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## **IMAGINING MODERN UKRAÏNICA**

To the memory of Bohdan Solchanyk

The year 2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of a famous discussion in the *Slavic Review* on what Ukrainian history should be like. Two decades seem an immense period considering the luxurious opportunities for research we have enjoyed. Back in 1995, could a scholar of the Ukrainian long nineteenth century even imagine benefiting from the many privileges we have now such as e-books, instant communication and consultations with colleagues thousands of kilometers away, or simply being able to type notes into electronic devices right on the spot, even in the Ukrainian National Library? Have we used them though? Does nineteenth-century Ukraine have the histories discussed by Mark von Hagen, George Grabowicz, Iaroslav Isaievych, Andreas Kappeler, Serhii Plokhly, and Yuri Slezkine?<sup>1</sup>

The Ukrainian academy has no lack of historians, or at least those who are officially recognized as such. Hundreds of them are employed as state

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<sup>1</sup> Mark von Hagen. Does Ukraine Have a History? // *Slavic Review*. 1995. Vol. 54. No. 3. Pp. 658-673; George G. Grabowicz. Ukrainian Studies: Framing the Contexts // *Ibid*. Pp. 674-690; Andreas Kappeler. Ukrainian History from a German Perspective // *Ibid*. Pp. 691-701; Iaroslav Isaievych. Ukrainian Studies-Exceptional or Merely Exemplary? // *Ibid*. Pp. 702-708; Serhii M. Plokhly. The History of a “Non-Historical” Nation: Notes on the Nature and Current Problems of Ukrainian Historiography // *Ibid*. Pp. 709-716; Yuri Slezkine. Can We Have Our Nation State and Eat It Too? // *Ibid*. Pp. 717-719.

servants in countless institutions that publish dozens of books and journal titles every year. Is the scholarship they produce on the nineteenth century proportional to their numbers? Are there any outstanding scholarly authorities among them with a reputation comparable to, say, Natalia Iakovenko among specialists on the Early Modern period (universally acclaimed and often quoted)? An overview of the landscape of recent historiography written in the Ukrainian language on the modern period of the history of Ukraine reveals a series of “mounds” formed by studies of administrative practices of the Russian Empire,<sup>2</sup> the legacy of Kyivan Rus’ in the nineteenth century,<sup>3</sup> studies on Ivan Franko,<sup>4</sup> Ievhen Chykalenko,<sup>5</sup> and on railways in the former territories of the Habsburg Empire.<sup>6</sup> Two ambitiously designed but still unfinished “towers” are constructed around publications of the legacies of Mykhailo Hrushevsky<sup>7</sup> and Panteleimon Kulish.<sup>8</sup> The editors of these projects cannot be blamed for their *Gipfelwanderungen* – so many other important Ukrainian thinkers of the nineteenth century still await properly annotated academic publications of their full oeuvres, first among them, Mykhailo Drahomanov. Otherwise, the terrain is covered by swamps of texts titled at best “On the Question of . . .”

As a result, Fedir Savchenko (1892–1937) remains the best author on the Ukrainian 1870s, and so far no one has written any readable synthesis of the 1860s, 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s. In this respect it is quite telling that Yaroslav Hrytsak’s attempt at a synthesized history of modern Ukraine was published only once,<sup>9</sup> back in 1996 with an additional run printed in 2000, but was never republished in an enlarged or reworked version. This is particularly striking since a similar companion on medieval and early modern

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<sup>2</sup> Valentina Shandra. *General-gubernatorstva v Ukraïni*. Kyiv, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Aleksei Tolochko. *Kievskaiia Rus’ i Malorossiiia v XIX veke*. Kyiv, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Yaroslav Hrytsak. *Prorok u svoïi vitchizni: Franko ta iogo spil’nota (1856–1886)*. Kyiv, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Inna Starovoitenko. *Evgen Chikalenko: liudyna na tli epokhy*. Kyiv, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Igor Zhaloba. *Infrastruktorna polityka avstriis’kogo uriadu na Pivnichnomu Skhodi monarkhii v ostannii chverti XVIII–60-kh rokakh XX st.: na prykladi shliakhiv spoluchennia*. Chernihiv, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Mikhaïlo Hrushevsk’kii. *Tvory u 50 tomakh*. Lviv, 2000–. Sixteen volumes have been published so far. The major problem with this series was caused by the editors’ decision to translate Hrushevsky’s articles, published in Russian, back into Ukrainian, sometimes causing the translation to be distorted.

<sup>8</sup> Panteleimon Kulish. *Povne zibrannia tvoriv*. Kyiv, 2005–. Two volumes have been published so far.

