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Bridging the Past and the Future: Ukrainian History Writing Since Independence

Ukrainian historical scholarship as it emerged after the Soviet collapse represented a confusing mixture of old and new, and attempts to bridge the thematic, institutional, and methodological breaks spanning the Soviet past, the Ukrainian present, and the international future defined the next twenty years of history writing in independent Ukraine.¹ These decades saw the rise of the “national paradigm” in historiography as well as challenges to its dominance, resulting from increased exposure to modern Western methodologies. Above all, though, the struggle between the new and the old was about liberating the historical profession from the enduring legacy of Soviet dogmatism, if often dressed up in the clothes of post-communist nationalism.

FROM THE OLD ORTHODOXY TO THE NEW

Beginning with the disintegration of ideological controls in the last years of the Soviet Union’s existence, the study of previously forbidden topics became possible. There was little agreement in Ukrainian society of the early 1990s on the interpretation of such topics as Hetman Ivan Mazepa’s break with Russia, the Ukrainian Revolution, the Famine of 1932–1933, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and dissidents, but at least scholars could now write and argue about these issues. Indeed, these topics came to dominate public discourse about history and the agendas of the institutions that Ukraine inherited from the Soviet state: large research institutes and hundreds of history departments at numerous colleges—the latter’s numbers increasing dramatically with the abolition of the history of the Communist party as an obligatory subject and the subsequent rebranding of all such departments as those of the history of political movements, “Ukrainian ethnopolitics,” or Ukrainian history.

Soviet Ukrainian historiography, with its theoretical rigidity and limited repertoire of prescribed topics (such as revolutionary movements, cultural links to Russia, party guidance in all spheres of life, and the construction of a socialist society), was long overdue for a conceptual revolution. Yet, some Western observers warned early on that the wholesale and ideologically motivated rejection of Marxist methodology would not benefit Ukrainian historians. As Orest Subtelny

¹ I am grateful to Yulia Kysla, Andrii Portnov, Volodymyr Sklokin, Oksana Yurkova, and the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive suggestions, and to Marta D. Olynyk, who edited the text.

wrote in 1993, “rather than precipitately abandoning the Marxist methodology, which they know well, for unfamiliar Western approaches, it may be more fruitful for Ukraine’s historians to concentrate instead on applying the Marxist approach more creatively. For example, those historians who dealt with classes, class struggles, and class consciousness throughout their careers could now apply their expertise to the study of labour history, urban and rural studies, or the history of women and the family. In other words, they might move into the currently popular new social history.” Subtelny also hoped that the younger generation would explore the “great variety” of methodologies available in the West to prevent the mechanical replacement of “one ‘correct’ methodology with another.”²

The latter, however, was precisely what happened in the 1990s. The “national paradigm” of Ukrainian history—a grand narrative focusing on the Ukrainian ethnic nation’s struggle for its own state—replaced Soviet models of “socialist construction” and the “friendship of peoples” with a similar sort of dogmatism.³ As Serhii Plokhy has argued, even within the history of ethnic Ukrainians and their ancestors, the emphasis on the Cossacks and the Ukrainian national project of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted in other social groups, movements, and cultural phenomena being marginalized, if not completely left out. In addition, the “national paradigm” brought with it the danger of a retroactive “Ukrainization” of institutions and identities that existed before the age of modern nationalism.⁴ Even more problematic in this teleological scheme was any inclusion of Ukraine’s national minorities and territories with strong regional identity. These had to be defined in relation to the titular ethnic group and its entitlement to a nation state—as friends, enemies, or fellow travellers. Indeed, in this framework even the ethnic Ukrainian population could be seen as lacking a “national consciousness” and in need of being elevated to some gold standard of Ukrainian identity.

Several factors influenced the transformation of the national paradigm into a new orthodoxy. Its populist (Mykhailo Hrushevsky) and statist (Viacheslav Lypynsky) incarnations were predominant in pre-Soviet Ukrainian historical thought and thus constituted a natural fallback position for a profession that had

² Orest Subtelny, “The Current State of Ukrainian Historiography,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 18.1–2 (Summer-Winter 1993): 42. Of course, one can argue, as does Andrii Portnov, that late Soviet Ukrainian historiography was not really Marxist, but Subtelny’s point that the abandonment of social history topics in the early 1990s was counterproductive stands. See Andrei [Andrii] Portnov, *Uprazhneniia s istoriei po-ukrainski* (Moscow: OGI-Polit.ru-Memorial, 2010) 113.

³ The most comprehensive, if now somewhat outdated, study of this transformation is a book by a Polish scholar, which, ironically, has not been translated into Ukrainian. See Tomasz Stryjek, *Jakiej przeszłości potrzebuje przyszłość?: interpretacje dziejów narodowych w historiografii i debacie publicznej na Ukrainie 1991–2004* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN/Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2007).

