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For Discussion

Ukrainian Studies: Framing the Contexts

George G. Grabowicz

No one should be surprised to hear that, despite significant growth in stature in recent years, Ukrainian Studies or *ukraïnistyka* is not really commensurate with such fields as American Studies or Russian Studies. The reason for this has little to do with intrinsic value: those who have cause to think about this would in principle agree that all cultures are equally valuable and so too, presumably, the study of each of them. To say that all cultures (and their histories) have equal intrinsic value, however, is not the same as saying they are all equally important. For “importance” reflects not only a scholarly sense of centrality or priority, but a hierarchy of other, often entirely pragmatic considerations, not least of them the political and the traditional. This hierarchy is also a canon—and any movement towards reconfiguring it and the authority behind it is bound to elicit resistance.¹ Closer to the core of scholarly priority is the issue of power or, concretely, statehood. Clearly, there is a big difference between studying a province or region and studying a country, especially one that is new, large and unpredictable. But the essence of the hierarchy, as I see it, lies in the totality of the field, which includes its intellectual and its social resonance (its “cachet”), its compatibility with existing intellectual and academic structures and its history as a discipline. In this respect, Ukrainian studies are different both intrinsically and extrinsically. On the other hand, the history itself, the multi-cultural and multi-political legacy, the borderland geopolitical status, and the peculiarly conditioned or “delayed” process of modern nation formation of Ukraine differ significantly from countries that constitute the usual western canon of study. This is the *content* of Ukrainian history (and broadly of Ukrainian studies); and these are the issues that Mark von Hagen cogently addresses in his essay. On the other hand, there is the more elusive but altogether germane issue (with which he begins but on which he does not really focus) of the discipline itself, its standing and resonance, its *Salonsfähigkeit*, as one of my colleagues likes to put it. My task, then, is to relate these factors, to frame the context.

Two major issues are raised by von Hagen. One is the matter of “illegitimacy” (be it with or without quotation marks), specifically the question of its locus. Generally speaking, every history is a formulaic or ideological reconstruction, and to expect actual events to show intrinsic “legitimacy” or cohesiveness is to engage in very ahistorical thinking. At the same time it seems to me that a subtle but problematical shift occurs as von Hagen’s discussion moves from historiogra-

1. Cf. Horace G. Lunt, “Notes on Nationalist Attitudes in Slavic Studies,” *Canadian Slavic Papers* xxxiv, no. 4 (December 1992).

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phy, the formulas of perception and narrative exposition, to post-Soviet reality and such concrete, both historical and contemporary, phenomena as discontinuity and the permeability of national borders and of national identity. In effect, the paradigm of legitimacy/illegitimacy is introduced into the political present, as, for example, when von Hagen seems to doubt the integration of western Ukraine, former Galicia, with the whole or when he concludes that after “centuries of occupation by foreign powers and the attempts by those powers to destroy or suppress Ukrainian culture... the search for a pure or fixed Ukrainian identity [is] something of a chimera.” Certainly the issue of Ukraine’s cohesiveness is topical; there has been much discussion and, more importantly, a juridical basis in Ukraine’s citizenship laws for rejecting the “chimera” of a “pure” or “fixed” Ukrainian identity. My point is that in and of itself this has little if anything to do with the “legitimacy” of Ukrainian history. For, after all, Russia faces centrifugal forces and problems of blurred identity that are no less severe, but no one questions the legitimacy of Russian history.

The second, attendant issue is one of apparent hubris, or “incorrectness.” The fact that a canon or a given academic consensus (and von Hagen seems to build much of his argument on this) reveals such or another emphasis, valuation or priority does not necessarily determine any intrinsic value or truth. The Harvard University Extension School, for 1994–1995, for example, offers two courses on the history of Boston, while offering none on Ukraine, or on eastern Europe for that matter.² Does this say anything about the respective importance or legitimacy of these topics? While von Hagen’s interest in a revitalized approach to Ukrainian history, indeed his advocacy of greater involvement in this area, is as evident as it is welcome, there is a sense whereby the very rhetoric of the formulations—Does Ukraine have a history? *Should/Will* Ukraine have a history? *Should* Ukraine have a history?—somehow sounds like an echo of the past, where Ukraine was ever the object, not the subject of history. The problem, of course, is generic and constitutes a paradigmatic post-colonial issue. But seldom has discourse been as one-sided as it is in this case. As Ukraine continues to suffer its various crises, not the least of which is the ongoing degradation of its academic and intellectual base, the scholar’s task will also be one of framing the discourse in a way that is congenial to its development. While Ukrainian history—as a discipline, as a set of issues, paradigms, traditions—inheres, as von Hagen has shown, in various other intellectual and political frames, it also has its own context, the field of Ukrainian Studies.

