

“There is only one Ukrainian people!”: Ukrainian Canadians, symbols of self, and the  
negotiation of legitimacy in Cold War Canada

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Homelands, argues Frances Swyripa, are powerful sources for symbols of identity amongst diaspora communities.<sup>1</sup> The majority of symbols are nostalgic interpretations of objectified figures or objects that become familiar because of their association with specific groups. The incorporation of symbols by immigrant communities hints at their concern of preserving fragments of the Old World in a foreign and often incongruous environment. Their use also suggests that immigrant groups were deeply occupied with situating themselves within the ‘safe’ bounds of Canadian society.

The symbols incorporated by Ukrainians upon their arrival in Canada reflected these trends. The organized community deliberately picked figures and objects that could be molded into representations of the past that were inoffensive to the dominant (and largely xenophobic) Canadian narrative. For example, things like the Cossack or the embroidered peasant blouse were popular because of their accessibility to both community members and so-called ‘outsiders’. They were simple - yet vivid - and signified an “unambiguous national stereotype”.<sup>2</sup>

Ironically, many symbols began to exist independently of their homeland specificities, romanticizing, mythologizing, and distorting their Old World past in the process. Indeed, Taras Shevchenko, the most noteworthy of Ukrainian poets, had never set foot in Canada, never lived under Austro-Hungarian rule as most of the émigrés had, and had died before mass migration to Canada. Yet, he became extremely important to early manifestations of Ukrainian Canadian identity as he “[lightened] their burdens, gave birth to hope in their hearts for a brighter future and urged them to struggle for its realization”.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, despite his strong patriotism and calls for an independent Ukraine, Shevchenko could be reformatted as politically innocuous.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the greatest interest in Shevchenko stemmed from the fact that he belonged to the romantic nineteenth century movement of nation building, participating in nationalist political organizations throughout his life. His works combined competent and moving prose with the

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes, Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian State* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 160-165.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 160-165.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Shevchenko in Canada* (Toronto: The Ukrainian Canadian, 1961), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Aya Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity: Japanese, Ukrainians, and Scots, 1919-1971* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 68.

political project of unifying often disparate and polylinguistic peoples. Shevchenko's writing was consciously designed to instill nationalist ideas in populations, coalescing criticism of the Russian tsar with deep sympathies for the plight of the peasant and serf. In Canada, Shevchenko as a propagator of Ukrainian identity took on new forms, as he assisted in the articulation and consciousness-building of a distinct Ukrainian diaspora. This was especially relevant in the postwar period, when pronounced factions emerged within the community.<sup>5</sup> The split was largely ideological, separating Ukrainians into distinct assemblages and organizations. The Ukrainian Canadian Committee (UCC) emerged to represent nationalist Ukrainians, while the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) and later the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC) spoke on behalf of socialist and communist Ukrainians.<sup>6</sup>

This paper will explore the use and articulation of Shevchenko by various factions within the organized Ukrainian Canadian community in the postwar period. While Shevchenko had long been a popular symbol and catalyzing figure, Cold War tensions coupled with international events resulted in his feverish promotion by both the UCC and AUUC. I argue that Shevchenko cannot be understood as merely an amorphous poet or cultural symbol, but rather as a political and *politicized* figure. In many ways, the struggle over Shevchenko was a struggle for the legitimate inheritance of the Ukrainian people. As the poet was the most cherished in the language, events devoted to him were excellent avenues of recruitment and socio-cultural legitimacy for competing organizations. This legitimacy was especially important when it could transcend international events and serve as a form of social armor against a dominant Canadian society who remained intensely resistant to the inclusion of 'others'.

This paper will also address how changing notions of belonging, citizenship, and 'Canadian-ness' interacted with ideas of whiteness, political utility and the wider social sphere. The story of the creation of a singular voice for organized Ukrainians in Canada shows how the state did not simply act upon its citizens, but was also acted upon in kind. Tracing the way in which competing political factions battled over Shevchenko reveals the larger issue of how the state

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the ideological splits within the Ukrainian community in the postwar period see Lubomyr Luciuk, *Searching for Place: Ukrainian Displaced Persons, Canada, and the Migration of Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> The AUUC replaced the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) when it was made illegal during the Second World War. The Ukrainian Canadian Committee is now known as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

actively shaped ethnically articulated organizations to their own domestic and geopolitical ends. Despite the Canadian location of this struggle, it was far from a simple internecine or parochial affair. The postwar jockeying over the legacy and inheritance of the poet was part of the transnational and ideological frameworks that constituted the era. Indeed, diaspora politics are global politics, and the fight over political and cultural legitimacy extends well into the political, ideological, and cultural realm.

By the Second World War, Canadian designs of citizenship and identity had shifted away from wholesale suspicion of immigrants and entrenched xenophobia towards a ‘cultural mosaic’ model that would attempt to incorporate - and even celebrate - distinct immigrant cultures. As Ivana Caccia notes, the war had resulted in national anxieties over the potential delicacy of Canada’s collective identity. Fears of Canada’s vitality resulted in heightened desires to reinforce cohesiveness, re-examine the imagined boundaries of nationhood, and accelerate the process of nation building. This would not only include recognizing the French-English duality of Canada, but also its aboriginal and immigrant presence.<sup>7</sup>