⁴ Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) 288–289.

suddenly found itself at a conceptual crossroads. The national paradigm also fit well with the young Ukrainian state's ideological stance for much of the 1990s, when attempts to create a strong Ukrainian identity translated into anti-imperialist rhetoric aimed at cultural separation from Russia. For historians trained in the Soviet era, the national school was not as difficult to accept as one might think. In much the same organicist way as the nationalists, the Soviet authorities since the late 1930s had encouraged the historical profession to think of nations as subjects of history (as in "the great Russian people" or the "reunification of Ukraine with Russia"). Its only departure from the national paradigm, the direction of the nation's historical development, could easily be adjusted to lead to independence rather than to union with the Russian brethren within the socialist federation of nations. Finally, post-Soviet Ukrainian historians were not making this choice in a vacuum: their diaspora colleagues took an active part in the reorientation of the Ukrainian historical profession by helping restore the national paradigm as preserved in the diaspora.

Ironically, in light of his appeals to preserve the best in the Marxist historiographical tradition, Subtelny's own survey of Ukrainian history became a symbol of the national paradigm's sweeping victory in Ukraine. Even though the Ukrainian translation's real print run is difficult to estimate due to widespread under-reporting and outright piracy in the Ukrainian publishing world, educated guesses put it at somewhere between 900,000 and well over a million copies.⁵ Subtelny's *Ukraine: A History* became a standard college textbook and a widely used text for college-entry exams, as well as a treasure trove of interpretations to be borrowed by authors of innumerable other school- and college-level textbooks. In the process, this work, which at the time of its original publication in the 1980s was one of the national paradigm's best examples, incorporating, for example, Miroslav Hroch's scheme of the three-stage development of national movements in stateless nations and Bohdan Krawchenko's sophisticated sociological analysis of overcoming the "incompleteness" of the nation's social structure, was "read" at a more primitive level than it deserved. Even more problematic, though, was the next stage in the restoration of the national school, wherein Ukrainian historians of the 1990s blended Hrushevsky's populist concepts with statist interpretations advanced in Galicia in the 1920s and the Soviet understanding of historical causation dating from the 1980s.⁶

Thus, post-communist Ukrainian historians inherited the dogmatism and longing for a clearly defined subject of history that was equally present in the

⁵ Georgiy Kasianov, "'Nationalized' History: Past Continuous, Present Perfect, Future," in *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, edited by Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009) 23.

⁶ Iaroslav Gritsak [Hrytsak], "Ukrainskaia istoriografiiia 1991–2001: Desiatiletie peremen," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2003): 437–438.

Soviet and Ukrainian nationalist traditions. Many of them also never quite managed to rid themselves of pseudo-Marxist language even as they switched to the nationalist theories from the 1920s, as illustrated beautifully by the claim in a collectively-written survey of the history of Ukrainian culture (authored by a group of former historians of the Communist party) that the authors used “a psychological approach based on the principle of historical materialism.”⁷ More consistent, but not necessarily more sophisticated, was the introduction to the survey of twentieth-century Ukrainian history prepared at Kyiv University and approved by the Ministry of Education as a textbook for students majoring in history. The book opens with the following statement: “The history of Ukraine is the Ukrainian people’s path of struggle for independence.” An elaboration follows in the next paragraph: “The history of the long-suffering Ukrainian people is filled with striking pages of brilliant victories for the cause of liberation and of defeats which returned them to the previous condition.”⁸

If this was the emerging, dominant scheme of Ukrainian history, it should come as no surprise that many authors of scholarly monographs published in independent Ukraine chose not to include any statements on methodology or on how their research contributes to the larger picture of Ukrainian history. In at least one case, a sense of academic integrity amid widespread frustration with the supplanting of one dogmatic ideology with another led the authors of an excellent 1994 monograph on the Soviet state and Western Ukrainian intellectuals to declare that “a simple, everyday accumulation of facts” was more important for Ukrainian historical scholarship than any “philosophy of history.”⁹

INTO THE WIDER WORLD

If the diaspora’s intervention helped establish the dominance of the national paradigm, it also set the Ukrainian historical profession on the road to internationalization and inclusion into the world’s methodological currents. Together with the Soros network and other Western agencies, funding from the Ukrainian diaspora helped develop new centres, journals, and translation projects that were not connected by the force of institutional inertia to the old Soviet academic world. These included the Institute for Historical Study at Lviv University, the Kowalsky Eastern Ukrainian Institute at Kharkiv University, and *Krytyka* [Criticism] magazine in Kyiv. The journal *Ukraina Moderna* [Modern Ukraine], affiliated with the first of these and based on the Western model, soon

⁷ S. M. Klapchuk and V. F. Ostafiichuk, eds., *Istoriia ukrains'koi ta zarubizhnoi kul'tury*, 4th ed. (Kyiv: Znannia-Press, 2002) 12.

