academic discourse as well, is to programmatically, ontologically, disregard and thus delegitimize the central issue of esthetic value. Ideological value becomes paramount. The consequences of this are far-reaching for the critical reception of the writer for it blurs not only the esthetic import of his works, but also their pragmatics and ideology.

* * *

Before summing up this issue, however, one must still briefly address the paired phenomena of Franko’s seemingly totally unmediated and polar – both negative and positive – depictions of Jews within the frame of Jewish-Ukrainian relations. The first, the negative, is arguably best expressed by the poem “Shvindelesa Parkhenblyta vandrivka z sela Derykhlopy do Ameryky i nazad” published in the satiric journal *Zerkalo* in 1884. The work is an unfinished satiric and burlesque poem written, as his recent biographer argues, at the height of Franko’s critical involvement with the Jewish question in Galicia: in fact, along with his long, but unsigned article, “Pytannja zhydivs’ke” that had appeared in 1883 on the first page of the leading Ukrainian Galician newspaper *Dilo*, this poem, he avers, constitutes the heart of Franko’s anti-Semitism.⁵⁶ Virtually all the critics who

п’явками, а прийде що до чого – найменша іскра, і вибухне огонь, і жида – ми всі, винні й невинні – будуть відповідати за всі ті гріхи, яких не раз ані вони не сповнили, ані їх батьки, ані діди”; *ZTPT*, vol. 20, p. 387. This is also the very text that was cited in the Profil article <http://www.profil.at/articles/1343/560/368421/iwan-franko-denkmalstreit-nationalhelden> (last access October 2014) and then again in an open letter rebutting it by several Ukrainian critics and writers, http://zaxid.net/news/showNews.do?ivan_franko_ta_yevreyi_z_privodu_falsifikatu_v_zhurnali_profil&objectId=1297806 (last access October 2014).

56 Yaroslav Hrytsak, “A Strange Case of Antisemitism,” *Shatterzone of Empires*, Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weits, editors, Indiana University Press, 2013, pp. 228–242, here pp. 231–235. “Pytannja zhydivs’ke” (*Dilo*, No. 1994, 20 August (1 September), p. 1) is not easily available and I was not able to consult it. (Kudriavtsev does not feel it is Franko’s and does not include it in his bibliography; the recent consensus is that it is, although the arguments for ascribing it to Franko are not given: cf. Hrytsak, *op. cit.*) It was not included in the 50 vol. edition of Franko’s works (*ZTPT*), nor in the 2 volumes of Ivan Franko’s works that were bypassed by it, i. e., Ivan Franko, *Mozajika I*, Lviv, 2001 and Ivan Franko, *Mozajika II*, Lviv, 2009 – but that, of course,

comment on this poem refer to it as marginal and esthetically weak;⁵⁷ none of them, however, devote any attention to the poem – other than passing references.

But what needs to be noted at this juncture is that satire is unquestionably one of Franko's strongest suits: he devotes much attention to it, both in poetry and prose and to the extent that it is commensurate with publicistic writing – and it certainly is – in his various essays as well. Characteristically, he does not pull punches and gladly satirizes various targets – in terms of ethnicity, both Poles and Jews, as we have seen, and Ukrainians not least of all (cf. his “Botokudy,” or “Tsekhmistr Kyprian,” or “Nie Kocham Rusinów”); virtually every class or profession (capitalists, teachers, priests, peasants, landowners, academicians and others); and in virtually all the genres he writes in (thus his much acclaimed “lyrical drama,” *Zivjale lystja* [1896, 1910] is replete with satiric elements, not to speak of such narrative works as *Lys Mykyta*, “Pans'ki zharty” and others). He is also capable of satirizing and parodying himself, particularly in moments relating to his symbolic autobiography.⁵⁸ In effect, this is a default mode for Franko and his satiric or parodic works deserve special attention: they convey, I would argue, a presumption of centrality, and perhaps quality as well.

