

Ukrainian literary journals in Australia: An overview

After the Second World War, 21,000 Ukrainian ‘Displaced Persons’ immigrated to Australia as refugees. On arrival they immediately formed a community and organised social and cultural organisations and infrastructure. A lively literary life also flourished. Authors, many of whom had begun writing prior to arrival in Australia, wrote mainly in their native Ukrainian language. They wrote across all genres, producing poetry, prose, novels, plays, memoirs and essays in a wide range of subjects and styles. Literary texts were produced, distributed and consumed within the Ukrainian community and a distinct and dynamic literary culture evolved, comprising writers’ associations and readers’ clubs, recitals at community concerts and commemorations, literary events, competitions, and the production of periodicals and books. Literary texts were also distributed within an international diaspora located in North and South America and western Europe. Eventually, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, connections would be made with an independent Ukraine.

Literary journals produced in Australia were an important part of Ukrainian-Australian literary culture. The earliest attempts at publishing a literary journal occurred in the early 1950s and resulted in one periodical published in Sydney titled *Slovo [The Word]: Ukrainian Monthly in Australia* [Слово: Український місячник в Австралії] and one published in Melbourne titled *Our Bulletin* [Наш Вісник: Універсальний журнал – Квартальник]. Two very interesting literary journals appeared in the late 1970s. The “Literary-Artistic Quarterly” [Літературно–Мистецький Квартальник] was a literary supplement included in the Ukrainian-Australian newspaper, *The Free Thought* [Вільна Думка]. The *Kiev Quarterly: Presenting Ukrainian Authors in English* was designed to introduce an English-language readership to iconic Ukrainian authors and works. The most substantial literary journal and chronicle of Ukrainian-Australian literary culture was *The New Horizon* [Новий Обрій], an “Almanac” [Альманах] published every five or so years, beginning in 1954.

Slovo [The Word]: Ukrainian Monthly in Australia* *Слово: Український місячник в Австралії

A literary journal was published in Sydney in 1953. It was called *Slovo [The Word]: Ukrainian Monthly in Australia* [Слово: Український місячник в Австралії]. The editor and publisher was Yevhen Yu Pelens’kyj [Євген. Ю Пеленський].¹ He was a writer and scholar, and an activist instrumental in the establishment of some of the most important cultural and scholarly organisations within the Ukrainian community in Australia.

There were six issues published over two years. Literary material comprised poetry, prose, short stories, comic pieces, scholarly essays and book reviews. In this, the journal prioritised work by Australian-Ukrainian writers. Sombre stories told of Soviet atrocities in Ukraine. The harsh realism of these historically-informed narratives mirrored an anti-Communist stance aimed at exposing the truth and lived experience of Soviet dictatorship. This bespoke an editorial policy to uphold the ideological motivation of the newly-arrived Ukrainian immigrant community. In the first issue, the reader was told: “We are a political emigration that remembers its duty to the homeland it left behind and seeks from the Australian community a supportive attitude towards the cause of the liberation of our country.”² By contrast, comic writing provided an amusing account of daily life in Australia. This reflected a second editorial aim: to focus on Ukrainians’ new life in Australia and address cultural differences and settlement issues.

Aside from literature, *The Word* contained an eclectic array of material. The contents of each issue were divided according to subheadings such as “Literature, Art, Scholarship” [Література-Мистецтво-Наука]; “From the life of the Church” [З церковного життя]; “Community matters” [Громадські справи]; “Management” [Господарство]; and “Sporting competitions” [Змаг].

Pelens’kyj very much valued the intellectual and cultural life he saw developing within the Ukrainian-Australian community. His editorial statement in the first issue of the journal made clear his intention to document significant cultural and community events.

“Our community in Australia feels the need for a cultural magazine interested in Ukrainian-Australian issues; our desire is to meet this need by recording all the most important manifestations of Ukrainian public and cultural life in Australia.” (“From the editor”).³ In accordance with this aim, the journal published reviews and journalistic accounts of recently held cultural events.