The Legacy of the Past

One cannot adequately conceptualize Ukrainian studies in the west or the US without understanding both the field in Ukraine and its

2. Cf. *Harvard University Extension School 1994–1995*, Cambridge, 1994, 90–95.

evolution. As many have noted, the heart of the matter is the question of institutions: the centuries-long and discontinuous process of the formation of both state and ethnos on the territory of what is now Ukraine, and the lengthy and more than usually complex process of Ukrainian nation building. Just as the territory of what was Ukraine expanded many times, so also the content of what is “Ukrainian” evolved in the cultural, political and even in the ethnic sense. Accompanying and conditioning this process has been colonialism—political, economic, cultural and psychological. In this model, the colonial experience in Ukraine would encompass the entire eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, with the notable exception of the 1920s, the entire Soviet period—in effect the bulk of modern Ukrainian history. In one sense, the colonial paradigm was prefigured by nineteenth-century Ukrainian populist thought, from Kostomarov to Hrushchivs’kyi—although the terms “colonial” or “colonialism” were never stressed.³ In contemporary Ukrainian thought, from the scholarly to the political, Ukraine’s history as reflecting a colonial status has great currency and has given rise to a range of factographic works, both of the lachrymose and martyrological variety mentioned by von Hagen, and the analytical. Among younger and western-trained scholars and critics, particularly in literature, philosophy and intellectual history, the colonial and post-colonial paradigms have not only become current but have stimulated new and interesting revisionary studies.⁴ But the model itself has not been the object of rigorous examination. A number of terms and criteria that have already surfaced in the colonial paradigm—legitimacy/illegitimacy, centrality/marginality, cultural identity under circumstances of cultural and political oppression, and so on—beg to be tested.

I would only like to make a few points. One is that resistance to such a reading comes from various quarters (certainly not only from the traditional Russian or Polish historiographies) which, naturally enough, are not prepared for the revisionism (and soul searching) that such a task invariably entails. As reflected in a recent Columbia conference on Russia and Ukraine,⁵ there also appears to be a predisposition among American (and western) historians, Ukrainianists included, to avoid this notion in favor of making a putatively simpler distinction (again with reference to imperial Russia and historical Po-

3. Thus Drahomanov, in his “Antrakt z istorii ukraïnofilstva, 1863–1872” (An Episode in the History of the Ukrainian Movement), makes only in passing the point that on the right bank Ukrainian territories there was only the Polish aristocracy and no Polish *narod* as such (cf. M. P. Drahomanov, *Vybrane* [Kiev, 1991]: 207).

4. Cf. the writings of Mykola Riabchuk, Oksana Zabuzhko, Solomea Pavlychko, Tamara Hundorova and others; cf. also Marko Pavlyshyn and J.E.M. Clarke eds., *Ukraine in the 1990s: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Ukrainian Studies Association of Australia; Monash University, 24–26 January, 1992*; (Melbourne, Monash University Slavic Section, 1992).

5. The most recent such venue was the Columbia conference on “Peoples, Nations and Identities: The Russian-Ukrainian Encounter,” 13–15 November 1994.

land) between dominant and subordinate nations and cultures. This presumably would adequately describe the Ukrainian situation in both the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the Russian Empire; to my mind, however, it skirts major problems, particularly in the area of culture but in economic relations as well.

To be sure, the Ukrainian variant of the colonial experience lacks the classical ingredient of race. As in the Roman Empire with its Syrian emperors and the Byzantine with its Armenian dynasty, the Russian Empire seemed not to be predicated on ethnic discrimination. Beginning with Tuptalo and Prokopovych, and on through Bezborod'ko, Rozumovskii, Kapnist and many others, a Ukrainian background was no impediment to upward mobility and high imperial office.⁶ While a system of multiple and hierarchical loyalties did exist, the historical record shows that by and large the imperial role and identity all but precluded a national identity, particularly if the latter were “conscious” or articulate.⁷ The single greatest truism of modern Ukraine’s history is that of the “denationalization” of its elites or, more accurately (and less ahistorically), the establishment of a national identity on a populist basis. Clearly, the charge of “denationalization” was and could be voiced only from the populist perspective. As much and as correctly as recent Ukrainian historical study (particularly in the west) has stressed the role of elites, the fact remains that Ukrainian culture (however one defines it), whether under Poland-Lithuania or under Russia, was subject to continuous marginalization and at times, especially under the latter, outright repression. The closest analogue to this—particularly in the cultural sphere—is colonialism. It is fleshed out by a pattern of economic exploitation, which is actually most apparent in the Soviet period.⁸

The counterargument that the imperial policy of cultural suppression was not directed at a single group, e.g. Ukrainians, but was “universal” and “egalitarian” so to speak, that “Russification,” as more than

6. A late Soviet variant on this, which one would be likely to hear from the Russian man in the street, was the catalogue of “Ukrainian” general secretaries of the CPSU—Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Chernenko and even Gorbachev. It goes without saying that even if there were identifiable Ukrainian ethnic roots (which has hardly been demonstrated), it is more than obvious that for such a position a national identity of any form other than the crudely ethnographic, i.e., one that would easily fit the mold of *homo sovieticus*, would have been an insuperable handicap.

7. In the case of enlightened and creative individuals like Prokopovych, the imposed denial of one’s roots and intellectual heritage could be found to leave a visible textual trace. Cf. Iurii Sherekh [Shevelov], “Moskva, Maroseika” in *Ne dlia ditei* (New York: Proloh, 1964), 34–42. One should also note here that the formation of modern Ukrainian literature in the early nineteenth century is precisely a study in this process of bifurcation and separation from the dominant canon.