“Shvindeles Parkhenblyt” is not a comedic masterpiece, and it clearly is not politically correct, drawing as it does on the basic stereotype of the wily and duplicitous Jew – with his name itself highly derogatory and insulting.⁵⁹ But in its mode of the trickster tale it is at times funny – and it achieves this primarily through the bad Ukrainian that Shvindeles speaks, where gender and case endings are seldom if ever correct, and where the numerous yiddishisms give the narrative a kind of presumption of authenticity. The gentiles, here the Ukrainian peasants, are also depicted exclusively through presumed Jewish stereotypes – as “marks” to be conned, or as brutes to be avoided. In this it continues the attitudes described in the earlier Boryslav stories and in the stories from the “Ne spytavshy brodu” cycle discussed earlier; as such it cannot be said to depict a greater sense of conflict than those stories do, and unlike *Boa constrictor* and *Boryslav smijetsja*

merely reflects the pattern of omitting practically everything on the Jewish theme that Franko wrote. In the introduction to *Mozajika I* both the article and the poem are mentioned, but merely to cryptically note that they were too “sensitive” to handle in this edition (op. cit., p. 11). The article was not reprinted by the MAUP publishing house which specializes in printing provocative and anti-Semitic material; however, “Shvindeles Parkhenblyt” was published, cf. Pantelejmon Kulish, Mykola Kostomarov, Ivan Franko, *Zhydotrepanije*, MAUP, Kyiv, 2005, pp. 318–355; cf. below. By framing certain writings in this way MAUP was also promoting its own anti-Semitic agenda; cf. below.

57 Cf. Jakym Horak, “Lysty Volodymyra Shukhevycha do Ivana Franka,” *Ukrajins'ke literaturoznavstvo, Zbirnyk naukovykh prac'*, Vypusk 68, 2006, pp. 306–343; here, p. 310; cf. also Yaroslav Hrytsak, *ibid.*, p. 232.

58 Cf. my “Vozhdivstvo i rozdojennja: ‘valenrodyzm’ Franka,” in *Teksty i masky*, Kyiv, 2005.

59 “Shvindeles,” of course, plays on “swindling” and “Parkhenblyt” could be a variant of “Drachenblut” with the substitution of the Ukrainian root from “parkhy/parkhatyj” (scabby).

it does not substantiate with “analysis” and narrative the topos of Jewish exploitation (although it does refer to it, especially at the outset). Instead, and more directly, it plays the otherness of Jews and the vagaries of the trickster tale largely for laughs. Most of all, the first person narrative, for all its comic and derogatory tinges, does lead the reader, *nolens volens*, to identify with the title character. If the poem is anti-Semitic, as various features suggest and as critics like Hrytsak and Roman Mnich argue, it is not of a programmatic and dehumanizing kind, and its hero is hardly more rapacious than various characters that Franko had depicted earlier.⁶⁰ The suggestion that the entire Jewish community is depicted in the mode of Shvindeles is not born out.⁶¹ In general, the comic and parodic elements of the poem dilute its hero’s negativity. Much more nuance, however, is introduced by the texts that precede and then follow this poem in Franko’s broader development of the Jewish theme.

In the aftermath of the pogroms of 1881 Franko wrote two other poems, “Pir’ja” (1882) and “Sambation” (1883), that subsequently became part of his cycle “Zhydivs’ki melodiji,” in the collection *Z vershyn i nyzyn* (1887) and then again in the greatly expanded second edition of 1893. In a footnote he directly refers to the pogroms in Russian Ukraine and speaks of the various forms of the popular Jewish response to it in Galicia, ranging from psalm-like laments imploring God’s help to humorous mockery of excessive fears.⁶² The two poems included here are thus a kind of preliminary illustration for this range of responses. Both also reflect Franko’s interests in Jewish folklore and apocrypha. The first tells the story of how King David will come from the other world, the

60 Cf. e.g., Hrytsak, “A Strange Case of Antisemitism” and his “Mizh semityzmozom i antysemityzmozom: Ivan Franko i jevrejs’ke pytannja” and Roman Mnich, “Franko i jevreji”, <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/doslidzhennya/937-roman-mnykh-ivan-franko-i-iev-rei>; cf. also his *Ivan Franko im Kontext mit Theodor Herzl und Martin Buber*, Konstanz, 2012.