The war had also helped solidify overt factions amongst Ukrainians, resulting in increased competition over which group would become the sole, legitimate bearer of the community. As the nationalists were mainly integrated into the war effort (the government played a significant role in the establishment of the UCC), they reinvigorated their symbols to support the long-term goal of Ukrainian independence.<sup>8</sup> They were largely influenced by the literature produced by Canadian elites at the time. The most significant agent of Canadian citizenship was John Gibbon, who attempted to consolidate white, British-Canadian identity through the assimilation of immigrants into ‘Canadian culture’. Gibbon’s intervention was essential to the development and popularization of the ‘Canadian mosaic’.<sup>9</sup> Gibbon had previously written about the impact of Ukrainians on Canadian designs in 1923, commenting, “[these] new flowers...will surely add a

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<sup>7</sup> Ivana Caccia, *Managing the Canadian Mosaic in Wartime: Shaping Citizenship Policy, 1939-1945* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the formation of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, see Bohdan Kordan, *Canada and the Ukrainian Question, 1939-1945* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> See Antonia Smith, “Cement for the Canadian Mosaic: Performing Canadian Citizenship in the Work of John Murray Gibbon,” *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 1:1 (2007).

richness and colour to the present somewhat monotonous Canadian literary garden”.<sup>10</sup> In 1938, he once again wrote of the impact of Ukrainians on Canadian culture, noting that Ukrainians could be described as “a race of poets, musicians, artists,” who have “fixed for all time their national history in the songs of the people which no centuries of oppression could silence. Their greatest poet, Taras Shevchenko,” contended Gibbon “wrote the songs they love best to sing”.<sup>11</sup> The UCC also used their advantageous position to advocate against their communist opponents. Early in the war, they appealed to the government to protect people “led astray by agents of Moscow”, restrict communist activity, and ban communist organizations.<sup>12</sup> State-sanctioned repression of communism eventually led to the illegality of the ULFTA (subsequently replaced by the AUUC), the seizure of its property, and the internment of its leadership.<sup>13</sup> In this context, Shevchenko was politicized, cloaked in the new rhetoric of citizenship and democracy, and transformed into the most significant accolade denoting community legitimacy.

The relatively disadvantaged position of the pro-communist Ukrainians did not stop them from competing over Shevchenko. In fact, their inconsequential status in the eyes of the state may have been responsible responsible for their invigorated efforts to claim Shevchenko as their own. On the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shevchenko’s birth, AUUC leader Matthew Shatulsky honored the

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<sup>10</sup> John Murray Gibbon, “European Seeds in the Canadian Garden,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 25:2 (1923): 123-4.

<sup>11</sup> John Gibbon, *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1938), 299. Several other writers echoed Gibbon and further reinforced the potential of Ukrainians to assimilate. Writing for *Saturday Night*, Charles Roslin noted that in matters of art, “the Ukrainian race is richly endowed, and in particular these people are passionately fond of music, of the dance and of drama”. He praised Ukrainian organizations for giving their community “good music, folk dancing and homemade vernacular drama”. See “Canada’s Bolshevik Drama – Miroslav Irehan, Playwright and Prophet of a Proletarian Revolution,” in *Prophets and Proletarians: Documents on the History of the Rise and Decline of Ukrainian Communism in Canada*, ed. John Kolasky (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990), 72. Similarly, noted academic Watson Kirkconnell wrote that “unheeded by the Anglo-Canadian, they have tenaciously cultivated their handicrafts, music, ballet, drama, fiction, and poetry”. See Watson Kirkconnell, *Canadian Overtones: An Anthology of Canadian Poetry* (Winnipeg: Columbia Press, 1935), 76.

<sup>12</sup> John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979), 22. Matthew Shatulsky, a ULFTA leader, complained “there was not one convention of these fascist organizations at which resolutions were not passed against us; there was not one affair of any kind at which appeals were not made against our organizations to the authorities that they curtail the Ukrainian labour farmer organizations”. See John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion*, 22, 23.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the official repression of communists during the Second World War see Chris Frazer, “From Pariahs to Patriots: Canadian Communists and the Second World War,” *Socialist History Project*, [http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/History/Pariahs\\_to\\_Patriots.htm](http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/History/Pariahs_to_Patriots.htm); Ian Radforth, “Political Prisoners: The Communist Internees,” in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, eds. Franca Iacovetta et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Reg Whitaker, “Official Repression of Communism During World War II”, *Labour/Le Travail* (Spring 1986): 135-166.

poet, writing, “Every Ukrainian citizen should know, not only of Shevchenko, but Shevchenko as he was. To know Shevchenko,” he continued, “means to read his work – not the work that has been censored by all kinds of ‘moralizers,’ not the expurgated versions offered by Ukrainian nationalists, falsified by nationalist literary ‘historians’, reviewers, critics and itinerant authorities of Shevchenko”. Instead, Shevchenko should be read “as [he] wrote it”. Only then could they “better organize the Ukrainian people to struggle with today’s fascist aggressors and their Ukrainian hangers-on”.<sup>14</sup>

Towards the end of the war, the loyalties of the state towards its Ukrainian community shifted. Now an ally, the USSR and its representatives in Canada were - at least officially - preferred by the state.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the political climate and wartime commitments of the day had secured the official acceptability of the AUUC over the UCC. Writing in 1943, Dana Wilgress, a Canadian diplomat in the USSR, told his associates in Ottawa that Soviet authorities had become greatly disturbed over the work of anti-Soviet groups such as the UCC who “not only complicate Canadian-Soviet relations” but also promote “disunity among the Allies”. A 1943 memorandum publicly affirmed Canada’s loyalty, proclaiming “the nationalist elements among the Right Wing Ukrainians will become a greater source of embarrassment” and that “this irredentism among Ukrainian Canadians is being closely followed in Moscow and is resented”.<sup>16</sup> The RCMP was instructed to closely monitor the activity of the UCC, especially its upcoming inaugural Congress.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Shevchenko in Canada*, 41. Reflecting on his internment during the Second World War as a result of his activities in the Ukrainian pro-communist movement, Peter Krawchuk noted the significance of Shevchenko’s work to his senses. Interestingly, Krawchuk notes that Shevchenko’s works had been censored twice before being delivered to him, once in Ottawa and once by the guards at Kananaskis. Peter Krawchuk, “Shevchenko in the Camps,” in *Interned Without Cause*, Socialist History Project, <http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/CPC/WW2/IWC18.htm>

<sup>15</sup> By this time, it is reported that the AUUC has over 60,000 members. For more on AUUC membership numbers see John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: John Kolasky, The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979).