Each issue also contained an English language section, with news stories, reports and reviews. This included verse which had been translated from Ukrainian into English. However, if Pelens’kyj’s aim was to introduce Australians to a Ukrainian literary tradition, it was equally to expose Ukrainian readers to world literature. The journal featured translations from German and English into Ukrainian.

Despite Pelens’kyj’s outward-looking view, which allowed him to look beyond his immediate community and engage with a wider literary world, *The Word* remained committed to upholding a Ukrainian literary tradition. The journal printed works by and about classic Ukrainian writers while also promoting work by contemporary writers living outside of Ukraine and elsewhere in the diaspora.

Although held in high esteem within certain intellectual circles, publication of *The Word* proved to be short-lived.

Our Bulletin
Наш Вісник: Універсальний журнал – Квартальник

Two years before *The Word* appeared in Sydney, a literary-cultural journal had been published in Melbourne. It was called *Our Bulletin* [*Наш Вісник*] and it was published by the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria in 1951. It was compiled and edited by Dmytro Nytchenko,⁴ who was also known by his pseudonym Dmytro Chub [Дмитро Нитченко/Чуб], a very active writer, critic, scholar, editor, publisher and educator living in Melbourne.

The opening editorial statement pledged “Giving preference to literary, artistic and popular scholarly material that will have great educational value for our readers”. At the same time, there was a promise to provide information regarding all forms of Ukrainian cultural life across Australia, involving community organisations, churches, theatres, youth and women’s associations. It even undertook to include a section which would give legal advice regarding settlement in Australia.⁵

The intended literary focus was evident with an emphasis on the work of Australian-Ukrainians. Poetry and prose depicted the refugee experience of the ‘Displaced Persons’ and early immigrant life in a new homeland. However, while maintaining a focus on Ukrainian literary life in Australia, Nytchenko was also committed to the broader parameters of Ukrainian literature. This converged with his aim of educating the reader, to result in the publication of literary material from elsewhere in the world. This included the work of prominent writers of Ukraine and Ukrainian writers now living abroad within the diaspora.

Part of Nytchenko’s literary mission was to disseminate information about Ukrainian writing worldwide. To this end, the journal contained a section of “Criticism and Bibliography” [Критика і Бібліографія] which contained reviews of new works and a timely listing of periodicals and books, all of which had been published in 1951, the same year as *Our Bulletin* appeared.

The journal contained an English-language section which, according to the editorial statement, had dual aims of cultural transmission. “The English part will acquaint us with life in Australia, and will also inform the Australian reader about our [Ukrainian] history, art and our struggle against the eternal enemy who has invaded our homeland.”⁶

Reaching far beyond the literary and cultural, those involved with *Our Bulletin* undertook to provide practical advice regarding settlement issues. The “Administrative – Legal Informant” [Господарчо – Правний Інформатор Нашого Вісника] was a section of the journal which would interact directly with the readership: “In this section, our journal will feature answers to our readers' inquiries on matters of an administrative, legal and social nature.”⁷

The contents of *Our Bulletin* reflected a diverse set of editorial aims. Whilst dissimilar, the objectives were not random, as the journal described itself as a “Universal Magazine”. On the first page, a type of subheading defined the journal in this way: “a magazine in Australia that contains stories, poems, memoirs, humour, essays, popular scholarly articles, reviews, and also informs the public about our cultural and community life on this continent. At the same time, the magazine provides both on its pages and in letters, advice on various questions concerning our life and work.”⁸

Nytchenko had been ambitious in his literary endeavour. However, despite his remarkable efforts, only one issue of *Our Bulletin* was published.

The New Horizon: Almanac: Literature, Art, Cultural Life
Новий Обрій: Альманах (Література, Мистецтво, Культурне життя)

Three years after *Our Bulletin* was published, Nytchenko’s “literary itch” was not satisfied and he started mobilising authors from all around Australia. The result was an “almanac” published in 1954.⁹

This first “Almanac” was called *The New Horizon*. Although early issues named an editorial collective of up to four people, and later issues named the Melbourne Literary-Arts Club as being responsible for the publication, the driving force behind this periodical was the “General Editor,” Dmytro Nytchenko (also known as Dmytro Chub).