⁸ A. H. Sliusarenko, V. I. Husev, and V. M. Lytvyn, eds., *Novitnia istoriia Ukrainy, 1900–2000: pidruchnyk dlia studentiv istorychnykh spetsial'nostei vyshchyykh navchal'nykh zakladiv* (Kyiv: Vyshcha shkola, 2002) 5.

⁹ O. S. Rublev and Iu. A. Cherchenko, *Stalins'hchyna i dolia zakhidnoukrains'koi intelihtentsii: 20–50-ti roky XX st.* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1994) 12.

developed into the best historical journal in Ukraine. The Krytyka Publishing House in Kyiv became the leading publisher of academic translations introducing Ukrainian audiences to the finest Western works in Ukrainian Studies and beyond. A historical school critical of the national paradigm, which follows recent Western epistemological trends, was established in the Department of History at the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy. Finally, since the early 1990s an ever increasing number of Ukrainian students have undertaken graduate training in the West. Some also obtain academic positions there. Together with a small number of established Ukrainian scholars who have managed to secure positions in Western academia, they continue publishing and giving public lectures in Ukraine. Similarly, many leading Ukrainian historians who have built their reputations and schools during the post-Soviet period travel widely and read the same journals as their Western colleagues. In the emerging global and multilingual world of Ukrainian history writing, the old national history model is increasingly challenged by new epistemological and methodological approaches. However, it survives and even demonstrates its ability to adapt by including some of these innovations in the traditional, overall scheme of the nation's trials and victories.

Perhaps the best illustration of such adaptation and the tensions present therein may be found in the changing format of major historical surveys. The crowning achievement of Soviet Ukraine's historical scholarship was the multi-volume, collectively written *Istoriia Ukrain'skoi RSR* [History of the Ukrainian SSR], originally published in Ukrainian in 1977–1979 (8 volumes in 10 books) and in a revised Russian translation in 1981–1985 (10 volumes). As the leading institution for this project and, indeed, a research institute that was originally created in 1936 in order to produce a Marxist survey of Ukrainian history, the Institute of History (under the umbrella of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences) had to redefine its very *raison d'être* with the emergence of independent Ukraine. At first, a solution was sought in another multi-volume history authored by a large collective of scholars, this one based on the national paradigm. In the early 1990s the Institute released several small-circulation brochures formulating possible conceptual approaches to this project, titled “Istoriia ukrains'koho narodu” [The History of the Ukrainian People].¹⁰ However, difficulties with securing state funding for such a monumental project, as well as the realities of the post-communist publishing market, resulted in the implementation of a very different model—a book series with individual volumes single-authored or co-authored by leading specialists. Entitled “Ukraina kriz' viky” [Ukraine Through the Ages], this fifteen-volume series was released in 1998–1999 by the Alternatyvy Publishing House, earning its authors the State Prize

¹⁰ See, e.g., V. H. Sarbei, *Do vyroblennia kontseptsii bahatotomnoi “Istorii ukrains'koho narodu” (rozдумы i propozytsii)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NANU, 1994); R. H. Symonenko, *Do kontseptsii bahatotomnoi “Istorii ukrains'koho narodu” (mizhnatsional'ni i mizhnarodni aspekty)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NANU, 1993).

for Scholarship and Technology in 2001. Still, the success of these individual authors did not justify the existence of a large research institute with over a hundred staff members. A larger project involving most of the Institute's researchers was, instead, the ten-volume *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy* [Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine], which started publication in 2003, with seven volumes released by 2010. In embarking on this work, the Institute's executive apparently saw the encyclopedia as a safer and more "fact-oriented" project compared to a multi-volume history. With the latter, there was always the danger of creating a political stir not just with the evaluation of controversial topics, such as Mazepa or the UPA, but also with the entire scheme of Ukrainian history.

By 2010, however, the Institute needed another large project and grudgingly settled on a further incarnation of the concept of a multi-volume, collective history. Demonstrating some familiarity with Western concepts of history writing, the compilers of the prospectus missed the critical connotations of the term "grand narrative" and proclaimed their intention to develop a national grand narrative for Ukrainian history. Accordingly, the 2011 prospectus was entitled "*Istoriia Ukrainy*": *materalny do rozrobky kontseptsii natsional'noho hrاند-naratyvu. Zaproshehnia do dyskusii* [History of Ukraine: Materials Toward the Development of a Concept of a National Grand Narrative: An Invitation to a Discussion].¹¹ What is refreshing about this publication is its structure as a discussion piece. Together with the prospectus of the five-volume historical survey, it includes a tour-de-force essay by Heorhii Kasianov and Oleksii Tolochko, highlighting the dangers of the teleological and essentialist approach inherent in national histories, as well as an alternative prospectus by Iryna Kolesnyk and comments by a number of other leading scholars. It seems that the final consensus is to produce a work modelled on *The Cambridge History of Russia* or *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*: thematic rather than chronological within volumes and avoiding the application of modern ethnic designations to premodern societies. Moreover, the editors envisage inviting foreign specialists to contribute chapters to each of the five volumes, all of which will have separate editors—unlike in the old Soviet model of an "editorial board" for the entire publication.