<sup>16</sup> Donald Avery, “Divided Loyalties: The Ukrainian Left and the Canadian State,” in *Canada’s Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity* eds. Lubomyr Luciuk and Stella Hryniuk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 283. The nationalists nonetheless had allies amongst the Canadian elite. Watson Kirkconnell, for example, warned of the activities of the AUUC as dangerous to Canada. “The politics behind their concerts and dances,” he stated, “were the icing on the educational cake, but the cake itself was filled with political arsenic” that would “destroy both Christianity and the British form of government”. Watson Kirkconnell, *Our Canadian Loyalists* (Winnipeg: Ukrainian Canadian Committee, 1943), 20.

<sup>17</sup> Lubomyr Luciuk, *Ukrainians in the Making: Their Kingston Story* (Kingston: The Limestone Press, 1980), 134-137. A private RCMP memo relayed that “no cooperation...is possible between the patriotic Ukrainians in Canada and the revived Communist elements, formerly members of the ULFTA. The Ukrainian Canadian Committee,” it

In this shifting and often contested space, competing factions were belligerently galvanized and extremely conscious of the importance of securing legitimacy for themselves. An article in *Ukrainski Robitnychi Visty* (Ukrainian Labour News), the official organ of the AUUC, noted, “Our organizations will conduct the campaign...[to] mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of T. Shevchenko. We should raise the March campaign this time *above all campaigns*. We should place the [organization]” it appealed, “*at the forefront*, utilizing for this all our forces: organizational, educational, and cultural”.<sup>18</sup> The newspaper frequently featured articles on Shevchenko under titles such as “Taras Shevchenko – Revolutionary Poet” and “In Memory of the Great Poet-Democrat”. They emphasized the integral role of Shevchenko in the building of Soviet culture, his revolutionary ideas against serfdom, and, to appeal to Canadian tastes, his classification as a democrat. “In building a Ukrainian Soviet culture, we celebrate and honor the memory of the poet-revolutionary-democrat Shevchenko who fought against darkness, serfdom, and domination in appalling conditions enforced by the [tsarist] reaction”. Another editorial noted that Shevchenko was a revolutionary of the peasants. Shevchenko “reflected the interests of the peasantry, which was, at that time, aimed at the destruction of tsars and masters. He called [on the peasants] to break the thrones [and] tear the porphyry... In this is his revolutionary strength”.<sup>19</sup> The newspapers also criticized the nationalist community, which was accused of “treating Shevchenko’s original work liberally, adjusting the language so that it was in their

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continues, “has defined its stand on this subject at a meeting...when it was decided to continue to opposition against the new Communist movement in Canada, and to that effect warn the people in a special communiqué, which was to be issue in the press”. Interestingly, the report hints at suspicions of the AUUC, declaring their claims of loyalty to Canada “as false as the Communists themselves. The Communists in Canada...are fully aware that the Government continues towards them an attitude of suspicion and hostility” and that “they maintain their old uncompromising attitude toward the Government”. The report concludes with a warning that it would be “sheer folly on the part of authorities...to trust this class of people in Canada which had proved itself in the past as the most malcontent and unreliable class of Canadians. No matter what, they will always harken to the voice of their masters in Moscow and play the same old game of subversive activities”. For more on the private musings of the state in regards to pro-communist Ukrainians see Kassandra Luciuk, “A Necessary Bridge to a Radical Consciousness: Rethinking the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association and the Peculiarity of Ukrainian Identity,” Master’s dissertation, (Queen’s University, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> “Take Advantage of the Month of February for Great Organizational Preparation,” *Prophets and Proletarians*, 86. Emphasis in original.

<sup>19</sup> “Taras Shevchenko – Revolutionary Poet,” 10 March 1936, *Ukrainski robotnychi visty*, NJ. FM. 1774, Library and Archives Canada Microform Holdings Newspaper Collection, Library and Archives Canada. The translations are the author’s own.

interest. Everyone who has read the work of Shevchenko is easily convinced that his language was different from that “amendable” language defended by [nationalist writers]”.<sup>20</sup>

The intensified commitment to the promotion of cultural events by the AUUC also reflected changes in the Soviet Union’s policy towards the advancement and utilization of nationalism.<sup>21</sup> In the initial years of Soviet rule, Shevchenko’s works were forbidden, his portraits were trampled, and copies of his *Kobzar* were burned. However, Soviet officials began using his influence and popularity, and he accordingly became the semi-official cultural icon of Soviet Ukraine.<sup>22</sup> The ‘Cult of the Red Shevchenko’ spread quickly, with Soviet authors referring to him as ‘The Red Christ’, the ‘Evangelist of equality’, the ‘apostle of day labourers and hired hands’, and the ‘proletarian poet’. The transformation of Shevchenko into a useful figure was tied with attempts to erase all traces of him as a prophet of national independence, a concept previously popular in what would become the Ukrainian SSR. However, since many Ukrainians had now emigrated beyond Soviet borders and were protected from potential repercussions, the battle over interpretations, and ultimate ownership, of Shevchenko was relentless.<sup>23</sup>

Exploiting the allied status of the USSR, the AUUC decided to stage a festival that would mark Canada’s transition from war to peace. A tremendous success for the organization, the event attracted over 55,000 people. To the surprise of the audience, three delegates from the Ukrainian SSR and the Soviet ambassador greeted and thanked the crowd for their support of the USSR

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<sup>20</sup> “The Language of Taras Shevchenko,” 6 March 1936, *Ukrainski robotnychi visty*, NJ. FM. 1774, Library and Archives Canada Microform Holdings Newspaper Collection, Library and Archives Canada. The translations are the author’s own.