61 Hrytsak’s argument that one of the stereotypes being utilized here is that the entire Jewish community is in on the exploitation of the “goyim” and that religious authority, the Talmud, condones it (“What is also worth noting is his emphasis on the solidarity of Jews versus their victims. Jews were exploiting peasants because Talmud permitted them to do so. So exploitation of Christians, according to him, was at the core of Jewish identity. Franko implicitly extends responsibility for this exploitation to the whole Jewish community”; “A Strange Case of Antisemitism”, pp. 232–233; cf. also his “Mizh semityzmozom i antysemityzmozom”) is not born out by the poem itself. When Shvindeles goes to visit the Tsadyk (part 3), this issue is not discussed and all the rabbi says to him, other than to get him to make a donation, is basically “Не лякайся жадне цурес,/ Ворогів ти всіх обдуриш—/ А сам вийдеш ціло! Klal,— “, *Zhydotrepanie*, p. 335.

62 “Після відомих жидівських погромів на Україні в р. 1881 панувало між нашими жидами, особливо на Підгір’ю, велике занепокоєння. Носились дивовижні слухи, тривожні оповісті, зловіщі пророкування. Жидівські народні співаки склали навіть пісні про ті факти, то гумористично висміваючи жидівську тривогу, то наслідуючи тон давніх псалмів і благаючи Сгову о поміч... Оце й були сюжети двох перших “Жидівських мелодій”.” *Mozaika I*, p. 27.

fantastic boiling sea of Sambation, to save his people in their moment of extreme trial. The second, "Pir'ja," (actually written earlier) is a lament at the destruction unleashed by the pogroms, but one that is undercut by the bathos of adding to the various stanzas of the poem (e. g., the opening lines: Розвіяне злими юрбами,/ Мов снігу платки з-над руїн,/ Летиш ти до хмари з вітрами,...) the refrain, "О, пір'я з жидівських перин" i. e. the flying feathers from the feather beds.⁶³ The incongruity may be comic, but it is also, especially from our perspective today, insensitive: it ends up mocking not so much the "Jewish fears" that Franko mentions in the note, as the victimization itself.⁶⁴ That discordant note aside, these poems do set the scene, and they introduce the fundamental issue of a Jewish perspective on the Jewish predicament. But they hardly prepare the reader for the remarkable evolution of the Jewish theme that occurs between the first and second edition of *Z vershyn i nyzyn*.

Its articulation was both intense and rapid, in effect, in the course of four weeks in the late summer of 1889, by his own dating between August 21 and September 20, during which time Franko was in prison (i. e., between Aug. 16 and Oct. 20, 1889) on trumped up charges of supposedly seeking the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (by hosting some students from Russian Ukraine). While in prison, among other works, he wrote 6 poems – "Asimilatoram," "Zapovit Jakova," "Surka," "U Tsadyka," "Z ljubovy," and "Po ljuds'ky" (totaling almost 2,200 lines) – which would constitute the great bulk (more than 90 %) of the whole cycle of "Zhydivs'ki melodiji." This period of incarceration was generally productive for his creativity: in addition to the poems for "Zhydivs'ki melodiji" he also wrote his "Tjuremni sonety" (Prison sonnets) and the already discussed story "Do svitla".⁶⁵ In fact we learn from his own words – his letter to Drahomanov of Nov. 11, 1889, after he had been released, that it was a particularly difficult time for him, when compared to his earlier imprisonment – and that his conversations with the Jewish prisoners had been particularly meaningful for him: "Мене самого тюрма сим разом страшно придавила. Я думав, що зійду з ума, хоч сам не знав, що саме мене так болить. В казні я цілими днями нідокого не говорив і слова, особливо, коли не стало жидів, з котрими всяка розмова була интересна".⁶⁶ In effect it became a rare opportunity to con-

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

64 To cast it, as does Hrytsak, as "true sympathy for the victims" ("Mizh semityznom i anty-semityznom," p. 89) is to miss the basic tone of the poem – and the central aporia here. The *Zhydotrepanie* published by MAUP includes the poem, along with "Shvindeles Parkhenblyt" (cf. pp. 359–360) – presumably intuiting an echo of animus or mockery. This, however, is not real evidence: the other Franko poem that is included in this edition, "Opivnich. Hlukho. Zymno. Viter vije" has no apparent relation to the Jewish theme.