Nytchenko took responsibility for selecting and editing material, collating and proofreading texts. He also managed the printing and distribution of each volume. He liaised with contributors to solicit and accept material. He communicated with individuals and community organisations to arrange funding for each print-run.

The print run in the first year was 1800 copies; in later years one thousand copies of each issue were printed. These were numbers Nytchenko was proud of given that the *Almanac* [Збірник] of the Association of Ukrainian Writers ‘Slovo’ [Об'єднання Українських Письменників «Слово»], the most substantial literary periodical within the diaspora,¹⁰ was published in print runs of 500–600.

Nytchenko was also proud of the fact that *The New Horizon* pre-dated the *Slovo Almanac*, which first appeared in 1962.¹¹

In the second volume of *The New Horizon* (which appeared in 1960), the editor was able to report that more than thirty Australian-Ukrainian authors had contributed—twice as many as had been involved in the first issue, five years before. Readers were told that almost all writers who live and work in Australia contributed.¹² Every issue after that continued to feature new contributors. Almost three decades later, in the eight volume (published in 1988) readers were told that in each issue of the almanac new authors of literary works had appeared, together with individuals working within other areas of art and culture. It was also brought to readers' attention that the literal size of the volumes had increased, from 127 pages in the first issue (in 1954) to the current issue of 280 pages, reflecting that Ukrainian literary activity in Australia had not subsided.¹³

The Ukrainian-Australian literary texts which featured in *The New Horizon* were of varied genre and theme. They included autobiographical pieces and life-writing (about Soviet rule in Ukraine including the Holodomor, Nazi occupation, war experiences and then escape as a refugee, and immigration and early life in Australia); personal memoirs; travelogues (recounting journeys within Australia, the Pacific, and eventually travel to Soviet Ukraine); excerpts from historical novels; humour and satire; children's literature; short stories and other forms of prose (such as the feuilleton) across all these themes and subject matter; and poetry across all these themes and subject matter. Other types of literary material included: literary criticism and scholarship regarding Ukrainian writers, Australian-Ukrainian writers and Ukrainian writers residing elsewhere in the diaspora; reports on the activities of literary associations and book clubs around Australia; listings of Ukrainian-Australian publications and biographical accounts of Ukrainian-Australian authors; translations (particularly literary exchanges with Australian literature); attention to young and emerging writers; and occasional English language writing by second generation writers. There was an evident deference to Ukrainian literary tradition through the inclusion of works by Soviet Ukrainian dissident writers in addition to classic writers of the 19th and early 20th century, and commemoration of literary anniversaries, such as the birth or death of iconic Ukrainian writers.

The New Horizon was the most substantial Ukrainian literary journal produced in Australia. However, it also served as a chronicle of wider cultural activity in the community. The subtitle made this clear. *The New Horizon* was an “Almanac” [Альманах] with the subordinate title “Literature, Art, Cultural Life” [Література, Мистецтво, Культурне життя]. The third volume provided a succinct summary of these aims: “Our almanacs are a piece of the history of our life and creativity on this terrain, particularly in the literary, artistic and cultural

fields.”¹⁴ Each issue was dated in approximate five-year periods. In the first volume, for example, readers were told that “with this publication, we mark five years of life and work of Ukrainian immigration in Australia.”¹⁵ The second volume chronicled the first ten years of life in emigration.¹⁶ The third volume stated that it was chronicling the first 18 years of immigration in Australia.¹⁷ Remaining issues followed this pattern. This positioning reflected the editor’s intent to provide a chronological account.