<sup>21</sup> The shifts and contours of the Soviet national policy and their edification of cultural symbols within the social sphere, to political ends, was criticized by Leon Trotsky, who argued: “Nowhere did restrictions, purges, repressions and in general all forms of bureaucratic hooliganism assume such murderous sweep as they did in the Ukraine in the struggle against the powerful, deeply-rooted longings of the Ukrainian masses for greater freedom and independence. To the totalitarian bureaucracy, Soviet Ukraine became an administrative division of an economic unit and a military base of the USSR. To be sure, the Stalin bureaucracy erects statues to Shevchenko but only in order to more thoroughly to crush the Ukrainian people under their weight and to force it to chant paeans in the language of Kobzar to the rapist clique in the Kremlin”. Leon Trotsky, “Problem of the Ukraine,” *Socialist Appeal*, 9 May 1939.

<sup>22</sup> For more on Soviet nationality policy see Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53:2 (1992) and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Bohdan Rubchak, “Introduction,” in *Shevchenko and the Critics, 1861-1980*, ed. George Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 23.

during the war.<sup>24</sup> Due to the tremendous success of the first festival, AUUC leaders began organizing a western Canadian equivalent in Edmonton in July of 1946. Several distinguished Canadians attended, including the Governor-General, lieutenant-governors, provincial premiers, provincial chief justices, mayors, and others. A delegation was hosted from Soviet Ukraine, including a leading Ukrainian poet and the editor of the newspaper funded by the Comintern. The AUUC stressed the significance of these cultural festivals, publicly remarking that no other organization or ethnic group has “revealed the artistic and organizational talent that our association has revealed in organizing that and other festivals”.<sup>25</sup> This series of festivals generated considerable intrigue amongst Ukrainians and raised the influence and prestige of the AUUC. In stark contrast to the beginning of the war, the AUUC was now entertaining both delegates from the USSR and members of the Canadian government at its events!

For the UCC, now somewhat out of favor with both its community and the Canadian state, the public presentation of their culture was especially important for demonstrating that they were socially and politically parallel with Canadian values. They repeatedly referred to the recommendations of Gibbon to publish a collection of ethnic literature, noting that Ukrainian cultural works could appeal to mainstream Canadians. “We have often appeared before our Anglo-Saxon friends with our beautiful folk songs, our spirited dances, and our colourful national costumes. Through our music and songs,” stated C.H. Andrusyshen, “we have practically unlimited possibilities for the enrichment of Canadian culture”. At the first UCC congress, Andrusyshen cited Gibbon again, stating that “Dr. Gibbon thinks, and rightfully so, that the successful completion of such an anthology will assist the Canadians in their understanding of each other thoroughly, and so will help to consolidate their varied cultural attainments into a single Canadian mosaic”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> On 2 July, the representatives appeared in Winnipeg, where they spoke at a mass concert and meeting at the Playhouse Theatre. In the evening, they were honored at a banquet at the Royal Alexandra Hotel, attended by over 300 guests.

<sup>25</sup> John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion*, 50-55.

<sup>26</sup> Aya Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity*, 97-99. Meanwhile, Anthony Hlynka, MP to Vegreville, quoted Lord Tweedsmuir, an early supporter of Ukrainians and Canada’s cultural mosaic, on two occasions in the House of Commons. In 1940, he conveyed Tweedsmuir’s message of resisting distrust of Ukrainians and stressing the value of Ukrainian culture to Canadian identity. In 1943, he cited Tweedsmuir again in an attempt to envision how postwar Canada should incorporate its Ukrainian community. He argued that now that Ukrainians had proven their loyalty, Canada should produce a form of citizenship that would reflect an inclusive mosaic.

The nationalists were eager to distance themselves from their pro-communist counterparts and distinguish themselves as a separate organization that could appropriately speak on behalf of the community. They repeatedly objected the AUUC's plans for the 1945 – 1946 festivals. In fact, when the Edmonton city council donated \$300 to the festival committee, the nationalists protested.<sup>27</sup> Wasyl Kushnir, President of the UCC, emphasized his organizations supremacy and cast doubt on the legitimacy of the AUUC to speak on behalf of all Ukrainians in Canada. "We, the Ukrainian Canadians," he stated, "have never belonged to this type of people. We have never been, we are not, and we will never be the Communists or the Nazis".<sup>28</sup>