<sup>9</sup> Yaroslav Hrytsak. *Narys istorii Ukraïny: formuvannia modernoi ukrains’koï natsii XIX–XX stolittia: navchal’nyi posibnyk*. Kyiv, 1996, 2000.

Ukrainian history written by Natalia Iakovenko published simultaneously with Hrytsak's volume, has been republished several times in two enlarged and reworked editions.<sup>10</sup>

The situation could probably have been better in other academic milieus. Scholars outside Ukraine could have known von Hagen's article, unlike their Ukrainian colleagues: alas, since the end of the 1920s, most historians in Ukraine have not read their foreign colleagues. (If one actively engages with texts published in English, German, or French, then the works of their predecessors from the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences of the 1920s, by contrast, today look as if they were written by aliens.) However, if one looks into recent histories of modern Ukraine published in languages other than Ukrainian, the situation does not seem much better. Theoretically endowed with the "advantage of distance" stressed by Kappeler in 1995, they have not used it.

Among the Russian-language texts the pathbreaking book by Aleksei Miller remains the only serious study written on Ukrainian history since 2000.<sup>11</sup> His work has not been productively developed or meaningfully challenged by subsequent scholarship. Similarly and most surprisingly, Polish academia also cannot boast a first-rate specialist in Ukrainian nineteenth-century history comparable, for instance, to Grzegorz Motyka dealing with the twentieth century.

Over the past twenty years, English-language historiography acquired a number of important books on modern Ukraine by U.S.- and Canada-based scholars, covering topics such as the Galician peasantry,<sup>12</sup> South-Ukrainian Protestants,<sup>13</sup> Ukrainian Jews,<sup>14</sup> Lviv,<sup>15</sup> Kyiv,<sup>16</sup> and Russian–Polish–Ukrai-

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<sup>10</sup> Natalia Iakovenko. *Narys istorii Ukraïny: z naidavnishikh chasiv do kintsia XVIII st.: navchal'nyi posibnyk*. Kyiv, 1997; Eadem. *Narys istorii seredn'ovichnoi ta rann'omodernoï Ukraïni*. Kyiv, 2005; Eadem. *Narys istorii seredn'ovichnoi ta rann'omodernoï Ukraïny*. Kyiv, 2006, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Aleksei Miller. "Ukrainskii vopros" v politike vlastei i ruskom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX v.). St. Petersburg, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Andriy Zayarnyuk. *Framing the Ukrainian Peasantry in Habsburg Galicia, 1846–1914*. Toronto, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Sergei Zhuk. *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830–1917*. Washington, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern. *The Anti-imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew*. New Haven, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Markian Prokopovych. *Habsburg Lemberg: Architecture, Public Space, and Politics in the Galician Capital, 1772–1914*. West Lafayette, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Natan Meir. *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859–1914*. Bloomington, 2010.

nian reciprocal imaginaries in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> However, except for the above-mentioned works and several others, one might also notice a recent tendency toward an increasing toleration of superficiality in English-language academia dealing with Ukraine.