In Volume 8, it was made clear that the aim of the journal was to chronicle cultural as well as literary life: “Just as previously in our seven almanacs, we now also endeavour to reflect not only our literary life, but the activity of several different types of cultural practice within our community: choirs, dance groups or ensembles, music, actors, artists of the fine arts, and the like.”¹⁸ The role of documenting community cultural activity had been evident in the very first volume of *The New Horizon*, which contained articles about individual artists and musicians; photographs of dance troupes, choirs, theatre groups and performances; and historical accounts of cultural activity in communities around Australia. This role of documenting cultural practices within communities around Australia, established in the very first issue, remained throughout all issues. Hence one could find an article about a dance troupe in Sydney in Volume 2; reproductions of paintings by Ukrainian-Australian artists in Volume 3; an article about a theatre group in Sydney in Volume 4; an article about the cultural activity in Perth during the previous three years in Volume 5; the profile of an opera singer in Volume 6; an article about a choir in Sydney in Volume 7; and an article about a bandura ensemble in Melbourne in Volume 8.

From 1954 until 2005, 12 volumes of *The New Horizon* were published. In later years, with a retrospective view, Nytchenko noted that the almanac had been a definite achievement because it rallied almost all Australian-Ukrainian authors and reflected not only literary creativity but all Ukrainian cultural and artistic life in Australia.¹⁹

The New Horizon had become the most significant literary journal and record of Ukrainian-Australian literary culture. This significance was well-understood by Nytchenko. In 1998, looking back over ten issues of the almanac, he admitted that *The New Horizon* would provide invaluable primary source material for future scholars of literary and cultural life of Ukrainians in Australia.²⁰

One final issue of *The New Horizon* appeared in 2005, some six years after Nytchenko’s death. This twelfth volume was compiled by Bozhenna Kovalenko and edited by Hryhoryj Vyshnevyy, both of whom were Melbourne-based writers who had long been involved in the Vasyl Symonenko Literary Club.

The longevity of *The New Horizon: Almanac (Literature, Art, Cultural Life)* was a testament to Nytchenko's extraordinary efforts and enduring commitment to Ukrainian writing. The journal reflects the literary and cultural achievements of the Ukrainian diaspora in Australia.

The Free Thought: Literary-Artistic Quarterly
Вільна Думка: Літературно–Мистецький Квартальник

Ukrainian community newspapers and periodicals played an important role in publishing and reviewing Ukrainian literature produced in Australia and abroad. This most often took the form of publishing or reviewing single literary texts, placed throughout an issue or grouped together in a “literary page”. However, one newspaper, *The Free Thought* [Вільна Думка], based in Sydney but with a national readership, published a literary supplement for several years. The “Literary-Artistic Quarterly” [Літературно–Мистецький Квартальник] was a self-contained insert of several pages in length which was part of the newspaper for four years, beginning in April 1976.²¹ It was edited by Ukrainian-Australian writer, Yevhen Haran (Євген Гаран).²² Editorial aims included showcasing local literary talent as well as literature from Ukraine and elsewhere in the world. Translations of classics from Australian and other literatures were also included.

Number 18, dated April-June 1980, exemplified these aims. This issue featured a patriotic poem about Ukrainian self-determination by an established Australian-Ukrainian writer. There was also a short story written by a 14-year old student of a Ukrainian community school in Sydney. The story had been awarded first prize in a young writers' competition held by the Vasyl Symonenko Literary-Arts Club in Melbourne the previous year. Under the heading “Poetry from behind barbed wire” [Поезія за колючими дротами] was a literary analysis of a poem by a Ukrainian poet and political dissident, imprisoned by the Soviet regime. Also included was a review of a newly-published book by a prominent Ukrainian writer living in Canada. Under the heading “From the Australian classics” [З австралійської класики] was the translation of a short story by a literary figure well-known in Australia in the early 20th century.

While it lasted, the “Literary-Artistic Quarterly” was a serious endeavour with a wide circulation, given it was distributed as part of the Ukrainian-language newspaper, *The Free Thought*.

Kiev Quarterly: Presenting Ukrainian Authors in English

During the late 1970s another literary journal appeared. It was written and published by Yuriy Tkach,²³ grandson of Dmytro Nytchenko, who became a literary translator, publisher and distributor through his own company, Bayda Books.