In 1949, Danylo Lobay, a former member of the socialist-progressive movement, also criticized the AUUC for celebrating and manipulating Shevchenko. "The Communists in Canada celebrate the anniversary of Shevchenko...because the anniversary has become [important] in Ukraine [because] of Stalin," he wrote. "In Ukraine, Shevchenko is celebrated...for the glorification of Stalin's terrorist regime in Ukraine and to attach Russian patriotism to the Ukrainian nation. The so-called Ukrainian SSR," he continued, "allegedly has its own government and its own Presidium, even though they are assigned by Moscow and are composed of Moscow's men. They cannot give a theatre in Kyiv the name of T. Shevchenko – only Moscow can do this. And behold," wrote Lobay, "in Kyiv's *Proceedings*, on 8 March 1939, it was written that the Presidium of the USSR in Moscow...released a decree renaming the National Opera of Ukraine into the Ukrainian National Opera and Ballet Theatre of T.H. Shevchenko and [attaching Shevchenko's name to] the National University of Kyiv". Lobay continued that whenever the theatre announced "Long Live Stalin!" the orchestra would play *The Internationale* and everyone would stand. "Was this the anniversary of Shevchenko," he interrogated, "or the anniversary of Stalin? Did they pay tribute to the Ukrainian poet or did they pay tribute to the Moscow-Georgian satrap? When the anniversary of Shevchenko became an anniversary in the USSR," he concluded, "then Moscow's followers in Canada would undoubtedly also celebrate the anniversary and continue fooling gullible people. And so they celebrate".<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion*, 82. The nationalists seemed intent on protesting virtually every AUUC effort, including, in 1947, a display in the Toronto Art Gallery.

<sup>28</sup> Lubomyr Luciuk and Bohdan Kordan, *A Delicate and Difficult Question: Documents in the History of Ukrainians in Canada 1899-1962* (Kingston: The Limestone Press, 1986), 107.

<sup>29</sup> "Why the Communists Celebrate Shevchenko," 18 May 1949, Danylo Lobay Fonds, Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Education Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba. The translations are the author's own. Tension between organizations

The competition over Shevchenko climaxed with the unveiling of an AUUC monument in his honor in the village of Palermo, Ontario in 1951. Determined to maintain the momentum sustained with the festivals of 1945 – 1946, the organization resolved to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada. Notably, the monument was unveiled on Canada Day, emphasizing the dialectical interactions between Ukrainian culture and Canadian inclusivity. The decision to unveil the monument on Canada Day further emphasized that the creation of a more inclusive Canada was not simply a ‘top down’ process, but one in which the marginalized actively involved themselves. According to George Kidd, a reporter for *The Telegram*, “Rain failed to keep the guests from all over the Dominion from attending. Traffic was snarled completely an hour before the unveiling. It was the largest gathering of Ukrainians ever held in Canada”.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the unveiling was a tremendous success, with some suggesting that over 45,000 attended the unveiling.<sup>31</sup> William Pylypiw, son of the first Ukrainian immigrant to Canada, fittingly undraped the statue, “his voice [breaking] continually” and “forced to wipe tears from his eyes”. As the statue was unveiled, “thousands of people wept unashamedly” but they “also cheered, and the choir sang the familiar Ukrainian number, [Shevchenko’s] *Zapovit*”.<sup>32</sup>

Reflecting on the success of the event, a member of the organization praised the “great AUUC” for their “cultural manifestation on a scale unequalled in the history of any other, even the oldest, Canadian national group. This was a manifestation of which all progressive Ukrainian workers and farmers can be justly proud”. Commenting on the lasting mark of the festival, the author submitted that its participants “will carry their impressions to the people” and “will tell their

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often surpassed vicious commentary in the newspapers and was expressed with extreme violence. On 8 October 1950, an explosion occurred outside the Ukrainian Labour Temple at 300 Bathurst St in Toronto. A number of used railroad spikes, which had been attached to a bomb, landed in the auditorium, where a concert was being held. The AUUC quickly released a statement categorically denying that the bombing “was the result of some kind of ‘rivalries’ among Ukrainian Canadian ‘factions’”. The Ukrainian Canadian community in Toronto, with its different churches and organizations, has existed for 40 and more years and at no times has there been terrorism of such a nature in our midst. The Ukrainian Canadian community,” it stated, “is composed of decent, law-abiding citizens”. The AUUC accused “former SS Nazi men, who have managed to enter our country in the guise of Displaced Persons” of the attack. “If the perpetrators of this attempted mass-murder are not apprehended,” the statement warned, “then further and more diabolical terrorist attacks, not only against our people, but against other sections of the Canadian people, will inevitably follow”. “Bombing 300 Bathurst Street, Toronto. 1950,” Prokop Family Fonds, Box: H-875 File: 30, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Quebec.

<sup>30</sup> “Statue of Poet-Hero Unveiled at Palermo,” *Prophets and Proletarians*, 293.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Our History*, 82.

<sup>32</sup> “Statue of Poet-Hero Unveiled at Palermo,” *Prophets and Proletarians*, 293.

friends of the concert and the unveiling of the monument of Taras Shevchenko. Hundreds of thousands...will learn of the success of the famous sixtieth anniversary". The task at hand now, the author concluded, was to "further continue strengthening the AUUC".<sup>33</sup> At the AUUC's Fifth National Convention, Peter Prokop called the event a "massive demonstration by the Ukrainian Canadian democratic population in Canada" and a display of its "respect and gratitude to the people of Ukraine". More so, the unveiling underscored the organizations "ties with our maternal roots, and at the same time [has] consolidated our place here, as citizens, with roots imbedded deep in Canadian soil". He stressed that the unveiling of Shevchenko was attended not only by members of various Slavic organizations, but "by Ukrainians who belonged to no organizations, as well as those who belonged to nationalist organizations and churches".<sup>34</sup> The suggestion that Ukrainians from all factions and organizations were present for the unveiling of the monument underscores the bids of the AUUC to appeal to - and speak on behalf of - *all* Ukrainians in Canada.