As promising as this proposal looks, one also senses a theoretical and methodological tension between the very notion of a need for a "national grand narrative" and approaches that are designed to avoid a teleological and primordialist concept of national history. Whether or not this tension makes the new survey history innovative or conflicted, the participants' awareness of the challenges to the national paradigm places Ukrainian historical scholarship on par with other European historiographies.

This intellectual engagement with Western historiographical debates developed only gradually. In 1995, when the leading Western journal of Slavic Studies, *Slavic*

¹¹ V. A. Smolii, ed., "*Istoriia Ukrainy*": *materalny do rozrobky kontseptsii natsional'noho hrاند-naratyvu. Zaproshehnia do dyskusii* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NANU, 2011).

Review, brought together Ukrainian and Western scholars for a discussion of Mark von Hagen's provocative think-piece, "Does Ukraine Have a History?", the participants seemed to be talking at cross-purposes. Von Hagen's contribution was concerned with the early signs of "the enshrinement [in Ukraine] of a new integral nationalist dogma, a primarily diaspora narrative that charts the prehistory of the independent Ukrainian state as the teleological triumph of an essentialist, primordial Ukrainian nation." In contrast, he proposed to turn the perceived "weaknesses" of Ukrainian history, such as discontinuity in state tradition and the permeable cultural frontiers of "Ukrainian" identity, into its strengths: "Precisely the fluidity of frontiers, the permeability of cultures, the historic multi-ethnic society is what could make Ukrainian history a very 'modern' field of inquiry."¹²

In his response, a leading Ukrainian historian from Ukraine, Yaroslav Isaievych, showed little appreciation for von Hagen's postmodern sensibilities, and even for the colonial and postcolonial approach suggested in concurrent comments by another Western commentator, George Grabowicz. On the contrary, Isaievych argued that Ukrainian history was suppressed by Poles and Russians "as a means to maintain a hold on Ukrainian lands," and expressed his disenchantment that "even after the proclamation of Ukrainian independence" authoritative Western scholars, such as von Hagen, wanted to "discuss the very existence of Ukrainian national history."¹³ Isaievych also explicitly refused to see the nation-state model of historical process as outdated, and questioned any fluidity of frontiers or permeability of cultures in the lands of what is now Ukraine, where "only the political and not the ethnic border changed comparatively often."¹⁴ Another Ukrainian participant, who was by then based in Canada, Serhii Plokhly, offered a much more nuanced reaction to von Hagen's paper. Instead of defending or dismissing the national-history model, he saw it as essentially based on historical mythology, itself a necessary component of national identity. The only problem in his view, then, was that this was a nationalist mythology for ethnic Ukrainians, which was facing challenges in present-day multicultural Ukraine. Plokhly noted that "contemporary Ukraine, which to a great extent is the product of one historical myth, now needs a new myth to make its way forward." In order for this to happen, Hrushevsky's historical scheme had to be reconciled with the heritage of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.¹⁵

¹² Mark von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?" *Slavic Review* 54.3 (Fall 1995): 665 and 670.

¹³ Yaroslav Isaievych, "Ukrainian Studies—Exceptional or Merely Exemplary?" *Slavic Review* 54.3 (Fall 1995): 702.

¹⁴ Isaievych 706.

¹⁵ Serhii M. Plokhly, "The History of a 'Non-Historical' Nation: Notes on the Nature and Current Problems of Ukrainian Historiography," *Slavic Review* 54.3 (Fall 1995): 712.

In contrast, the deconstruction of national historical myths was front and centre of the follow-up discussion that was published in 2009. Originally intended as an assessment of the field ten years after von Hagen's provocative intervention, the collection of essays entitled *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography* in fact came out fourteen years later. Tellingly, a Ukrainian historian and his German colleague (the latter working in Italy at the time) conceived the project and co-edited the book.¹⁶ Although von Hagen contributed a piece revisiting his ideas in light of recent historiographical trends, the real lead articles were written by the co-editors, Georgiy (Heorhii) Kasianov and Philipp Ther. Whereas Kasianov focuses on a critique of what he calls "nationalized history" with its teleological linear narrative, essentialism, and ethnic exclusivity, Ther proposes the "transnational paradigm" for Ukrainian history. Transnational history, of course, has been actively explored by Western European and American historians as a productive way of transcending national and, indeed, even continental boundaries. Understood as the study of relations between cultures and societies rather than within them, transnational history focuses on episodes of cultural interaction and instances of *histoire croisée* (entangled history).¹⁷ The other Western contributors to this collection also stress the need to transcend the old-style national history. Andreas Kappeler provides a useful amplification of this argument by proposing that Ukrainian historiography should first move from an "ethnonational" to a multi-ethnic approach and from the latter to a transnational one, although his understanding of the latter differs in some respects from Ther's. Von Hagen fine-tunes his original thesis by proposing for Ukrainian history the interpretive frames of "borderland studies," regional history, urban studies, and the biographical approach.¹⁸