8. Cf. for example, the conclusions regarding the exploitative inter-republican system of Soviet economics in Volodimir N. Bandera’s “Income Transfers in Macroeconomic Accountability from the Standpoint of Ukraine,” *The Ukrainian Economy: Achievements, Problems, Challenges*, I. S. Koropecykyj, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

one speaker noted at the Columbia conference, was also directed at the Russians themselves (the favorite analogue here was the French policy of turning peasants into Frenchmen⁹) is not persuasive. For one, there is a basic qualitative difference: decrees were passed limiting or prohibiting such languages and literatures as Ukrainian and Lithuanian, not Russian. Beyond that, membership in the dominant nation transcended class distinctions: a Russian laborer could feel superior to a Ukrainian intellectual simply because the latter was a “*khokhol*”; by itself this is racial discrimination without actually invoking color of skin (although that, of course, was also a factor in both the Russian and the Soviet Empire: one need only recall the contempt for the “*churki*”). And when this becomes a pattern of behavior in the so-called ethnic territories, it is hardly distinguishable from the behavior and values of classical colonialism.

There is a final, political argument. Nationhood is ultimately a matter of identity and self-perception. Thus, if a given group, say the Carpatho-Rusyns, considers itself separate (I am assuming a genuine consensus), then, ethically and anthropologically speaking, it is separate, and what remains is the task of finding a just delimitation of cultural and political space. The same applies to the colonial experience: if a people feel they have been colonized, they probably have been. Without claiming that Ukraine is Russia’s (or pre-war Poland’s) Algeria, I would submit that the colonial paradigm is much more pertinent than has been generally assumed. One qualification to this is that in the last three centuries Ukrainian political and cultural existence was never unitary, never fully within one overarching political-cultural system: thus Ukrainian territories were both under Russia and at first Poland and then Austria-Hungary; later again, within the Soviet Union and under Poland. Later still, after World War II, while all of the Ukrainian territories were part of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian cultural and political activity also existed, and quite significantly, as we see more and more, in emigration to the west, in what is now called the Diaspora. This ongoing, albeit always different polycentrism, was a powerful antidote to a purely colonial existence: it continued to introduce a political and cultural corrective. At the same time, it could only modulate and not change the essence of the historical experience.

A further complicating feature is that in Ukrainian history the colonial model easily melds with the provincial one. Ukrainian culture from the end of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century was that of a semi-autonomous or vassal country, the Hetman State being turned into a somnolent province of Russia. Provincialization in terms of the loss of quality, narrowing of horizons, distortion of intellectual and artistic production, and so on was accompanied by more classical features of colonial rule, especially economic exploitation and the reshaping of all indigenous cultural institutions. For ex-

9. Cf. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernization of Rural France 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

ample, after the defeat of Mazepa at the battle of Poltava in 1709, which dashed Ukrainian hopes for separation or at least autonomy, Peter I introduced policies that had the clear intent of impoverishing Ukraine vis à vis Russia proper. In effect, while turning it into a province and thus purportedly a constituent part of a larger administrative whole, the imperial goal was to weaken it, to prevent its resurgence by purposefully stunting its growth and infrastructure (for example, by forbidding the publishing of books). Ukraine was thus both a province and a conquered country.

A major result of the colonial experience is the appearance of a deep and long-lasting chasm between “foreign” political and cultural-administrative structures and “the people,” the *narod*. In the nineteenth century this divide came to be expressed in the phenomenon of populism or *narodnytstvo*: as a compensation for the alienation from administrative structures (already in evidence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), there appeared a far-reaching syncretism of social and cultural life. A characteristic example of this is that in the nineteenth and even the twentieth century, literature became more a carrier of national consciousness and a surrogate of political action than a form of art. There also appeared a syndrome of dependence and derivativeness, which under Soviet totalitarianism was systematically expanded to the national culture. The means of wholesale discrimination were reduction of the culture to ethnography, isolation from normal intercourse with the outside world, a cadre policy which in the cultural sector not only eliminated the best, either through repression or through a systematic brain-drain, but also imposed the worst—the malleable, the timid, the mediocrities. It was entirely normal, for example, that Ukrainian writers or filmmakers or scholars who were very good would be invited to Moscow, where they would become all-Union, i.e., Russian writers, filmmakers or scholars. At times one was simply forced to do so, as was the case with Oleksandr Dovzhenko in the early 1950s; when the Ukrainian poet Vitalii Korotych became an all-Union editor at the time of perestroika, he was given the option—which one almost always accepted. Regardless, the colonial pattern obtained and its very ordinariness prevented its being seen for what it was. (Could one, for example, consider a Polish writer from Warsaw going to Moscow to become a Russian writer; or, writing his works in Russian so that they would have greater circulation?) Overarching it all was the general discreditation or, as the Soviet term had it, “deperspectivization” of things Ukrainian—in the scholarly sphere, as well as every other.