French and German scholars doing Ukrainian history are less well-known and discussed among Ukrainianists. Apart from the great books by Daniel Beauvois on Ukrainian–Polish–Russian interweaving,<sup>18</sup> nothing written on modern Ukraine by a French historian comes to mind. On the contrary, recently we have seen a great upsurge of Ukrainian studies in the German language. Even though German-language texts remain virtually unknown in Ukraine (except for, maybe, Andreas Kappeler’s articles), and although the majority of them put a greater emphasis on Galicia (especially those written by Austrian historians), German-language *Ukraïnica* is probably the most dynamically and productively developing of all foreign-language historiographies of modern Ukraine.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Serhiy Bilenky. *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*. Stanford, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Beauvois. *Le noble, le serf et le revizor*. Paris, 1985; *Idem*. *La bataille de la terre en Ukraine*. Lille, 1998; *Idem*. *Pouvoir russe et noblesse polonaise en Ukraine 1793–1830*. Paris, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Paulus Adelsgruber, Laurie Cohen, Bőrries Kuzmany. *Getrennt und doch verbunden: Grenzstädte zwischen Österreich und Russland, 1772–1918*. Vienna, 2011; Teresa Andlauer. *Die jüdische Bevölkerung im Modernisierungsprozess Galiziens, 1867–1914*. Frankfurt M., 2001; Christoph Augustynowicz, Andreas Kappeler (Hg.). *Die Galizische Grenze 1772–1867. Kommunikation oder Isolation?* Vienna, 2007; Tim Buchen. *Antisemitismus in Galizien. Agitation, Gewalt und Politik gegen Juden in der Habsburgermonarchie um 1900*. Berlin, 2012; Jan Fellerer. *Mehrsprachigkeit im galizischen Verwaltungswesen, 1772–1914. Eine historisch-soziolinguistische Studie zum Polnischen und Ruthenischen*. Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2004; Paula Giersch, Florian Krobb, Franziska Schossler (Hg.). *Galizien im Diskurs. Inklusion, Exklusion, Repräsentation*. Frankfurt M., 2012; Elisabeth Haid, Stephanie Weismann, Burkhard Wöller (Hg.). *Galizien. Peripherie der Moderne – Moderne der Peripherie*. Marburg, 2013; Guido Hausmann. *Universität und städtische Gesellschaft in Odessa, 1865–1917*. Stuttgart, 1998; Kerstin Jobst. *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus: die polnische und ukrainische Sozialdemokratie in Galizien von 1890 bis 1914*. Hamburg, 1996; Andreas Kappeler. *Russland und die Ukraine: Verflochtene Biographien und Geschichten*. Vienna, 2012; Bőrries Kuzmany. *Brody. Eine galizische Grenzstadt im langen 19. Jahrhundert*. Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 2011; Michael Moser. “Ruthenische” (ukrainische) Sprach- und Vorstellungswelten in den galizischen Volksschullesebüchern der Jahre 1871 und 1872. Wien und Berlin, 2007; Svjatoslav Pacholkiv. *Emanzipation durch Bildung. Entwicklung und gesellschaftliche Rolle der ukrainischen Intelligenz im habsburgischen Galizien, 1890–1914*. Vienna and Munich, 2002; Kai Struve. *Bauern und Nation in Galizien. Über Zugehörigkeit*

In the end, the question posed by von Hagen and his discussants remains open. Twenty years of immense opportunities seem to have been largely wasted on petty bustle and theoretical discussions of wars over history, memorial politics, and what kind of narrative we should (should not) write. Self-proclaimed bluestocking elites leading mostly fruitless debates on how one should practice history, criticizing their lightweight colleagues, and at the same time writing little themselves, have managed to publish numerous texts, analyzing some mythical Ukrainian historical politics with its evolutions, convolutions, and dissolution. Two decades seem to have gone down the drain not just in Russian historiography, as has been correctly emphasized by my colleagues, but, foremost, in Ukraine itself, in Poland, seemingly closest to Ukraine, and in other foreign historiographies of Ukraine. Modern Ukraine does not even have histories in their most down-to-earth narrative form. Primary sources were not made available and not analyzed, nonethnic Ukrainians were not taken into account, and histories of Ukraine were not included in comparative studies of European history.

Take, for instance, conceptual history, a field that is very actively developing now on Russian imperial material. The concept of “Ukraine” should have been the most obvious choice for anyone trying to take this approach. Still, various colleagues are arguing either about a “stolen name” on one hand, or about some “Little Russian identity” all the way to the end of the Romanov empire, on the other. How can we meaningfully discuss these questions if until now we have not had a proper study of imperial censorship of texts in Ukrainian in 1793–1917 better than Sergii Efremov’s 1926 work?<sup>20</sup> How then should we respond to stories about censors changing everything from “Ukraine” to “Little Russia,” for instance, in 1854 during the publication of A. Metlyn’s *ky’s* “South-Russian Folk Songs,”<sup>21</sup> or in 1896 during the publication of Ie. Tymchenko’s “Russian-Ukrainian

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und soziale Emanzipation im 19. Jahrhundert. Göttingen, 2005; Anna Veronika Wendland. *Die Russophilen in Galizien. Ukrainische Konservative zwischen Österreich und Rußland, 1848–1915*. Vienna, 2001; Ricarda Vulpius. *Nationalisierung der Religion: Russifizierungspolitik und ukrainische Nationsbildung 1860–1920*. Wiesbaden, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Sergii Efremov. *V tsnikh riamtsiakh. Ukraïns’ka kniga v 1798–1916 rr.* Kyiv, 1926. It seems that the only historian who tries to take censorship into account seriously is Johannes Remy. See, for instance, his article, *The Valuev Circular and Censorship of Ukrainian Publications in the Russian Empire (1863–1876): Intention and Practice // Canadian Slavonic Papers*. 2007. Vol. 49. No. 1-2. Pp. 87-110.

<sup>21</sup> Volodimir Daniliv. *Do istorii Ukraïns’koï etnografii // Zapiski Ukraïns’kogo naukovogo tovaristva v Kievi*. 1909. No. 4. P. 44.

dictionary?”<sup>22</sup> Here, of course, I would not even mention that inside Ukraine the field is being hampered by the unreadable translation of Reinhart Koselleck’s essays,<sup>23</sup> and by the unavailability of digitized historical newspapers, which are available, for instance, in Finland.