65 Cf. Jakym Jarema, *Khronolohija zhyttja i tvorchosti Ivana Franka*, Lviv, 2006, pp. 50–51.

66 Cf. *ZTPT*, vol. 49, p. 219.

front – personally and existentially – the issue of common humanity. The results of this are far-reaching, especially for his elaboration of the Jewish theme.

The formal and structural feature that differentiates these poems from the bulk of his other writings is that they are all told from the Jewish perspective, they are all told from within. They may, as with “Asymilatoram,” continue in the mode of a collective response to general oppression (as did “Sambation” and “Pir’ja”) by presenting an apocryphal version of the story of Jacob and the Pharaoh (Genesis 47,7) where instead of the Patriarch bowing to Pharaoh and blessing him, God himself keeps him from having to acknowledge Pharaoh’s dominance. Similarly, “Zapovit Jakova” will provide not a canonic, but an apocryphal story: Jacob’s prophecy will concern not his sons and the future of the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 49), but will tell his descendants how to bury him by the roadside so he can hear their suffering, how they should await the dawn of freedom and the punishment of Egypt for its persecution of the Jews, and finally his request that his bones be taken to the promised land when the Jews depart from Egypt. The final four poems, which are well over three fourths of the cycle, tell personal stories, however, – and they develop a remarkable and affecting turn of the theme.

“Surka,” as Franko later tells his mentor Drahomanov, is a story he heard in prison from his Jewish cellmate, Hershon, the horse thief.⁶⁷ It is the personal account of a poor Jewish woman, homely and uneducated, who is exploited by her masters, a Jewish tavern keeper and his wife. The man gets her with child, and when his wife sees it, she drives Surka away, penniless, without her wages, into a freezing storm; the man, of course, does not intervene to help. As she is about to freeze along with her child in the storm (the echoes of Shevchenko’s “Kateryna” are apparent) she comes upon a peasant house and leaves her child by the window and then goes off to die in a snowdrift. But she is rescued by a policeman; and the peasants had taken in the child, and take her in as well. It is a wonder to her that common people can show basic compassion. At the end, even though she faces prison (for attempting suicide?) she is happy that she has her child with her.

“U Tsadyka” tells the story of a Jewish merchant, Elkun, who begins to have pangs of conscience when he sees the destruction of his Jewish competitor in whose downfall he had a hand (forcing his bankruptcy). He sees no future in continuing his usual scheming and moneymaking and in the end he disappears. It later turns out he left the city and hired himself out as a worker to a local farmer – there he felt happy and unsullied. Now his wife has had him kidnapped and brought to the Tsadyk (the story is told in her voice) whom she asks to exorcise the dybbyk (devil) that now possesses her husband – i. e., the new conscience that Elkun has acquired.

67 Cf. *Lystuvannja Ivana Franka ta Mykhajla Drahomanova*, Lviv, 2006, p. 389.

“Z ljubovy,” a longer narrative (subtitled in its first edition “opovidannja konokrada,” i. e., of the same Hershon⁶⁸), tells the sad story of a Jewish man who marries not for money, but for love and encounters setbacks and unhappiness at every step. Out of love he is even willing to divorce his wife so they can live separately, but not in misery. Indeed he himself wants to live not from money grubbing, or from crime (he in fact is a horsethief), but off the land. His constant setbacks somehow give the story a certain moral authenticity – they show not a *Geschäftsmann* but a simple and sympathetic individual who cannot seem to find personal happiness in the dominant value system of his community. In the frame of Franko’s earlier stories, it again draws attention to the general human predicament – because the issue of outsiders (gentiles, etc.) is not brought in: the unhappiness and misery emerges from one’s own environment.