***Ukrainistyka* and the Humanities in Ukraine**

The humanities in Ukraine developed more or less in step with scholarship and education in the west, while incorporating the various filters of the current political system, be it Russian or Austro-Hungarian. On the other hand, given the fact that throughout the nineteenth

century the intellectual legitimacy of its object of study, Ukraine, was suspended, *ukraïnistyka* had an entirely different intellectual-ontological basis. As an inquiry into what was not officially sanctioned, was indeed repressed or at the very least interpreted so as to diminish the autonomy and immanence of the subject itself (in official Russian historiography of that time, the only perspective on Ukrainian history, was that of a dependent, or temporarily disunited, phenomenon¹⁰), *ukraïnistyka* or *ukraïnoznavstvo*, as it was then called, inevitably came to rely on affective underpinnings. From the perspective of the establishment it was dangerously close to “counter-scholarship”: if official scholarship (or the government in St. Petersburg which financed it) claimed that Ukraine did not, does not and will not exist (as in the point of the so-called Valuev Circular of 1863: “*ne bylo, net, i byt' ne mozhet ukraïnskogo iazyka*”), then to claim the opposite was a form of anti-scholarship. To be sure, the picture was more complex and the “official” imperial Russian position (herein lies the difference between it and the totalitarian Soviet one) did not fully determine the social and intellectual discourse. Even after the Ems ukase of 1876, when Ukrainian activities had in large measure been banned,¹¹ a discussion on the possibilities and tasks of “*ukraïnofilstvo*,” with the participation of such eminent intellectuals as Kostomarov, Pypin and Drahomanov (the latter already an émigré writing under a pseudonym from Geneva) was printed in the major journal, *Vestnik Evropy*.¹²

From the point of view of official scholarship and the scholarly establishment, *ukraïnoznavstvo* was often simultaneously amateurish and tendentious. Given the internal dynamics of scholarship and the role of institutions, this, of course, was a self-fulfilling prophecy. The now obvious fact that the perspective, the premises and the ideology, and indeed the principles of canon-formation of the given dominant scholarship, be they Russian or Polish, had *their own* imperial, nationalist or simply colonial tendentiousness was not noticed.¹³ Non-dominant or dependent scholarship (and in principle this applies to all national scholarship in analogous cultural and political circumstances) could not but in some measure be marred. Still, the issue is not the whole but certain basic flaws, the underlying cause of which is the fusion of

10. Most telling in this respect are the titles—and the conceptual and narrative paradigms that they project—of two of the most substantial and influential histories of Ukraine in nineteenth century Russia, i.e., Kostomarov's *Bogdan Khmel'nitskij i vozvrashchenie Iuzhnoi Rusi k Rossii* (1857) and Kulish's *Istoriia vozsoedineniia Rusi* (1874, 1877).

11. Cf. Fedir Savchenko, *Zaborona ukraïnstva 1876 r.* (Kiev: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukraïny, 1930); English translation: *The Suppression of the Ukrainian Activities in 1876* (Munich: W. Fink, 1970).

12. Cf., for example, Kostomarov's “Zadachi ukraïnofilstva,” *Vestnik Evropy* (1882), I: bk. 2, 886–900.

13. The programmatic awareness of cultural relativism and the consciousness that all dominant ideologies, including the scholarship that grows on that basis, have their immanent “tendentiousness” or, more generally, their systems of values and paradigms of perception, was determined only in the twentieth century in the social and cultural sciences and on the basis of post-evolutionist theories.

the emotional and the cognitive, and a prioritization of the activist over the analytical. One should also remember that in this, as in any discourse, the stronger side sets the rules; once rules are set, a label attached and a mask imposed (by the dominant side, of course¹⁴), dialogue assumes its own inertia.

Polemic and defensiveness, and the lacrimogenesis that von Hagen and others see on the present east European scene are less the products of rewarmed nationalist dogmas (although they are that) than the consequence of deep and still unhealed collective traumas. Ukrainian history can provide more than its share of illustrations. In 1948 in Paris the major Ukrainian writer and political figure, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, wrote an impassioned essay asserting the Ukrainian nation and its culture's will to live despite the apparent total triumph of the Soviet order. The title of his piece, "Bula ie i bude," echoes and contradicts the Valuev Circular which had summarized the verdict of the Russian state on the "right to life" of the Ukrainian language (and culture). But Vynnychenko's piece refers not only to 1863 but also to an open letter to Maxim Gor'kii that he had written twenty years earlier. In that letter Vynnychenko had castigated Gor'kii for his earlier refusal to allow his works (specifically *Mat'*) to be translated into Ukrainian—because for Gor'kii it was only a dialect. Can one deny Vynnychenko's and the Ukrainian intelligentsia's perception of a tradition of contempt and suppression towards their culture and political aspirations extending back to official tsarist proscriptions and indeed the patriarch of Russia's "enlightened" critical thought, Belinskii?¹⁵ And while there were other, sympathetic and genuinely enlightened voices (Vynnychenko specifically refers to Georgii Fedotov¹⁶), is there any doubt which tradition dominated? What is most telling, however, and virtually a textbook illustration that some perceptions become profoundly encoded (and how can one's denial of your existence not become deeply encoded?) is that Vynnychenko's "Bula ie i bude" has just been reprinted in a recent issue of the major Kievan weekly, *Literaturna Ukraïna*.¹⁷ The issue—not of legitimacy but of survival—clearly still exists and it informs not only the overall cultural and political situation, but the scholarly one as well. *Ukraïnoznavstvo* is again reinforced in the mode of polemic and self-assertion, not self-analysis and revision. Instead of creating new works and values, the writer's task is still one of denying and apologizing—of proving (as the old Soviet chestnut had it) that you are not a camel.

With the growing cultural and political status of Ukraine, and above

14. Compare, for example, Gombrowicz's notion of "pasting on a mug" (*Ferdurke*) or Frantz Fanon's explicit metaphor: *Black Skin, White Masks*.

