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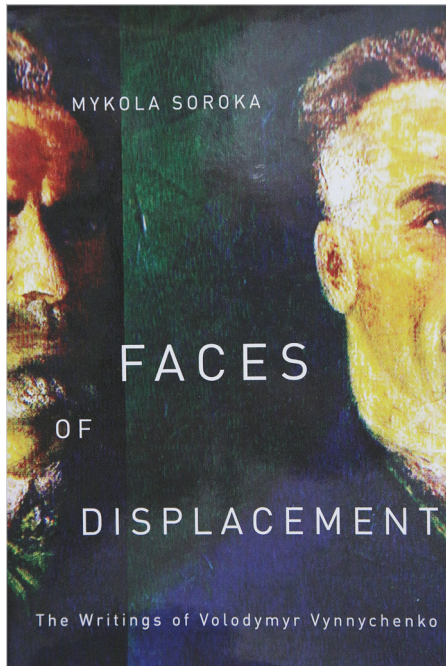
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Reviewed by: Yana Chapailo

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Mykola Soroka

*Faces of Displacement:
The Writings of Volodymyr
Vynnychenko*

Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-
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Reviewed by Yana Chapailo

The problem of displacement has appeared in humanities discourse in recent years, as a phenomenon of incorporation into other cultures, their traditions, prejudices, and beliefs that totally differ from native ones. A person in a displaced condition faces obstacles on multiple levels, such as everyday graft, economic difficulties, and customization with other traditional sensitivities.

In his monograph, *Faces of Displacement: The Writings of Volodymyr Vynnychenko*, Mykola Soroka raises the issue of displacement in the writings of a Ukrainian writer of the modernist period, Volodymyr Vynnychenko (1880–1951) during his stays abroad, and conducts research on those obstacles that made an impact on Vynnychenko's writings during several periods of his displacement. Soroka's study emerges from the well-known fact that Vynnychenko spent 31 years in Ukraine and around 40 years abroad (mostly in France), and the fact that Vynnychenko's stays in different geographical and political environments should not be ignored during an in-depth analysis of his works. Soroka claims that displacement contributed significantly to Vynnychenko's evolution as a writer — and directly determined his social, cultural, and philosophical views, his ideological preoccupations, and his vision for society in his homeland, not to mention his attitudes toward his host land and the world in general, as well as his choice of themes and settings.

M. Zerov, S. Pohorily, and V. Panchenko place special emphasis on three periods in the literary career of Volodymyr Vynnychenko: 1902–1906 — when the writer produced short stories about peasants, workers, hobos, and criminals, including impartial observations of their lives; 1907–1920 — when he focused on dramas and novels, indicating a shift toward analysis and experimentation, and moral and philosophical issues; and 1921–1951 — when Vynnychenko wrote socio-philosophical and adventure novels in a more popular style. Based on these three periods, two periods of Vynnychenko's displacement are proposed: 1907–1914 — when Vynnychenko was an émigré, an expatriate/traveler, and an exile; and 1920–1951 —

on long stays in France and reorientation to a broader international audience. The principal point of the research is to emphasize that all forms of displacement, such as exile, immigration, expatriation, travel, nomadic emigration, and the diaspora should not be seen as isolated phenomena. They may overlap not only during separate periods of a someone's writing but also synchronically in one period. The dominant concept of exile allows scholars to accept it as an all-embracing defining differentiating aspect of displacement within "exile studies." Soroka states that the psychological experience of alienation may be characteristic even for those writers who do not remain in the actual geographical displacement, and suggests to distinguish these two generic concepts, applying only the primary concept of outer exile, viewed as geographical displacement. The term of displacement appears to be very relevant to the process of defining a postmodern, complex understanding of identity as one that is in a constant state of formation, so that the state of "in-betweenness" as an ordinary state of a human-being is closely related to all modernist and post-modernist writing.

There are three major phases of displacement marked by the relationship between homeland and hostland, which are encountered chronologically:

- 1) an imaginary return home, often with a new vision of it, and intense rediscovery of the past and longing for it;
- 2) a clash with a new society and attempts to adjust to it;
- 3) adjustment to a new society or, in the case of failure, marginalization or even death.

The discernible characteristics of any displacement literature are the individual displacement of writers; subject matter, settings, characters, language, images, and symbols.