Tkach's first venture was a magazine of which four issues were produced during 1975 and 1976 under the auspices of the Melbourne University Ukrainian Students Association (MUUSA), of which he was president. The first volume of *Kiev Quarterly: Presenting Ukrainian Authors in English* opened with a statement of editorial intent: "The aim of Kiev Quarterly is to present to the Australian public an inexpensive magazine containing the translated works of some of Ukraine's most popular fiction writers. We hope, in future, to acquaint you with authors such as Dimarov, Korotych, Gzhitsky, Honchar." The magazines were produced modestly using a Roneo duplicating machine. Tkach encouraged feedback ("Any comments, criticisms or enquiries welcome") and sought the active involvement of others: "We are seeking the services of persons interested in illustrating or translating for the magazine." By the second issue, which was somewhat longer (at 45 pages), Tkach's more ambitious aims were becoming evident. The opening statement now foreshadowed his move towards translating entire novels: "As stated previously, this magazine's aim is to acquaint the Australian reader with the best of Soviet Ukrainian literature through an inexpensive publication. We hope to in the near future be able to present those full-length novels which have won wide acclaim in the Ukraine."

While *Kiev Quarterly* was relatively shortlived, it was unique in its objective of publishing literary translations and it exemplified an aspirational aim which eventually resulted in many books, as Yuriy Tkach would go on to become Australia's premier translator of Ukrainian literature into English.

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¹ Given in English as Eugen Yu Pelenskyj.

² "...ми є політична еміграція, яка пам'ятає про свій обов'язок супроти залишеної Батьківщини і домагається від австралійського громадянства прихильної постави до справи визволення нашої країни. Слово: Український місячник в Австралії Рік 1, Число 1, вересень 1953. (ст. 19)

³ "Наше громадянство в Австралії відчуває потребу культурного журналу, зацікавленого українсько-австралійською проблематикою; нашим бажанням є піти назустріч цій потребі, реєструванням всіх важніших проявів українського громадського і культурного життя Австралії." Слово: Український місячник в Австралії Рік 1, Число 1, вересень 1953. (ст. 19)

⁴ In English, transliterated as Nytczenko.

⁵ “Даючи перевагу літературно-мистецькому та популярно-науковому матеріялові, що матиме для наших читачів велике виховне значення, ми одночасно будемо інформувати наше громадянство про всі форми українського життя в цілій Австралії: про працю нашої центральної організації ОУА, про працю наших громад, церков, театрів, молодняцьких та жіночих організацій, даватимемо правні поради тощо.” “Від редакції”, *Наш Вісник* (сторінка без номера).

⁶ “Англійська ж частина знайомитиме нас з життям Австралії, а також інформуватиме австралійського читача про нашу історію, мистецтво та нашу боротьбу проти одвічного ворога, що загарбав нашу батьківщину.” Від редакції”, *Наш Вісник* (сторінка без номера).

⁷ “На цьому місці наш орган буде поміщувати відповіді на запити наших читачів у справах господарчого, правного і соціального характеру.”” Господарчо – Правний Інформатор Нашого Вісника”, *Наш Вісник* (ст.22)

⁸ “УНІВЕРСАЛЬНИЙ ЖУРНАЛ «НАШ ВІСНИК» журнал в Австралії, що містить оповідання, вірші, спогади, гуморески, нариси, популярно наукові статті, рецензії, а також інформує громадянство про наше культурне та громадське життя на цьому континенті. Одночасно журнал подає як на своїх сторінках, так і листовно правці поради в різних питаннях нашого життя і праці.” *Наш Вісник* (сторінка без номера).

⁹ “Літературна сверблячка не давала спокою: хотілося мати якесь літературне видання...І я почав збирати до гурту авторів з різних кінців Австралії ... І в 1954 му році з'явився на світ цей перший альманах.” Дмитро Нитченко, “Письменники та їхні здобутки у Вікторії”, ст. 756-762, *Альманах українського часопису Вільна Думка та Фундації Українознавчих Студій в Австралії*, упоряд. Володимир Шумський, Сідней, 1994. (ст.757)

¹⁰ The most substantial literary periodical within the diaspora was the *Almanac* [Збірник] of the Association of Ukrainian Writers ‘Slovo’ [Об'єднання Українських Письменників «Слово»]. The first volumes were published under the original name of the Ukrainian Writers' Association in Exile [Об'єднання Українських Письменників в Екзилі] in New York, where the organisation was based; later volumes were published in Canada (first in Toronto and then in Edmonton). The inaugural issue of the *Almanac* was published in 1962.