Despite the monument being a gift from the USSR, there were no Soviet representatives at the ceremony. With the defection of Gouzenko in 1945, Soviet officials probably felt it was best to avoid such publicity. Nonetheless, the AUUC viewed the event as a success. The festival not only provided an opportunity to showcase their work, but it also served as a means to discredit negative views of the Soviet Union before an undecided Ukrainian community. Due in large part to the Shevchenko monument, the AUUC entered its most relevant and successful period yet. The popularity of the organization was reflected in its sustained growth; the AUUC reported 13,000 members and 315 branches in 1945, with numbers consistently growing in the following years.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the women's branches had more than doubled, from fourteen to twenty nine. Perhaps more significantly, the weekend-long event commemorating Shevchenko reportedly attracted over 100,000 people.<sup>36</sup> This speaks to the organizations popularity more generally.

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<sup>33</sup> "Glorious Sixtieth Anniversary Jubilee," *Prophets and Proletarians*, 295.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Our History*, 82, 83.

<sup>35</sup> John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion*, 59. The great success of the unveiling of the Shevchenko monument also prompted the organization to establish a Shevchenko Museum to be built beside the monument. The museum contained numerous exhibits on the life and work of Ukrainians in Canada as they related to Shevchenko. Again, there were no representatives from the Soviet Union at this unveiling. However, a few months later, the Shevchenko Museum in Kyiv sent approximately 500 additional exhibits to Palermo. The historical realities of some of these pieces have been questioned in recent years, which frequently portrayed Shevchenko as a friend of Vissarion Belinsky, a Russian literary critic and known opponent of Shevchenko.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Our History*, 81.

While many did not necessarily join the organization, they were, at a minimum, certainly attracted to their cultural events.

Widespread praise and an increase in support from the Ukrainian community rewarded the AUUC. However, the festival was still marked with controversy. The UCC, displeased with the attention that the AUUC was receiving, criticized the organization and questioned its motives. “Having realized that Ukrainians feel very sentimental toward Shevchenko and have profound love for him and his achievements,” stated one editorial, “the communists... [manipulated] his honest sentiment of Ukrainians for their evil goal, spreading hostile propaganda, collecting donations from Ukrainians, and using them for their weak cause. Shevchenko vigorously reveled against Moscow, the worst prison house of people, [to lead] his people in the correction direction: the liberation of the Ukrainian people from Moscow. On this road,” it continued, “Ukrainian leaders and the entire people stand today”.<sup>37</sup> *Homin Ukrainy* (Ukrainian Echo), another nationalist newspaper, referred to the monument as a “Danian gift” and a “Trojan horse”. The Ukrainian Self-Reliance League (USRL) openly demanded that the Canadian government deport the monument to Moscow. Some UCC members eschewed words for deeds, traveling to eastern Canada to protest the unveiling.<sup>38</sup>

Canadian officials seemed unwilling to impose preference for the 1951 events. When the UCC invited representatives of the government to its own sixtieth anniversary celebration, government officials decided it was “preferable to exercise caution”. It was noted that “a vociferous Communist minority” had recently held its own celebration, which “inflamed Canadian public opinion”. Therefore, rather than take a stand, the government agreed it would not officially favor either the AUUC or the UCC and declined its invitation.<sup>39</sup> It is understandable that the government did not take advantage of the invitation of the UCC to undermine the influence and reputation of the communists. The creation of ecumenical wartime propaganda, coupled with geographically and ethnically mixed armed forces, precipitated a broader and more inclusive

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<sup>37</sup> Aya Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity*, 138.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Our History*, 82.

<sup>39</sup> Lubomyr Luciuk, *Searching for Place*, 257, 258.

understanding of membership within the Canadian polity.<sup>40</sup> Paired with the new rhetoric of citizenship, identity, and inclusivity, Ukrainians were heuristically transformed from ‘ethnics’ and ‘radicals’ and into ‘Canadians’.<sup>41</sup> Apart from their impressive numbers, it was no longer politically or socially palpable to simply repress the public activities of the AUUC through simple violence or illegal detention. Moreover, with the Ukrainians emerging as ‘white’ Canadians and a potential ethnic voting bloc, the government exercised caution so as not to be perceived as inimical towards the organization that clearly represented the majority of organized Ukrainian Canadians. Furthermore, as the unveiling was couched as a socio-cultural event, the organization was cloaked in a form of social armor that would protect it from the attacks of the state.

Despite - or perhaps because of - the mass showing of 1951, the government made quiet inroads into concreting their material support and political sanction of the vehemently anti-communist UCC. Speaking at the UCC congress in 1953, Prime Minister St. Laurent applauded the contributions of Ukrainians in Canada. The thinly veiled subtext of his address was evident. The showing of St. Laurent at the UCC congress was indicative of the government telegraphing its preferences within the brokerage politics of the Ukrainian community and invigorating the organization more friendly and useful to its interests. St. Laurent’s remarks were followed by the President of the UCC, who reminded the Ukrainian Canadians in attendance of their “triple duty” to “Canada as Canadian citizens, to the growing Canadian generation, and toward their less fortunate brothers across the Atlantic”.<sup>42</sup>

The geopolitical and the domestic merged in sharp relief when Khrushchev’s Secret Speech was leaked in 1956. Khrushchev’s revelations not only weakened the political legitimacy of the AUUC, but also slowed its membership growth and led to a defection of current members disillusioned by the revelations.<sup>43</sup> The magnitude and repercussions of the exposé was perhaps

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<sup>40</sup> See Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> For more on the transformation of immigrants into acceptable members of the polity see David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005) and Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> “Speakers Praise Ukrainian Contributions to Canada,” 10 July 1953, Danylo Lobay Fonds, Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Education Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>43</sup> See John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion*, 177-199.