No less interesting is the second part of the collection, which features articles on specific problems in Ukrainian history by well-known historians from Ukraine (Natalia Yakovenko, Oleksii Tolochko, and Yaroslav Hrytsak), the West (John-Paul Himka and Roman Szporluk), and Russia (Aleksii Miller and Oksana Ostapchuk)—all of whom in some form challenge the "national paradigm" in their case studies. The editors characterize this collection of articles as "almost an alternative reader of Ukrainian history,"¹⁹ although one wonders if they too engage in the reification of a fluid border between the official line and revisionism. All

¹⁶ Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther, eds., *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009).

¹⁷ Kasianov, "'Nationalized' History: Past Continuous, Present Perfect, Future..." 7–24; Ther, "The Transnational Paradigm of Historiography and Its Potential for Ukrainian History," in Kasianov and Ther 81–114.

¹⁸ Andreas Kappeler, "From an Ethnonational to a Multiethnic to a Transnational Ukrainian History," in Kasianov and Ther 51–81; Mark von Hagen, "Revisiting the Histories of Ukraine," in Kasianov and Ther 25–50.

¹⁹ Kasianov and Ther, "Introduction," in Kasianov and Ther 4.

three Ukrainian participants are leading authorities in their fields, as are the two North American and two Russian authors. Perhaps, the analytical distinction between the “national paradigm” and revisionist challenges should not be understood as a challenge to official historical scholarship in either Ukraine or the diaspora. The revisionists are increasingly well-established scholars or even leading voices in their fields, and these days few serious scholars embrace the extreme, unmodified version of “nationalized” history.

NEW APPROACHES IN UKRAINE

Thus, it would be misleading to analyze Ukrainian history writing since independence as a clear-cut struggle between the “national paradigm” and its opponents. Some believers in the nation-state framework have made important contributions to the field by documenting the development of the national movement or describing the mechanisms of imperial repression. Even greater numbers of solid professionals are doing excellent work on the topics that hold a privileged place in the new canon of national history, such as the Cossacks or the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1920, but their sophisticated social-history approach has little in common with the simplifications of old-fashioned nationalists. More often than not, the books that have “made a splash” in Ukraine’s historical community challenged the national paradigm, but they were not rejected by some hypothetical, dominant school. These influential interventions usually stand out because they offer new approaches that are adopted subsequently by a significant number of professional historians.

The Ukrainian case demonstrates that textbooks can have a similar impact. The two companion volumes from the Heneza Publishing House, Natalia Yakovenko’s *Narys istorii Ukrainy z naidavnishykh chasiv do kintsia XIX st.* [Survey of the History of Ukraine from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century, 1997] and Yaroslav Hrytsak’s *Narys istorii Ukrainy: formuvannia ukrains'koi modernoi natsii XIX–XX st.* [Survey of the History of Ukraine: The Formation of a Modern Ukrainian Nation During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 1996] did much to undermine the certainties of the national school.²⁰ Yakovenko’s book stands out because of the author’s conscious avoidance of teleological schemes and insistence that present-day ethnic categories are not helpful tools for an understanding of medieval and early modern society in the lands that now constitute Ukraine. Hrytsak’s volume emphasizes the constructed character of modern Ukrainian national identity and also introduces the Ukrainian reader to the most productive Western approaches to Ukrainian history of the last two centuries. Both authors are highly influential in the Ukrainian historical profession. Yakovenko is the

²⁰ N. M. Iakovenko, *Narys istorii Ukrainy z naidavnishykh chasiv do kintsia XVIII stolittia* (Kyiv: Heneza, 1997); Iaroslav Hrytsak, *Narys istorii Ukrainy: formuvannia ukrains'koi modernoi natsii XIX–XX st.* (Kyiv: Heneza, 1996).

chairperson of the History Department at Kyiv Mohyla Academy, where she has built the nation's top graduate program in history. She has also written an excellent textbook, *Vstup do istorii* [An Introduction to History], which matches the best Western equivalents in theoretical depth and methodological sophistication.²¹ Hrytsak has similarly developed an impressive following in Lviv and takes an active part in public debates on the issues of nationalism and national identity.