15. Cf. my article on "Ukrainian-Russian Literary Relations in the Nineteenth Century: A Formulation of the Problem," in *Ukraine and Russia in their Historical Encounter* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1992); and Victor Swoboda, "Shevchenko and Belinsky," *Shevchenko and the Critics 1851–1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 303–23.

16. Cf. his "Sud'ba imperii," *Novyi zhurnal* xvi (1947).

17. V. Vynnychenko, "Bula..ie i bude," *Literaturna Ukraïna*, no. 49 (December 1994).

all the historical differentiation of Ukrainian society, the study of Ukraine has begun to assume a normal, systemic and no less differentiated character. But the period of “counter-scholarship” when *ukraïnoznaustvo* was at times primarily a political act of faith and not a cold intellectual process has left its imprint in the populist tone of the discourse and in the projection of its implied audience: *ukraïnoznaustvo* was for everyone; it was community scholarship par excellence (the fact that such a combination was an oxymoron did not trouble anyone). In the premier object of early *ukraïnistyka*, the poet Taras Shevchenko, civic activity, scholarship and cult were closely fused, and this, too, did not trouble anyone, not even Drahomanov or Franko who were fully attuned to the differences between these modalities of thinking and acting. In some measure—one should neither overstate this nor ignore it—at its inception *ukraïnoznaustvo* was no less syncretic than Ukrainian society.

The Present Crisis

Independence, of course, configures an essentially new reality, one which is already fundamentally changing a range of disciplines, particularly history with all its subdivisions, literary scholarship, linguistics and the like. It goes without saying that independence must be seen in its complexity and not taken nominally or euphorically (although now there is hardly any danger of the latter). When viewed in a comparative context, Ukraine’s independence is particularly evocative of post-colonial transition. The observations by Frantz Fanon on post-colonial Africa some thirty years ago seem to be no less applicable: economic and political crisis, rampant corruption and, above all, a ruthless exploitation of national resources for the aggrandizement of the ruling elite.¹⁸ While crisis affects the entire cultural sphere, the effects are perhaps most dramatic in the academic sector. Recent economic policy, misleadingly and self-servingly labeled “market economics,” has led to a virtual collapse of scholarly production, particularly in publications; by all indications, at this time no humanities institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences has an ongoing publication plan, and the occasional scholarly publications that do appear are usually based on special commercial arrangements, most often with support from the Ukrainian diaspora in North America. This bleak picture may well be familiar from the situation in Russia but, if anything, it is darker still in Ukraine.

From the point of view of Ukrainian society, and often scholarship as well, the question of intellectual context is formulated in terms of

18. Cf. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Random House, 1963); and Oksana Grabowicz, “Kolonial’na spadshchyna v s’ohodnishnii Ukraini: kil’ka kliuchovykh pytan’” (The Colonial Legacy in Contemporary Ukraine: Some Key Questions), *Arka*, no. 1(3) (January–March 1994): 14–17.

an international stage on which Ukraine does or does not play a role. The paradigm “We and the World,” to be sure, is not confined to small countries: it is prominently present in the collective, institutionalized thought of large, but no less *complexé* countries (perhaps only the US is immune to it). In its traditional form, as reflected, for example, in a 1986 International Symposium sponsored by UNESCO in L'viv on “Ivan Franko and World Culture,” this paradigm implicitly seeks to measure impact, often in a purely factographic and hardly systemic fashion. The formulation, of course, expresses a defensive and curiously self-denigrating idea that the given country is somehow not part of “the world,” and that its presence must be zealously proclaimed and jealously guarded. Underlying it in the Ukrainian case, however, is a sense of marginalization and of enforced provincialism. As Ukraine ends its fourth year of formal independence, both at the level of intellectual discourse, of conceptualization, and at the level of implementation or even planning as such, there is a deep crisis around this issue. In the narrower case, the place of Ukrainian Studies within the context of the humanities in Ukraine is still undefined. In any normal setting this would seem utterly paradoxical: does not *polonistyka* occupy a prominent place in Polish scholarship and *rusistika* in the Russian? Don't the Danes study Denmark and the Indians India? In the Soviet Union, however, this was *zakonomerno*: in the case of Ukraine, and presumably in all the non-Russian republics, research into one's own history and culture did not fit into the approved gamut of the humanities. What is most striking is that in large measure this has remained the case. For example, even though the “Republican” (now called the “National”) Association for Ukrainian Studies came into being only a few months after the International Association was founded in June 1989, its relationship to the structures of Ukrainian humanities—the Academy of Science and the Ministry of Education—has not yet been defined in an *intellectual* sense. In the formal or legal sense the relationship was very quickly defined as one between a corporate (*hromads'ka*) and a governmental institution, where the latter related to the former with tolerance but with little involvement, with a basic *laissez-faire*. Attempts by the scholarly establishment, the governmental institutions, to adapt to new circumstances and now include *ukraïnistyka* as a set of legitimate disciplines has taken place exclusively within the existing system and its bureaucracy, its policy on cadres, its established priorities, methods, style of governance and so on—and with no indication at all that these disciplines are in crisis. In brief, there has not been the slightest divergence from the established manner of treating scholarship and culture; it is as if the last sixty odd years (since the onset of stalinism) had never occurred.