most evident in the AUUC's attempted celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Ivan Franko, another highly revered Ukrainian poet. At the Seventh Congress of the AUUC, held in 1956, it was decided that Ivan Franko, "who belongs to us Ukrainians in Canada", would be celebrated by the organization. Recognizing their have-not status, the AUUC issued a statement that emphasized their desire to collaborate with the newly state-sanctioned UCC. They reasoned that working together would "raise the Ukrainian image to new heights, create a favorable and beneficial impression among other Canadians in general, aid the cause of friendship generally, contribute to a better understanding of Ukrainians by their fellow-countrymen of other ethnic origins, and help the cause of peace, which is what all Canadians and people the world over long for".<sup>44</sup>

The UCC refused, accusing the AUUC of attempting to sabotage their triennial congress. "The centennial program is an outright propaganda ruse," stated the UCC, "arranged solely because they knew our congress would be held this week".<sup>45</sup> They further suggested that the AUUC's labours made it easier "for the communist Fifth Column in Canada to spread its subversive activities here".<sup>46</sup> In turn, the UCC successfully lobbied the Canadian government to refuse entry visas to members of a delegation (including Franko's niece Zinovia Franko) who were hoping to attend the celebration.<sup>47</sup> Franko's daughter, Anna Kluchko, furthered the blow, refusing the AUUC's invitation to participate in the festivities. Speaking to the press, she announced that she would speak at the UCC Congress instead, noting that had her father been alive, "they would have killed him, as they have killed others, or would have sent him to [Siberia], as they did my brother".<sup>48</sup> While the AUUC celebration went on as planned, its efforts were seriously crippled by the interventions of the UCC, who was now a powerful contender in the ongoing battle for legitimacy.

The circumstances surrounding the celebration of Franko are notable as it was the first time since the victory over fascism that the state actively and openly sided with the nationalist UCC. Furthermore, although the essence of the Secret Speech had been known since February, the

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Our History*, 84.

<sup>45</sup> "Hostile Note for Opening of Congress," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 3 July 1956.

<sup>46</sup> *Winnipeg Free Press*, 3 July 1956.

<sup>47</sup> "Rap Red Tactics in Franko Festival," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 June 1956.

<sup>48</sup> "Franko Never a Red, daughter tells UCC," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 June 1956.

publication of the text in full by the *New York Times* only a month before was undeniably influential on the outcome of the celebration. The events of 1956 were a devastating blow to the AUUC, who had relied exclusively on their membership for financial sustenance. Lacking powerful political patrons or close ties to Canadian elites, the AUUC understood the need to remain active in the face of an emerging anti-communist front in order to maintain their fleeting social power. As a result, the organization continued its efforts of promoting cultural symbols through festivals and celebrations in an attempt to maintain hegemonic control within the Ukrainian community.

In the meantime, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shevchenko's death, the UCC decided to build its own monument to Shevchenko in Winnipeg. Upon discovery, the AUUC declared its readiness to participate in the undertaking, hoping to capitalize on the prestige and publicity that would follow. Recognizing the changing social climate towards invigorated and active anti-communism, the National Executive Committee of the AUUC penned an open letter to the UCC in the *Ukrainian Canadian*. The letter firstly outlined the AUUC's acceptance and support of the monument and declared their preference of a joint all-national celebration, as this was "the business of all Ukrainians in Canada, irrespective of organizational affiliation, convictions, or religion. As the saying among Ukrainians has it," they continued, "there is only one Ukrainian people and only one Taras Shevchenko". Somewhat cheekily, the organization stated that it was "prepared to enter into negotiations" over the monument, reminding the UCC of its forty year lead of educational and cultural work amongst Ukrainians in Canada.<sup>49</sup> However, the AUUC was once again ignored and preparations for the unveiling continued on without them.

The night before the unveiling, Michael Starr, Minister of Labour and the first Ukrainian to hold a federal cabinet post, spoke to a rally about the approaching presentation. "In Canada, freedom is ours," he stated. "There is freedom for our institutions, freedom for our folkways and culture, freedom for our language and freedom to participate in the democratic way of life". If Shevchenko had been in Winnipeg that day, said Starr, "he would be proud...of what has been accomplished".<sup>50</sup> The next morning, the statue of Shevchenko was unveiled at the Manitoba

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<sup>49</sup> "Offer Co-operation to Build Monument in 1961," *Prophets and Proletarians*, 352.

<sup>50</sup> Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 168.

Legislature by Prime Minister Diefenbaker. Shevchenko took his place beside Queen Elizabeth, Major General James Wolfe, Lord Dufferin, and Louis Riel on the legislative grounds, somewhat signifying his acceptance by the Canadian mainstream. The crowd joyously sang “O Canada”, the Ukrainian national anthem, Shevchenko’s *Zapovit*, and “God Save the Queen”.<sup>51</sup> In his speech, the Prime Minister connected the legacy of Shevchenko to the ongoing Cold War. He expressed his faith in the eventual independence of Ukraine when communism “inevitably collapsed” and reminded “Shevchenko’s children in Canada” that they enjoyed the rights and privileges of freedom and democracy. “It is to your great credit,” he said, “that one of the tasks you have set yourselves is to keep sirens sounding to warn the nations of the dangers of appeasement, complacency or false security in the face of the monster menace of International Communism”.<sup>52</sup>