And finally the longest of the poems, “Po ljuds’ky,” – an involved narrative that traces the story of Khaim over his seventy odd years as he is transformed from an accomplice of the Polish gentry’s exploitative and cruel rule, the basic lawlessness of serfdom, to a kind and normal individual. Though a Jew, he lives at the end of his life with his sons and extended family on the land, drawing happiness and sustenance from it. In many ways, of course, this anticipates the Zionist ideal – of organic self-sufficiency, of renewal and hope through work and contact with the land; and specifically here, too – engaging the peasant community as a neighbor. This of course, comes over many years, with much suffering and setbacks – but it is shown as achievable.

This can be seen, of course, as a form of ideal realism, even a kind of precursor of socialist realism⁶⁹, but here it seems to work precisely because a narrative authenticity has been found; the characters speak for themselves and sound authentic, because their authenticity is anchored in their own voices – not the author’s various literary and often hackneyed devices. The overall effect, is one of real, or “found” sociology – not a stage set. As already seen in “Do svitla” (a story also stemming from the prison experience), the key enabling moment here is the narrating of experience.

But there is a final component to Khaim’s story, an ethical one – in which God himself plays a role. And He comes into the picture through the workings of a genuinely righteous man, Shaja Lajb, who appears at the end of the poem (parts 9–

68 Cf. *ZIPT*, vol 1, p. 481.

69 Characteristically, the Soviet approach was to censor Franko’s “Zvydivs’ki melodiji,” and thus the first four poems of the cycle were not reprinted in the 50 vol. “academic” edition. And understandably so: why disseminate a perspective on national identity, i. e., the Jewish national identity that places so much emphasis on the transcendent, symbolic and indeed religious? The latter four poems, however, were seemingly well-suited to a socialist-realist interpretation, but the Jewish theme was basically taboo and critical commentary on it was not encouraged.

12), first as one who saves Khaim from destruction at the hands of the ruthless Polish landlord to whom Khaim is indebted, and then emerges as a man who is both simple and honest, and at the same time highly successful; in fact he is a paragon of virtue, committed to doing good and fighting evil, not by words, but by deeds – as by funding a hospital for the poor in the town of Zhovkva. Shaja Lajb's end is most telling. He goes to the funeral of a Jewish tavernkeeper, Majlekh, known for his piety, but in fact, along with other family members, a usurer. Majlekh was renowned in his community for never turning a poor man or beggar away, but giving him ten cents – and recording it; thus in his lifetime he gave away 28,000 ten cent pieces (shistky). Hearing the constant repetition of this feat Shaja Lajb decides to tell the gathered mourners a dream he had. It was of Majlekh's last judgment where he comes to God bearing the many sacks of his coins which he had given to the poor, which God asks him to put on the scales and then asks Majlekh whether this money was earned honestly, and the little “no” that he has to say is also put on the scales on the other side and the bags of coins fly up like a feather. God banishes the cheat from His presence. For their part the community is outraged at this parable – they turn on Shaja Lajb (a true righteous man) and nearly beat him to death. He flees to find refuge in Khaim's place and soon dies there. The poem's last lines contextualize this tale even further: the community without such true righteous people like Shaja Lajb, *and without enlightenment* is destined to be “dark and rotten”; the times of the patriarchs may have been the golden age of the Jews, but the people were still in slavery in Egypt. And it was only the revolutionary prophet, Moses, who could raise them from slavery to build a new world:

Без таких людей земля би
 Сталась темна і гнила.
 Може, то й за патріархів
 Золоті часи були,
 Та все-таки патріархи
 Люд жидівський завели
 У Єгипет у неволю,
 Аж пророк-убійця встав,
 З невгомним, диким серцем,
 Тих невольників підняв.
 Вивів їх в пустиню дику,
 Водив блудом сорок літ,
 Та навчив їх здобувати,
 Збудувати новий світ.⁷⁰