¹¹ Дмитро Нитченко, “Наше літературне-мистецьке 20-ліття”, *Новий Обрій* ч.8, В-во Ластівка, Мельборн, 1988. (ст.225-228)

¹² “В другому числі взяли участь майже всі українські літератори та журналісти, що живуть і творять на цьому терені: тепер авторів понад тридцять – удвічі більше авторського складу першого числа.” “До читачів”, *Новий Обрій* ч.2, В-во Ластівка, Мельбурн і Аделаїда, 1960. (ст.236)

¹³ “А що літературно-мистецька діяльність в Австралії не стихає, маємо ріст не тільки з мистецького боку, а і в кількості сторінок цього видання. Перший номер альманаха «Новий Обрій», що вийшов ще в 1954 році, мав усього 127 сторінок, а це число має 280. Щоразу в кожному номері цього видання появляються все нові й нові як автори літературних творів так і особи в ділянках інших видів мистецтва.” “Після слово”, *Новий Обрій* ч.8, В-во Ластівка, Мельборн, 1988. (ст.273-274)

¹⁴ “Наші альманахи – це клапоть історії нашого життя і творчости на цьому терені, зокрема на літературному, мистецькому та загально-культурному полі.” “Слово до читачів”, *Новий Обрій* ч.3, В-во Ластівка, Мельборн, 1967. (ст.185)

¹⁵ “До наших читачів” *Новий Обрій* ч.1, В-во Ластівка, Мельбурн і Аделаїда, 1954. (ст.126)

¹⁶ “Десять років нашого життя і праці в Австралії (1949-1959)” *Новий Обрій* ч.2, В-во Ластівка, Мельбурн і Аделаїда, 1960.

¹⁷ “Вісімнадцять років нашого життя в Австралії (1949-1967)” *Новий Обрій* ч.3, В-во Ластівка, Мельборн, 1967.

¹⁸ “Як і попередніх разів у наших сімох альманахах, так і тепер, намагаємося віддзеркалити не тільки наше літературне життя, а й діяльність різних видів культурної діяльності нашої

спільноти: хори, танцювальні групи чи ансамблі, музики, актори, мистці образотворчого мистецтва тощо.” “Після слово”, ст.273-274. *Новий Обрій* ч.8, В-во Ластівка, Мельборн, 1988. (ст.273)

¹⁹ “Це видання було вже певним нашим здобутком, бо воно згуртувало майже всіх авторів та віддзеркалювало не тільки літературну творчість, а і все культурно мистецьке життя...” Дмитро Нитченко, “Письменники та їхні здобутки у Вікторії”, ст. 756-762, *Альманах українського часопису Вільна Думка та Фундації Українознавчих Студій в Австралії*, упоряд. Володимир Шумський, Сідней, 1994. (ст.757)

²⁰ “Це видання стало першоджерелом для дослідників нашого літературно-мистецького та культурного життя в Австралії.” Дмитро Нитченко, “Літературно-мистецький клуб ім.Василя Симоненка”, *Українці в Австралії*, т.2, ред. Марко Павлишин та ін. Мельборн, Національна Фундація Союзу Українських Організацій Австралії і Фундація Українознавчих Студій в Австралії, 1998. (ст. 331)

²¹ Євген Гаран, “Літературно–Мистецький Квартальник”, , *Альманах українського часопису Вільна Думка та Фундації Українознавчих Студій в Австралії*, упоряд. Володимир Шумський, Сідней, 1994. (ст. 183)

²² Given in English as Eugene Garan.

²³ Given in English as George or Yuri Tkacz.