The controversies in which Yakovenko is embroiled remain mostly within the historical profession. Her scathing critique of a volume on the seventeenth-century Cossack rebellion, co-authored by the influential director of the Institute of Ukrainian History and published in the "Ukraine Through the Ages" book series, is a good example of the debates taking place among Ukrainian historians. Yakovenko demonstrated that the theoretical framework and language of this book, *Ukrains'ka natsional'na revoliutsiia XVII st.* [The Ukrainian National Revolution of the Seventeenth Century], are strikingly similar to that of Soviet-era books on the Bolshevik Revolution. The concept of historical causation and the representation of the "people" as a united force have been carried over unchanged from Marxist to neo-nationalist historiography.²² Yakovenko's own book of highly imaginative and often revisionist essays, *Paralel'nyi svit: doslidzhennia z istorii uiavlenn' ta idei v Ukraini XVI–XVII st.* [Parallel World: Studies in the History of Representations and Ideas in Ukraine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries], took aim at a few "sacred cows" of the national paradigm, in particular the notion of the native aristocracy's "treasonous" conversion to Catholicism beginning in the late sixteenth century and the Cossacks' alleged unity with the people in defence of the nation and its Orthodox faith during the wars of the mid-seventeenth century. Through her subtle textual analysis of sources Yakovenko shows that until the mid-seventeenth century the world of the Ruthenian nobles in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was marked by religious tolerance, if not outright indifference, within regional and family-based power networks. As for the Cossacks, who are lionized by the nationalists, they actually shared with their Polish enemies the "knightly" ethos of condescension toward civilians and the right to loot, including the looting of their own confession's churches and the killing of co-religionist burghers.²³ Such interpretations certainly act as a healthy antidote to the traditional representations widely encountered in the Ukrainian mass media, even if specialists point out that Yakovenko may be going too far in her revisionism, especially in dismissing religion almost entirely as a factor in the Cossack wars.²⁴

²¹ Natalia Iakovenko, *Vstup do istorii* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2007).

²² See V. A. Smolii and V. S. Stepankov, *Ukrains'ka natsional'na revoliutsiia XVII st. (1648–1676 rr.)* (Kyiv: Al'ternatyvy, 1999), and Natalia Iakovenko, "V kol'orakh proletars'koi revoliutsii," *Ukrains'kyi humanitarnyi ohliad* 3 (2000): 58–78.

²³ Natalia Iakovenko, *Paralel'nyi svit: doslidzhennia z istorii uiavlenn' ta idei v Ukraini XVI–XVII st.* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2002) 13–79 and 189–228.

²⁴ Plochy, *Ukraine and Russia 252–265*.

Hrytsak, in contrast, often fights battles in the media, fending off attacks from both Ukrainian nationalists and supporters of a pro-Russian orientation. The former went into overdrive recently after the historian's courageous refusal to endorse the cult of wartime nationalist leader Stepan Bandera, which has become a new orthodoxy in western Ukraine. In August 2011 Hrytsak wrote a newspaper column with the telling opening sentence, "They are turning me into an enemy of the people."²⁵

Interestingly, Hrytsak's recent brilliant biography of the great Ukrainian writer and nation builder Ivan Franko (1856–1916) is no less of a threat to nationalist mythology, if only right-wing commentators had the patience to read this bulky volume, entitled *Prorok u svoii vitchyzni: Franko ta ioho spil'nota* [A Prophet in His Fatherland: Franko and His Community].²⁶ The phrase "his community" in the book's title could also read "his communities," since Hrytsak carefully examines the numerous micro-contexts of Franko's life and work: his native village, his school, the student circles of which he was a member, his readership, the journals he edited, the industrial city of Boryslav as the setting for his socialist propaganda and literary works, the women in his life, and so on. Hrytsak shows that the image of a peasant poet, the Ukrainian national identity, and the Ukrainian-sounding emphasis on the last syllable of his surname are all conscious identity choices that Franko made later in life. These choices were not predetermined either. The first Ukrainian intellectual in Galicia to earn a living as a writer and editor, Franko in fact survived only because for decades he also collaborated with Polish journals, which had a much larger readership. But historically more important was his work for the Ukrainian press, where subscription numbers at the time were usually under 1,500. The print run of Franko's most popular poetry collection in Ukrainian was actually only between 600 and 1,000.²⁷ By the early 1880s Franko had already become a Ukrainian "Moses" for this relatively small group of readers, a cult figure much like the poet Taras Shevchenko had become for Ukrainians in the Russian Empire. Ultimately, Franko immortalized his name early on by creating in his novels, poems, and scholarly texts a new and very modern Ukraine—a land of industry, worker activists, liberated women, and socialist intellectuals. In other words, in his scholarly and literary works Franko created a social and cultural space for a new generation of patriots to inhabit. In the process, he also proved that these

²⁵ Iaroslav Hrytsak, "Porady na zle i na dobre," *Gazeta.ua* 7 August 2011: <http://gazeta.ua/articles/grycak-jaroslav/_poradi-na-zle-i-na-dobre/393431>. The materials of recent discussions about Bandera in the Ukrainian media have been helpfully reprinted in Tarik Cyril Amar, Ivan Balyns'kyi, and Iaroslav Hrytsak, eds., *Strasti za Banderoiu* (Kyiv: Hrani-T, 2010).