Two periods of displacement in Volodymyr Vynnychenko's biography can be scrutinized. The first one began in 1907 when then young revolutionary writer had to leave his country in order to avoid imprisonment. Noticed as a dangerous writer whose works had a great influence on the masses, the only option for him was to escape from Ukraine and continue working abroad. The writer's displacement, although full of hardship and inconvenience, appears to have been enormously beneficial for his creativity and versatility, recognized, in particular, by his patron and close friend Yevhen Chykalenko. Vynnychenko shared most of his experience of staying abroad with Chykalenko through letters, which are now invaluable as a source of valid information and evidence of the whole process of forming Vynnychenko as modernist writer. What can be taken as proof of the great influence displacement had on Vynnychenko was a new stage in his literary career, which showed a transition from short stories about peasants' everyday lives to philosophical novels about the intelligentsia. Displacement appeared to be an unfavorable condition for creativity, as Vynnychenko's strong desire to return home and to share his impressions of staying abroad, visiting world famous places, and seeing important pieces of art emphasized his active attitude, both in cultural and political terms, toward his homeland. In this context, Maria-Ines Lagos-Pope regards distance as a medium to sharpen focus and active engagement in the processes unfolding in one's home country — literary responses to political repression. Tsvetan Todorov, at the same time, declares that movement in space is the first sign, the simplest sign of change because as narrative is nourished by change, journey and narrative imply one another. Contrary to expatriate or self-exiled writers such as Ernest Hemingway or James Joyce, Vynnychenko's displacement, with its intensive intellectual work, gave him possibilities that he transformed to his advantage. Travelling abroad, Vynnychenko

became familiar with the philosophical works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Henri Bergson, whose ideas he later tested on a number of modernist themes, such as the relativity of absolute truth, sex, and love. The writer's credo of "honesty with oneself" that became the dominant idea of all his texts might have been developed from the Nietzschean *Also sprach Zarathustra*. And the concept of consciousness and the importance of intuition, taken from Henri Bergson, later appeared in *Bazaar*, where Vynnychenko transformed it into a complex picture of human nature as a subject of constant tension between the rational and subconscious or instinctual. Another important work for Vynnychenko was "The Black Panther and the Polar Bear," where the writer explores the modernist dilemma of artistic freedom and beauty in the context of everyday life, family responsibilities, and paternal instincts. During his first period of displacement, Volodymyr Vynnychenko as a witness and expatriate constructed a story of the story of the Kanevych family that suffers from a lack of financial stability — a key factor that determines the finale of the story. Being under the modernist influences of European writers, Vynnychenko became the first Ukrainian writer to introduce sexual and erotic themes. He proclaimed sexual freedom as a matter of personal choice, and sexual desire as a natural instinct that bourgeois morality avoided or restricted. In regard to this Edward Said thinks about exiles as always very eccentric people who deeply feel their difference and try to emphasize this in their texts with extraordinary themes.

Vynnychenko's hardships in exile included living conditions, isolation from the homeland, the impossibility of returning back home because of the danger of being imprisoned, and uncertainty about the future. They led not only to boredom and nervous breakdown, but also to difficulties with new topics to write on. Being involved in Ukrainian life, connected with Ukrainian reality and people, Vynnychenko struggled with a lack of themes to work on. Such bitterness of exile was softened by nostalgia that was transformed into a new novel, *Equilibrium* (1911), which featured a broad portrayal of the life of exiles in Paris from 1907–1911. *Equilibrium* is an anatomy of exile, borne of personal experience, examining such issues as: what are the conditions of exile? What happens to exile over a period of time? What can be done to overcome the hardship of exile?

Vynnychenko's second displacement, which began in 1920 and lasted until the end of his life (1951), was a consequence of the writer's activity during the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, his role in the Ukrainian movement and Declaration of Independence following the First World War, and the crisis in the Russian Empire. When Vynnychenko understood that those who he considered to be likeminded appeared to be enemies, he decided to emigrate from the USSR, as the risks of being imprisoned or even killed were high. Taking into account his ideological preoccupations, his implication with foreign literatures could not be passive. Thus as a result of his intellectual background and experience the writer gained during the Bolshevik Revolution, *The Solar Machine*, has understandably been interpreted by scholars as a utopian sort of political and ideological polemics with both Soviet Bolshevism and Western Capitalism, highlighting the main problems of both systems. From his initial focus on his homeland during his first displacement, Vynnychenko's orientation shifted toward a search for a broad international audience, coupled with attempts to engage in the current literary discourse of his hostland. What had not been discovered was a deep nostalgia carefully hidden in the text. Right after the end of World War II, when many Ukrainians managed to escape from the Soviet Union,

Vynnychenko experienced a kind of homecoming. With the new émigrés, Vynnychenko again felt himself as a well-known respected writer. But on the other hand, interaction with the new emigres was complicated by his ambitions and doctrinarism, and the diaspora itself awakened a dormant Ukrainianness stimulated by his nostalgia.

Categorizing different forms of displacement or related terms: exile, émigré, expatriation, traveler, emigration/immigration, diaspora, and nomadism — helps us to understand and interpret such phenomena as the dynamic experience that may range from being totally negative to very positive. As an example of long displacement, Volodymyr Vynnychenko is an illustrative case of living and working abroad, creating relationships between homeland and hostland, adjusting to the new society and still remaining loyal to one's country. He has become one of the most significant modernist writers in Ukraine with his desire to experiment, examine, and investigate all the defects and peculiarities of the human-being. As can be observed now, displacement for Volodymyr Vynnychenko had become that precise factor that determined his writings as well as his life. Mykola Soroka managed to cope with a great number of writings, letters, and other materials related to Volodymyr Vynnychenko and to put them at the centre of displacement discourse. This research is new for the Ukrainian literary context and brings Volodymyr Vynnychenko's writings into a global context.