The centrality of “Zhydivs'ki melodiji” in Franko's work on the Jewish theme, and indeed in his entire corpus, is evident. Apart from further developing the con-

70 *ZPT*, vol. 1, p. 269.

stituent theme of social justice, which carries over from earlier works and will continue on to the end of his writing, its most striking contribution is the validation of the Jewish experience and the Jewish perspective – associated, to be sure, with the social perspective. The breakthrough moment of the entire cycle, culminating with the broad narrative sweep of “Po ljuds’ky” and its various Jewish voices, is the stress on the ethical dimension, the conviction that it trumps other values, if necessary, even that of community solidarity. As such it can be seen as a new fundamental criterion for progress and interethnic peace between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities.

* * *

The unequivocally positive projection of the Jews and the Jewish question occurs, of course, in Franko’s final long poem, *Mojsej* (1905, 1913). It also culminates his virtually life-long engagement with the Jewish theme. On the thematic, surface and ideological level, and as consistently argued in a long critical tradition, it is effected through the identification between two oppressed, and, as many, especially recent Ukrainian commentators rushed to add, stateless peoples – the Ukrainians and the Jews. Beneath this evident and more-or-less plausible parallel lies the more fundamental common ground: the role of prophecy that Franko takes upon himself and – assuming the heroic model of Moses – implicitly casts himself as the nation’s poet-prophet, leading it out of slavery into a new world.⁷¹

A couple of qualifications are in order. To begin, the notion of “unequivocally positive” does not mean not seeing flaws: both the Jews of Moses’ time and the Ukrainians of Franko’s are shown with all their flaws, respectively in both the poem and Franko’s overall oeuvre; the sense of the positive inheres in the unqualified value that the nation poses, and the prophet’s, and poet’s commitment to it. This, in fact, is the basic common ground that allows Franko to assume Moses’ role and in the process – as distant from each other as they may seem to be in historical time – to equate the roles and destinies of the Jewish and Ukrainian peoples. Clearly, too, this spells the end of any incipient or latent Judeophobia: the power of this model of self-abnegation in the face of serving one’s people – now directly shown to be patterned on the “other” – is so strong that it cannot tolerate the pettiness and meanness of stereotype and prejudice.⁷² The poet, in short, is also recasting himself as a spokesman for universal human values (a process initiated some fifteen years earlier in his “Zhydivs’ki melodiji”). Along with the ethical comes an opening up to the role of the sacred, to a sense that the

71 Cf. my “Franko i prorocstvo,” *Teksty i masky*, op. cit.

72 Arguably, this is also born out in his partially autobiographical, partially publicistic “Moji znajomi zhydy,” 1907–08 (?), *Mozajika*, I, pp. 335–347.

poetry that changes the thinking and reorients the path of whole collectives, whole nations, cannot but be, or strive to be, prophetic. In effect, this reorients basic priorities and values: the empirical and the satiric, realism and even “ideal realism,” as well as the tactics of struggle for social equality, become less important in the face of poetry’s new prophetic role and are reoriented by it.

* * *

Finally, one can briefly note three moments, which point to some unexamined facets of Franko’s creativity – and directly or indirectly cast light on the Jewish theme. While different, all are interconnected. The first pertains to what in earlier treatments I had referred to as Franko’s “symbolic autobiography,” in effect his readiness to project his deeper, concealed and fraught sense of himself onto his creative work. This is primarily located in his late poetry, such long poems as “Smert’ Kajina,” “Ivan Vyshens’kyj,” “Pokhoron,” and “Mojsej,” which deal with such fundamental questions as doubt in one’s own calling and claim to authority (fundamentally in “Mojsej”) and indeed in one’s identity (the motif of the double, particularly in “Pokhoron”). If we now look back at Franko’s earliest prose work, the jejune and pot-boiler *Petriji i Dovbushchyky*, we can see in the peripeteia of the plot, in the character of the Jew, Isaac Blejberg, who is in many respects a quintessential Jewish go-between and facilitator, and also the one intent on reforming the Jewish community and who is rejected by it, and who in the end turns out not to be a Jew at all, not only a precursor of the character Vagman, and some of the characters of “Zhydivs’ki melodiji,” but, more fundamentally, a kind of concealed alter ego of the author himself. The nuances of this are still to be examined, but the essential cathexis, it seems to me, is there – and the fact that during his life Franko, in some quarters, was considered a Jew is not inconsequential here.⁷³