²⁶ Iaroslav Hrytsak, *Prorok u svoii vitchyzni: Franko ta ioho spil'nota (1856–1886)* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2006).

²⁷ Hrytsak, *Prorok u svoii vitchyzni* 372.

modern realities could be described in the Ukrainian language, no longer just a peasant vernacular. Hrytsak argues, in contrast to much of the previous scholarship, that it was the radical (early socialist) political culture that Franko created rather than the cumulative result of the Ukrainian national movement which caused the final transition from the pre-national Ruthenian to a modern, national Ukrainian identity in Galicia.²⁸

The circumstance of being attacked by both the right and left, and criticized simultaneously by nationalists, former imperial masters, and postmodernists is nothing new to historians of modern Ukraine. This description fits the experiences of Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, the leading economic historian of twentieth-century Ukraine, who in the 1990s took up the challenge of heading a commission of historians evaluating the legacy of the UPA, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. This controversial nationalist organization is lionized in western Ukraine as a bastion of national resistance to both the Soviets and the Nazis, but seen in Russia and much of eastern Ukraine as a terrorist organization that collaborated with the Germans and was complicit in the extermination of Jews and Poles. Needless to say, the commission's reasonably balanced report failed to satisfy either side.²⁹

Much the same was the outcome of Kul'chyts'kyi's other, and equally courageous, decision to engage the issue of the 1932–1933 Famine, which the previous administration of President Viktor Yushchenko wanted officially recognized as the Holodomor (“terror by famine”) and a genocide of ethnic Ukrainians—the view that prevails in the Ukrainian diaspora. Not only was he criticized on both sides of Ukraine's political spectrum, but a younger revisionist colleague at the Institute of Ukrainian History, Heorhii Kasianov, made the analysis of Kul'chyts'kyi's gradual acceptance of the Holodomor concept the subject of his controversial book on the uses of the famine in Ukrainian public discourse.³⁰

One member of the historians' commission on the UPA, Ihor Il'iushyn, even suffered a serious career setback when his Doctor of Historical Sciences dissertation was failed on his first attempt to defend it at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University. Il'iushyn was the first Ukrainian historian to study the UPA's systematic and ideologically motivated ethnic cleansing of Polish civilians in Volhynia in 1943–1944, which until very recently historians of the national school either denied or justified as a response to earlier Polish atrocities. In fact, Il'iushyn's work on this subject is well researched, balanced, and objective. He takes into

²⁸ Hrytsak, *Prorok u svoii vitchyzni* 435.

²⁹ The commission's report has been published as *Problema OUN-UPA: Zvit robochoi hrupy istorikov pry Uriadovii komisii z vvychennia diial'nosti OUN i UPA* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NANU, 2004).

³⁰ Heorhii Kasianov, *Danse macabre: holod 1932–1933 rokiv u politytsi, masovii svidomosti ta istoriografii (1980-ti–pochatok 2000-kh)* (Kyiv: Nash chas, 2010) 162–189. See also an extended book review: Andrei Portnov, “O grazhdanskoii vovlechnosti, intellektual'noi nepredvziatosti i izuchenii pamiaty,” *Ab Imperio* 1 (2011): 12–20.

account the wider context of the violent Ukrainian-Polish struggles in the region, showing nevertheless that the 1943 massacres were ideologically driven and organized by the UPA.³¹ Likewise, the Holocaust in Ukraine and especially the role of the local auxiliary police in the Holocaust remain marginal topics in the overall picture of research and publishing on the war years. Welcome exceptions include, for example, works by Zhanna Kovba and Sofiia Grachova.³² By now historiographical controversies surrounding the “difficult issues” of twentieth-century Ukrainian history have provided enough material for a study of how history writing responds to changing historical memory in post-communist Ukraine. Andrii Portnov’s excellent short book is the best such analysis from inside the Ukrainian historical profession; more has been published on this subject by Western scholars.³³

One can argue, however, that the most important change in Ukrainian historiography is taking place elsewhere, not in the study of such controversial political issues as the UPA or the Holodomor. In the 2000s regional history and new social history, often informed by micro-historical and anthropological approaches, emerged as the fields where the finest Ukrainian works are on par with the best of Western historical writing in terms of theoretical and methodological sophistication. Such books are often authored by younger, Western-educated historians. Kateryna Dysa’s impressive study of witchcraft and witch-hunting in Right-Bank Ukraine during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a fine example of the historical-anthropological approach, was originally a Ph.D. thesis defended in English at the Central European University.³⁴ Andriy Zayarnyuk’s excellent book on the “idioms of emancipation” in the life and struggles of the Galician peasantry—the new social history at its best, informed by cultural anthropology as it emerged after the “linguistic turn”—is the expanded first part of the author’s doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Alberta.³⁵

³¹ See the second edition of his book: Ihor Il'iushyn, *Ukrains'ka povstans'ka armiiia i Armiiia Kraiova: protystoiannia v Zakhidnii Ukraini (1939–1945 rr.)* (Kyiv: Vydavnychi dim “Kyievo-Mohylians'ka Akademiia,” 2009). Il'iushyn’s thesis was later passed.