The Souvenir Book that was handed out at the celebration featured several greetings from various politicians. The Prime Minister sent good wishes to “all Ukrainian democratic organizations,” while the Premier of Saskatchewan praised Shevchenko for speaking out against tyranny and oppression “just as we in our day must oppose any form of totalitarianism which seeks to restrict man’s basic freedoms”. Accordingly, “Shevchenko belongs not only to the Ukrainian people but to all mankind”. Both Saskatchewan and Manitoba officially recognized the event in their legislatures. Meanwhile, on Parliament Hill, several speeches were made on both sides of the House of Commons. Nicholas Mandziuk, a Progressive Conservative MP, stressed the great significance of the event to Ukrainians in Canada, who have “integrated themselves in the Canadian way of life and who can be counted as constituents of most of the members of this House”. Paul Martin, representing the Liberal Party, stated that the “House has unanimously agreed to lay aside its procedures in order to...pay tribute to one of the great poets of Ukraine, Taras Shevchenko”. He continued that this recognition was necessary because it helped justify “the hopes of contemporary Ukrainians for the liberation of their homeland”.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> “Shevchenko Centennial Souvenir Book,” 8 – 9 July 1961, Toma Kobzey Fonds, Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Education Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>52</sup> Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 169.

<sup>53</sup> “Shevchenko Centennial Souvenir Book,” 8 – 9 July 1961, Toma Kobzey Fonds, Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Education Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Outraged, and perhaps even worried over the UCC's unwillingness to collaborate with them, the AUUC released a statement condemning the organization in *Ukrainske Slovo* (Ukrainian Word). The release stressed that the unveiling was not the first of its kind in Canada, drawing attention to their Palermo monument ten years before. The statement described the UCC's efforts as painful and disgraceful, criticizing the organization for "[slandering] Ukraine and the Ukrainian people" and for "war politics against the Soviet Union, of which Ukraine is a component as a free, sovereign republic". The AUUC also criticized the politicians in attendance, who "in one breath extolled Shevchenko and in another attacked Soviet Ukraine, the Ukraine of Shevchenko which, together with Canada, is a member of the United Nations and is recognized by the whole civilized world as the greatest state of the Ukrainian people. This was not a solemn commemoration of Shevchenko," it concluded, "but a mockery of Shevchenko. All honest Ukrainians, who sincerely and honestly respect the great Shevchenko, have nothing in common with those who attempt to use his bright name for base Judas aims".<sup>54</sup>

Increasing Cold War tensions coupled with the magnitude of the Secret Speech had significantly impacted the AUUC, and its leaders were struggling to answer the questions of their increasingly disenchanted (and disappearing) membership. The unveiling of the UCC's Shevchenko monument, with its official state endorsement, had delivered a crippling and final blow to the AUUC; its once admired socio-cultural events were now a thing of the past. The organization continued to rally around Shevchenko, but their efforts no longer attracted the kind of attention they once had from the community at large. Meanwhile, the UCC had seized the advantages that had been awarded to them by international events and the Canadian state. Their celebrations continued to increase in popularity, eliminating the influence of the AUUC almost entirely by the eighties.

The events surrounding the commemoration of Shevchenko reflect larger trends of how Canada interacted with its ethnic communities, especially in the face of the Cold War. The state had long been interested in policing the ideology of immigrants and had nurtured the UCC as its potential monitor within the Ukrainian community. The establishment of the UCC signaled the state's preferences for anti-communist immigrants (despite a temporary alliance with the Soviet Union)

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<sup>54</sup> "The Monument to Taras Shevchenko in Winnipeg," *Prophets and Proletarians*, 354.

and ensured that it would maintain significant political and social control over a large ‘foreign’ population. Moreover, the state contracted out the production of ‘good Canadians’ to ethnic elites and brokers who, in turn, instilled the values and rhetoric of liberal democracy in their constituents. The state continued defining parameters of acceptable socio-economic ideas, while Ukrainian elites internally policed correct forms of ethno-religious nationalism and political outlooks. This process neutralized competing voices and helped exert hegemonic power over community and cultural narratives.

Interestingly, as the UCC increased its cultural and political capital following the elimination of competition from the AUUC, it began making unprecedented demands on the state and engrained itself in Canadian brokerage politics. The organization successfully lobbied the state on important issues, inserted Ukrainians into Canada’s national narrative, controlled and promoted what histories were told, and influenced Canada’s foreign policy on the Soviet Union. The UCC also solidified the reality of Ukrainians as an ethnic voting bloc, forcing the state, and now also the government, into continued negotiation and interaction. This reveals the way in which members of the UCC were transformed from mercenaries of socio-political control into a political force themselves.

An examination of the uses of Shevchenko during the Cold War also shows how cultural symbols can transcend their realities and become politicized figures with strategic ends. It is clear that Shevchenko was more than just a poet or disciple of Ukrainian nationalism – he was assumed by competing organizations as a tool for securing legitimacy from the Ukrainian community. As aforementioned, the battle for Shevchenko was a battle over who was the legitimate bearer of Ukrainian identity in Canada. Events bearing his name were effective means of recruitment and also opportunities to lay claim to Shevchenko by various groups.

Understanding Shevchenko’s role in Canada also speaks more broadly to the interaction of Ukrainians in Canada with ‘acceptable’ ideas of belonging, citizenship, and whiteness in an ever-changing environment. It shows the corralling of the community into a singular category, while also pointing to the ways in which Ukrainians contested and negotiated their place in Canada. In this context, the manner in which Shevchenko was used becomes clear. The state promoted the

organizations whose needs and interests were parallel to their own while actively (and passively) ensuring the demise of those who were not. This interaction plays no small role in shaping how the community members continue to negotiate their identity – and their relationship to one another – to this day.

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