The list of the most burning problems can be further expanded, which makes it quite easy to answer the question of what future historians of Ukraine should write about. Essentially, they can examine any topic they want. They can use any approach they want: conceptual, cultural, environmental, gender, intellectual, social, urban, or any other historical approach. They can still write great stories of Ukrainian entanglement with other regional contexts because, despite all the studies from the volume on transnational Ukrainian history,<sup>24</sup> these essays are rather conventional and do not employ the concept the way Michel Espagne or Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann have understood it. They should still present the multiplicity of Ukrainian projects and questions and discourses of the nineteenth century differently from their few predecessors in the 1990s, who tended to speak of these national projects in the singular. Historians of Ukraine might want to proceed by launching a new forum to exchange ideas and provide mutual professional quality assurance, insofar as today no viable International Congress of Ukrainian studies exists and no academic periodical has a reputation for representing the entire field.

Looking at von Hagen’s article from the perspective of 2015, alas, it did indeed turn out to be just “intellectual pipe dreams,” whose author “was the only one,” who had those dreams. The field of nineteenth-century Ukrainian studies resembles the proverbial Ukrainian steppe, dotted with occasional tumbleweeds rolling around on it. Of course, this would be no problem at all if we did not take into consideration that twenty years since von Hagen’s article Ukraine got into a war that was also caused by the lack of decent expertise on Ukrainian history. In 2015 we finally have to acknowledge all the texts that were not published; all the sources that were not made available to the public; all the failed Russian–Ukrainian historical commissions and unrealized projects of Russian–Ukrainian scholarly cooperation; all the unpublished reviews of lamentable books and all the pathetic words about

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<sup>22</sup> Gennadii Boriak (Ed.). *Ukraïns’ka identichnist’ i movne pitannia v Rosiïsi’kiï imperiï: sproba derzhavnogo reguliuvannia (1847–1914)*. Kyiv, 2013. P. 272.

<sup>23</sup> Raingart Kozellek. *Minule maibutne: pro semantiku istorichnogo chasu*. Kyiv, 2005; Raingart Kozellek. *Chasovi plasti: doslidzhennia z teorii istorii*. Kyiv, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther, eds. *A laboratory of transnational history: Ukraine and recent Ukrainian historiography*. Budapest, 2008.

their authors; and all the poor and unnecessary translations.<sup>25</sup> For better or worse, at least now we will bitterly and acutely recognize that historians cannot be detached from contemporaneity, and that all of us could have prevented the disaster if we performed our social functions not necessarily as mythmakers or public intellectuals denouncing manipulators of history, or Cassandras drawing groundless lines between various “Ukraines” and wondering when they will turn into a new Yugoslavia. We could have been and should have become simply decent scholars doing our job in the name of “banality of good”.

## SUMMARY

The author argues that, with very few exceptions, the history of Ukraine of the nineteenth century, written in any language, still largely presents a *tabula rasa*. Key topics remain unexplored by scholars, including the history of concepts used at the time – a *sine qua non* for any sustained analysis of the cultural sphere. There is no cohort of universally recognized authorities on the history of the late imperial period in Ukrainian lands that is comparable with the group of highly reputed experts on the Early Modern period, for example. The author concludes that the question posed by Mark von Hagen in his 1995 seminal article “Does Ukraine Have a History?” remains open when it comes to the nineteenth century. The twenty years of immense opportunities that have passed since 1995 seem to have been largely wasted on petty bustle and the wars over history and memorial politics.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

Автор статті вважає, що, за небагатьма винятками, міжнародна історіографія України періода ХІХ в. представляє собою пустинний степний пейзаж. Неисследованными остаются наиболее важные сюжеты, включая историю понятий, использовавшихся в то время, без чего невозможно полноценное изучение культурной сферы. Не сформировалась и когорта общепризнанных авторитетов по истории украинских земель позднеимперского периода, сравнимая, к примеру, с лидерами в области изучения раннего Нового времени. Автор приходит к выводу, что вопрос, поставленный Марком фон Хагеном в его

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<sup>25</sup> Such as Andreas Kappeller’s general history of Ukraine, published originally in 1994 for a general German audience with no knowledge about Ukraine, which in 2007 was badly translated into Ukrainian.

основополагающей статье 1995 г. “Имеет ли Украина историю?”, остается открытым – по крайней мере, в отношении истории XIX в. Двадцать лет беспрецедентных возможностей, прошедших после 1995 г., кажутся растраченными зря на мелочные разбирательства и войны по поводу политики исторической памяти.