³² Zhanna Kovba, *Liudianist' u bezodni pekla: povedinka mistsevoho naselennia Skhidnoi Halychyny v roky “Ostatochnoho rozv”iazannia ievreis'koho pytannia*” (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2009); Sofiia Hrachova, “Vony zhyly sered nas?” *Krytyka* 9.4 (2005): 22–26.

³³ Portnov, *Uprazhneniia s istoriei po-ukrainski*. Among Western works on this subject, see, in particular, David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007) and several articles by the German historian Wilfried Jilge.

³⁴ Kateryna Dysa, *Istoriia z vid'mamy: sudy pro chary v ukrains'kykh voievodstvakh Rechi Pospolitoi XVII–XVIII stolit'* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2008). Dysa now teaches at Kyiv Mohyla Academy.

³⁵ Andrii Zaiarniuk, *Idiomy emansypatsii: “Vyzvol'ni proiekty” i halyts'ke selo v seredyni XIX stolittia* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2007). Zayarnyuk has since accepted a position at the

Ukrainian-educated historians also produce excellent scholarship employing many of the same approaches. Two recent books on the Kharkiv region are excellent examples of how new Ukrainian regional history can make use of new social history, micro-history, cultural anthropology, borderland studies, and biographical approach. One of them, Volodymyr Masliichuk's *Provintsiia na perekhresti kul'tur* [A Province at the Intersection of Cultures], was published in Ukrainian in Kharkiv, while the other, Tatiana Zhurzhenko's *Borderlands into Bordered Lands*, came out in English as part of a book series issued by a German publisher.³⁶

Two new annuals published by the Institute of Ukrainian History in Kyiv also demonstrate the growing influence of the new social history and historical anthropology: *Sotsium: Al'manakh sotsial'noi istorii* [Socium: An Almanac of Social History] and *Eidos: Al'manakh teorii ta istorii istorychnoi nauky* [Eidos: An Almanac of Historical Theory and History of Historical Scholarship]. Both are attracting younger contributors, some of whom are students of Yakovenko and Hrytsak, thus confirming the blurred boundary between the official line and revisionism in present-day Ukrainian historiography. The Institute itself, far from being a strict custodian of the national paradigm, counts among its most influential scholars the revisionists Heorhii Kasianov and Oleksii Tolochko. Moreover, the title of one of the Institute's current projects in twentieth-century Ukrainian history speaks volumes about the growing acceptance of the new social history: a series of collectively authored volumes "From the History of Everyday Life in Ukraine." By the end of 2010 four books had been published.³⁷ Familiarity with Western scholarship is not limited to mere titles, however, as the works in these series feature comprehensive discussions of French and Anglo-American new social history; the authors also apply Western social-history methodology to their research on everyday life in Soviet Ukraine. Perhaps even more important, the same can be said of many regional historical periodicals in Ukraine, such as *Zbirnyk Kharkivs'koho istoryko-filolohichnoho tovarystva* [Transactions of the Kharkiv Historical and Philological Society] or *Drohobys'kyi kraieznavchyi zbirnyk* [Drohobych Regional Studies].

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³⁶ Volodymyr Masliichuk, *Provintsiia na perekhresti kul'tur: Doslidzhennia z istorii Slobids'koi Ukrainy XVII–XIX st.* (Kharkiv: Kharkivs'kyi pryvatnyi muzei mis'koi sadyby, 2007); Tatiana Zhurzhenko, *Borderlands into Bordered Lands: Geopolitics of Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2010).

³⁷ S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi, ed., *Narysy povsiakdennoho zhyttia Radians'koi Ukrainy v dobu NEPu (1921–1928 rr.)*, vols. 1 and 2 (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NANU, 2010); V. M. Danylenko, ed., *Povoienna Ukraina: narysy sotsial'noi istorii (druha polovyna 40-kh-seredyna 50-kh rr.)*, vols. 1 and 2 (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NANU, 2010).

CONCLUSION

As Ukraine enters its third decade as an independent state, its historical scholarship is coming of age as a worthy partner in the family of the world's "national" yet increasingly international historiographies. Internationalization in this sense is not limited to similar theoretical and methodological apparatus, but also to the acceptance of regional history, micro-history, and historical anthropology among other approaches to the once-sacred "wholeness" (*sobornist'*) of the Ukrainian nation and its history. If the experience of Ukraine's western neighbours, such as Poland, is any indication, the road to the future is paved not only with further heated debates about victimhood and complicity in some of the past century's greatest tragedies, but also with efforts to construct a more open and inclusive national history, one that would be more of a mosaic than a monolith.

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