Individuals, or even some institutions which are committed to work in the direction of renewal, reform and modernization of the humanities, may do so, but on their own: there is no state policy in this matter. The whole system of scholarship, as with all the major functions of society, is still fully dependent on the state since “privatization” or

rather “demonopolization” is still very distant. Thus, “noninvolvement,” especially when compared to the very recent active imposition of Soviet ideology, all the obligatory baggage of scholarly atheism, marxism-leninism, socialist realism and so on, seems to reflect more a lack of genuine commitment to independence than, as is so often claimed, economic exigency. For some reforms do not have an economic price tag—only a political one. Given the facts that not so long ago Ukraine was officially forbidden to exist, that a large portion of its population had been subjected to a genocidal famine, that Ukrainian culture vegetated while its creative elites were systematically destroyed, that its hard sciences were largely reduced to applied sciences (the great bulk and bulwark of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences are its several institutes of welding) and its humanities reduced to provincialism, a policy of *laissez-faire* appears as something distinctly less than mere neutrality. It is as if the newly established state of Israel had had no policy relating to the Holocaust or to the revival of Jewish culture. But to make this comparison is to answer the question: Ukraine is not Israel. It was reborn in circumstances where those who only recently had actively suppressed all stirrings for independence, or had acquiesced in this suppression or covered it up, are now a dominant part of its establishment, of its existence as a state. While under Kravchuk the government did in fact examine the issue of genocide, of the terror famine of 1933, it never attempted a systematic study of stalinist depredations. Various reforms, which nominally may even include the establishment of departments or institutes relating to Ukrainian Studies, are purely cosmetic and not systemic. Most typical (and von Hagen also notes this) is that names are changed, the Academy’s Institute of the History of the Party is renamed the Institute of Ethnic Relations and Political Science, or a department of Scholarly Atheism is renamed as a department of Comparative Religion. But all the cadres, and with them their competence and style of work, remain the same. Their worldview and the strength of their convictions remain at the moment something of a mystery.

The glacial pace of reform is only one of the problems. Another is the actual critical mass of the humanities, including Ukrainian Studies. While these are not complete statistics, in the Academy of Sciences, the humanities have been allotted only 7.7 percent of the total number of academicians and corresponding members; the total personnel in the humanities (scholars, researchers and staff) was 4.5 percent for 1993.¹⁹ (At the same time, the Sector of Physical-Technical Problems of Materials, i.e., the institutes of welding, broadly speaking, comprised 21.7%. The president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences since 1958, Borys Paton, has his degree in welding.) And finally, in terms of funding, the combined total for the humanities was 2.8 percent in 1992

19. Cf. *Zvit pro diial'nist' Akademii Nauk Ukraïny, u 1993, r.* (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1994); cf also *Akademiia nauk Ukraïny, Dovidnyk* (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1993).

and 5.0 percent in 1993. In those same years the proportion of the budget allocated to Paton's Sector of the Physical-Technical Problems of Materials was 27.6 percent and 19 percent.²⁰ The numbers speak for themselves but what they show is only the tip of the iceberg. More ominous still, is the direction of change, above all a general disengagement from scholarly activity. Humanities institute productivity has declined to 20 percent or even 10 percent of what it was a few years ago, although their size remains the same as it was in pre-perestroika days: it is still virtually impossible to fire or retire staff.²¹ While these institutes remain inflated, with bloated cadres intended for gargantuan and intellectually dubious projects,²² radical contraction would seem desirable. But the government's budgetary policies preclude this since any cut in personnel, whether on the level of the institutes or of the Academy at large, would be reflected in decreased allocations. This total disincentive to streamlining is accompanied by a policy of covert unemployment, with delays of several months in the payment of salaries and, most recently, the technique of sending whole institutes on two or three months unpaid leave. The contraction that does occur spells disaster for the humanities. There is full retrenchment in the training of new scholars; in some areas this has all but ceased; along with that, the cuts devolve precisely on the youngest scholars. What a few years ago seemed but a paranoid fear on the part of some intellectuals has turned out to be all too accurate: the first to be let go with the "downsizing" of the Ukrainian humanities are not the worst but those who hold out even the smallest promise of change.

One cannot ignore, of course, the positive developments: the abolition of censorship, markedly increased contacts with the west, especially among younger scholars, and a readiness, again almost exclusively among the latter, to speak critically of the past and present stagnation. But it is clear that these changes are marginal in relation to the system and its monopolistic hold on resources.

20. *Ibid.*, 124–26.

21. I am specifically referring to the Shevchenko Institute of Literature and the Ryl's'kyi Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnography, but by all indications the same pattern obtains generally. Again, it should come as no surprise: if people are not paid for months on end, one can hardly expect them to work. At the same time, virtually all of the humanities institutes located at 4 Hrushevs'kyi Street in Kiev, the two already mentioned as well as the institutes of history and of linguistics, have leased a considerable portion of their premises to commercial interests—since in the absence of funding from the Presidium of the Academy this is their only source of income. Similarly, bookstores survive by leasing out part (often the larger part) of their premises to purveyors of other wares; in the case of the Poeziia bookstore on Maidan Nezalezhnosti these are photographic supplies and videos.