The second and third moments are closely connected. As was noted more than once, the critical literature – primarily the philological – still has not come up with a persuasive canonic take on the various facets of Franko’s creativity, their immanent weight or importance. There are surely differences between attitudes expressed in a journalistic article (“Pytannja zhydivs’ke”) and a satirical, popular poem (“Shvindeles Parkhenblyt”). How does one parse them? If there are differences between them, which expresses the “more authentic” or “more essential” Franko? (The question might seem specious, were it not for the fact that in what is one of his most important works, i. e. “Pokhoron,” Franko himself directly postulates a radical disconnect between himself as a public figure and as a

73 That this is given only passing mention in Hrytsak’s otherwise interesting and detailed biography is something of a missed opportunity; cf. *op cit.*, pp. 59 and 458.

poet – and does so in a highly inspired and esthetically satisfactory way.) Clearly, this cannot but have importance for our understanding of his articulation of the Jewish theme. In effect, as much as he himself is blurring the boundaries between his self-expression in poetry, prose and journalism by writing on similar issues in all of these modes, the “specific gravity” of what is expressed by them is different. Risking premature generalization, I would argue that over his creative life-span the privileged mode is the poetry, then the publicistic-journalistic work, and lastly the prose, which is all-too-often hack work. (Scholarship, obviously, stands apart: Franko is a fine and competent critic – although predisposed to be acerbic and at times inordinately polemical; with respect to some fellow writers, for example, Pantelejmon Kulish, he is consistently mean-spirited.) In matters of self-definition, the primacy of the poetry is unquestionable.

The third moment is altogether general and systemic: the state of Franko studies seems to persuasively show that volume does not signify quality (and that the bulk of Soviet and post Soviet Frankiana is stillborn) and that some areas of investigation, the Jewish theme especially, are still in their infancy. One can take comfort in the expectation, stemming from the new research now appearing, that what will come will be markedly better.

Part of that improvement, one may hope, will be a recalibration of analytical tools, terms and reference points. The tactic of positioning Franko between the poles of “philosemitism” and “anti-Semitism” may perhaps intimate the range and contradictory nature of his attitudes, but is hardly satisfactory. The qualities inferred are not symmetrical: the historical negativity of anti-Semitism, especially after the Holocaust, is so laden and essential that it easily overshadows any positive moments projected by the opposite term, the philosemitism.⁷⁴ More fundamentally, the issue at hand concerns not labels or positions but clusters of attitudes, values and narrative strategies – which are in movement, often ambivalent, and clearly evolving. Most importantly, as I had hoped to show, the mechanical transposition of notions and categories from political science or historical study to the realm of literature is done at some peril: while the terms (or labels) may be the same, their content is different. It goes without saying that the literary content – which reaches psychological and archetypal depths not always open to political and historical commentary – can be adequately accessed and examined only by the tools and means appropriate to it.

74 It should be noted that Hrytsak does speak to the fact, with reference to Peter Gay, etc., that the phenomenon of anti-Semitism has undergone significant evolution in the course of the decades; cf. also his reference to “progressive antisemitism”; “A Strange Case of anti-semitism,” *op cit.*, pp. 235–238. While part of the historical context, the notion of “progressive antisemitism” is also inherently problematic, however – and the response of those who took umbrage at it is not surprising: one cannot be expected to accept such qualifications if one is implicitly looking at the phenomenon not in historical, but in ethical terms.