22. An eloquent example here is a proposed five-volume, illustrated history of Ukrainian culture which echoes the gigantic MAIRSK project on Slavic cultures that was so strongly criticized at the International Congress of Slavists in Sophia in 1988 and has now apparently died on the vine. In the Ukrainian case, i.e., for the Academy of Sciences, the lesson was not learned; cf. its official *Plan-prospekt iliustrovanoï "Istorii ukrains'koi kul'tury" u 5-ty tomakh*, (Kiev, 1992).

Prospects for the Future

A major task facing Ukrainian Studies, both in and outside Ukraine, is that of rethinking and recasting the canon of national culture. This is a task that has barely begun—and one which can hardly be addressed in Ukraine with the resources and by the representatives of the past order. For example, in literature, along with the wholesale “rehabilitation” of various censored works, writers, approaches and even whole movements, former émigré and dissident canons are being conjoined with the former official one, without any real intellectual formulation or conceptualization. While the unified Soviet marxist-leninist ideology (which, of course, was selective and distorted in the extreme) is totally bankrupt (virtually no one can be found to defend it), the distancing from it and the search for new directions is only implicit, almost surreptitious. The absence of a fundamental rethinking of the canon will merely lead to a new syncretism, where the old socialist realism will coexist with a new nationalist realism—as we see from the most recent three-volume anthology of twentieth-century Ukrainian literature, subsidized, at great expense, by the Ukrainian-American diaspora.²³ Here, writers and texts inconceivable in the respective canons appear cheek by jowl: on the one hand an essay by Dmytro Dontsov, the interwar ideologue of a militant, and irrationalist Ukrainian integral nationalism, on Mykola Xvyl'ovyi, outstanding prose writer of the 1920s and early 1930s, and a “national communist” (and for the Soviets as much a *bête noir* as Doncov), and on the other Oles' Honchar, the ruling patriarch of Ukrainian literature and (the furor over his novel *The Cathedral* notwithstanding) essentially a socialist realist, writing—glowingly and vapidly—on Borys Oliinyk, the resilient, ever-demagogic and ever-successful paragon of Ukrainian populist communism. Following current wisdom, the editors seem intent on giving everyone equal space; a common frame of reference, the means of evaluating and interrelating these phenomena, is deemed unnecessary.

A new canon and the new values that underlie it will carry with them various practical consequences. They are bound to confront and uncover not only the distortions of the past, the practice and legacy of socialist realism, the ongoing pull of populism and so on, but also such organic (and not just ideologically imposed) flaws as the underdevelopment and marginality of avant-garde traditions. A genuine search for a new canon will constitute a barometer of intellectual honesty. An essential component will be the orientation of *ukraïnistyka* towards other cultural or minority segments in Ukraine—the Russians, Poles, Jews and so on. This is now a juridical fact and the form of the political system: Ukraine has defined itself as a multiethnic society and its new passports no longer have the Soviet-era rubric of “national-

23. V. Iaremenko and Ie. Fedorenko eds., *Ukraïns'ke slovo. Khrestomatiïa ukraïns'koï literatury ta literaturnoi krytyky*, (Kiev: Ros', 1994).

ity.”²⁴ But the central paradigm of *ukrainistyka* as a whole, and not only of Ukrainian history, is implicitly still ethnically Ukrainian (and in this, of course, Ukraine does not differ much from other central or east European countries). A reorientation in a genuinely pluralistic direction, as suggested by von Hagen with respect to history, would go far toward revitalizing the discipline.

A revived *ukrainistyka* may well provide a new context and sense of purpose to the other humanities in Ukraine. It is quite apparent that within the model of derivativeness which was projected by the imperial system of values, the scorn for all that was “local,” the humanities in Ukraine often tried to distance themselves from Ukrainian thematics. (It was more prestigious to write about American novelists than about Ukrainian ones—even if no one in the US was very likely to notice or seriously consider these writings.) To the extent that Ukrainian studies, as described, were deeply flawed, this may have seemed a reasonable course of action. The result was doubly destructive. It bred a false distinction between a supposedly better “international” and a supposedly worse “local” or “native” scholarship (even on the level of the thematics), thus reinforcing discrimination and contempt for one’s own, and it cut off the given humanistic discipline from its true base. While I certainly do not propose that these disciplines now proceed mechanically to “ukrainianize” themselves, they, like *ukrainistyka* itself, need to rethink their object of study as well as the cultural-historical ground on which they are working.

As a discipline, Ukrainian Studies in Ukraine suffered more under totalitarianism than other forms of scholarship and its future—more than that of other disciplines—will depend on its ability to reform itself. Ultimately it faces a set of difficult tasks: to examine the moral depredations undergone by Ukrainian society in this century; to analyze that society’s endemic weaknesses—the syncretism, populism, isolationism and so on that I have already discussed; and finally, to face a daunting post-colonial threat—the flourishing power of mediocrities selected by the previous system who are still in charge and who have become even more entrenched than before.

Ukrainian Studies in the US

Prior to its appearance as a program at Harvard, Ukrainian Studies was simply not on the academic map in the US.²⁵ Before WW II there

24. In this area there are a number of important and welcome governmental initiatives—a ministry of nationality and minority affairs, support for minority education, press and cultural activities—and various intellectual and scholarly initiatives: conferences, symposia, publications, exchanges and so on.

25. In Canada their profile was clearly greater—there were courses and degrees were given—but there, too, a genuine presence was established only with the creation, in some measure echoing the Harvard project, of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) in Edmonton and then the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto.

was, at best, only an occasional course, lecture or publication; its impact on the larger academic picture was practically nil, and in the journals and publications in, say, the Slavic field one is hard pressed to find even references to things Ukrainian. In the late 1940s and early 1950s various efforts were initiated by the émigré community, the most important of which was the creation of the Ukrainian Free Academy of Arts and Sciences (UVAN) and the Shevchenko Scientific Society. But, despite some significant and genuine scholarship, their internal structure, their predominant reliance on Ukrainian and on émigré society militated against inclusion in or impact upon the larger American academic and intellectual scene.²⁶ With the establishment of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard and later CIUS, the pitfalls of an exclusively émigré scholarship (isolation, dilettantism and so on) were largely avoided. In the broad scheme of American scholarship Ukrainian Studies thus moved from “illegitimacy” to legitimacy, albeit of an exotic kind. It was no longer off the canon but still generally perceived as far from central.

The question of centrality is also the double bottom of von Hagen’s question: Ukraine may have a history, but is the study of it so exotic, so circumscribed and secondary that it cannot “legitimately” call on our attention? And this question evokes other contexts—of Slavic Studies, of East European and Russian Imperial History and so on—and some of *their* problems. What is a “normal” or “objective” or indeed “scholarly” distribution of emphases within a field? Underlying this is the uneasy relationship between scholarship and the real world of academe. The values of the two are not coextensive: what may be distortion in terms of the former may be sound fiscal policy or simply the inertia of policy for the latter. There is, in short, a financial and political interface. (And we should briefly remind ourselves that the transition from “illegitimacy” to legitimacy in the case of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard occurred not as epiphany or as a visitation of the spirit, but as a result of some \$9 million in endowments.)

If one examines the American canon of Slavic Studies—the practice of a great number of the scholars, the makeup of curricula and departments, the profile of conferences, both regional and national, and, above all, the implicit valuations in the field, and the all important working of the job market—it appears hopelessly Russocentric. I say “hopelessly” both to signify degree and to note the vanishing prospect of improvement. Not only have Slavists by and large accepted the proposition that only Russian Studies are important (significant, rewarding, practical), but this is now systemic: incarnate in the field itself, in the

26. A major exception here were the Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the US. Cf. also Omeljan Pritsak’s critique of Ukrainian émigré scholarship, “Orhanizaciia i zavdannia ukraïns’koï nauky u SShA” [The Organization and Tasks of Ukrainian Scholarship in the US], *Suchasnist'* no. 4(76) (April 1967): 107–14; here, 109.

form primarily of university positions or departmental “slots,” and in the self-perpetuating inertia (and ever narrower focus) that this generates. If a given department is composed only of Russianists one may hardly expect that its members will be energetically seeking to introduce non-Russian course offerings, let alone positions. Such is difficult even in balanced—i.e., formally and actively—Slavic departments and not only those that are Slavic in name only. Non-Russian Slavic Studies seems condemned not just to the periphery but to growing marginalization. Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union, far from improving things, has only made them worse: with the downgrading of Russia (for that was what the “Soviet Union” always was for most Slavists²⁷) from an evil empire to a large, third-world state with nuclear weapons, its attractiveness for undergraduates has markedly decreased. In an era of declining enrollments and general, university-wide retrenchments or “downsizing,” there is little likelihood that our Russianist colleagues will actively support a more balanced Slavistic approach.

From an intellectual standpoint the present state of affairs is, of course, detrimental to Russian Studies as well. For whatever the disciplinary focus—linguistic, philological, historical, cultural or regional—the study of Russia itself remains incomplete without its broader context. In this connection Ukrainian Studies are an invaluable resource and corrective—not only with regard to the earliest, Kievan period, where they constitute the core, or the seventeenth century, when Ukraine is Muscovy’s window on the west, but even in the nineteenth century, when the historical development of the two could not have been more divergent. For me, one of the most telling comments on the interpenetration of Russian and Ukrainian history was made by Panteleimon Kulish, Ukrainian and Russian writer and historian, and the first biographer of Gogol’, in a memoir of his friend and colleague Mykola [Nikolai] Kostomarov, also a Ukrainian and Russian writer and historian. The passage in question refers to Petr Aleksandrovich Pletnev, critic, poet and *akademik*, editor and publisher of *The Contemporary*, friend of Pushkin and also a friend and patron of Kulish. As close as they were, writes Kulish,

the impediment to our full friendship was my Ukrainian nationality. For the fact that he did not know Ukrainian I considered him a man who did not have a *fully Russian* literary education. For my passion for things Ukrainian (*k ukrainshchine*) he saw me as something of a half-wit. Later, when I would send him my Ukrainian writings for his library I would write on them that there would come that enlightened

27. One example of this could be the fact that one could do a study of, say, “the Soviet novel” and discuss only Russian writers and their works, and no one, neither the publisher, nor the reviewers nor readers would think that anything was amiss. This was simply the code, or rather the very clear, albeit unwritten canon: for serious purposes “Soviet” meant “Russian.”

time when a descendant of Pletnev would use these books to study the history of the Russian nationality.²⁸

More than a century later this enlightened time still has not arrived but, judging by our discussion, it may be closer than one would have expected.

28. P. Kulish, "Vospominanie o Nikolae Ivanoviche Kostomarove," *Nov* 4, no. 13(1885): 61-75; here, 66.