Mikhail Bulgakov, Mykola Kulish, and Soviet Theater: How Internal Transnationalism Remade Center and Periphery

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Most studies of Soviet culture are, without explicitly stating so, studies of culture in Moscow, taking what happened culturally in Moscow (and occasionally Leningrad) as metonymy for the cultural production and reception of the entire Soviet Union. The prevalent model of Soviet culture is therefore one of diffusion, which assumes that the best cultural products were created in Moscow and transported to or copied by the periphery. The diffusion model assumes the provinces as peripheral to Moscow or, to put it differently, the periphery as provincial.[1]

Explicitly or implicitly refuting the assumption of Moscow as metonym, studies of culture in the Soviet republics often present an alternate model, tracing a well-established teleological trajectory of qualitatively good non-Russian culture created locally under *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) followed by Russification spread from an increasingly oppressive center.[2] Soviet culture

[1] For an intentional focus on Moscow, see Katerina Clark, *Moscow the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). For an unintentional focus on Moscow, see Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). Both show that a focus on Moscow can be rewarding, but such a focus does occlude any particularity to the rest of the Soviet Union.

[2] Indeed, this model is also one of diffusion, except that the Russian-language cultural products, which spread from the center, are perceived not as qualitatively good but as destructive of local non-Russian culture. The literature on culture in Soviet Ukraine is extensive. On art,

then exists in two parallel scholarships: one for Moscow, Leningrad, and "Soviet" culture nonethnically defined; and an entirely different one for the ethnically defined culture of the non-Russian republics. Ironically, both assume that Soviet culture emanated, for good or ill, in a single direction from Moscow, and both largely preclude culture traveling in the other direction, from the provinces to Moscow or Leningrad. More important, however, neither a Moscow nor a regional focus explains the obvious: Moscow came to be perceived as a center, and the provinces as peripheral. Might there be a larger model for the creation of Soviet culture that comprises both center and periphery in equal measure?

This article advances the suggestion that these two models—one focused on Moscow, the other on the regions—may exist in a larger paradigm by taking into account internal transnationalism inside the Soviet Union. The creation of Soviet culture can be inscribed into the larger postimperial Soviet space in two ways. First, what I call "internal transnationalism" accounts for different cultural processes unfolding in different regions in the Soviet Union yet also suggests that these different cultural processes were interrelated. Second, this interrelation may explain how artists, officials, and audiences came to perceive Moscow as a center and the periphery as provincial during the first two decades of Soviet rule. The internal transnationalism between Moscow and the regions is best understood as an "axis of cultural exchange," as advocated by Philipp Ther. He proposes a "new mental mapping of Europe in which places and axes of cultural exchange, not the nation-state or other territorial units of analysis, shape the map of the continent." Attending to internal transnationalism allows the historian to track the transformation of the artistic map of the former Russian Empire into that of the Soviet Union.[3]

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see, e.g., Myroslava Mudrak, *The New Generation and Artistic Modernism in the Ukraine* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986). On literature, see Oleh Ilnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914–1930: A Historical and Critical Study* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997); Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists, and the Nation*: *The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920's* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1992); and Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); and on theater Irena Makaryk, *Beyond the Undiscovered Bourn: Les´ Kurbas, Ukrainian Modernism, and Early Soviet Cultural Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). Serhy Yekelchyk has been challenging the trajectory of one-way diffusion from Moscow beginning with his *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian–Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

[3] Transnationalism is notoriously difficult to define. This article focuses transnationalism as a methodology, in which the transfer, exchange, and circulation of cultural products, people, and ideas are essential. It builds on Isabel Hofmeyr's statement, "The claim of transnational methods is not simply that historical processes are made in different places, but that they are constructed in the movement between places, sites, and regions" ("AHR Conversation: On

Two Soviet playwrights anchor this case study in how internal transnationalism functioned: Mikhail Bulgakov (1891–1940) and Mykola Kulish (1892–1937). Each playwright constitutes a focal point in the study of Soviet or (Soviet) Ukrainian culture, yet the life and work of each traveled a much more itinerant path than that allowed by a single geographic focus. Their paths crossed textually through their plays *Days of the Turbins* (Dni Turbinykh, 1926) and *Sonata Pathétique* (Patetychna sonata, 1929), which were both inspired by the events of the revolution and civil wars. The production and circulation of Bulgakov's and Kulish's works requires a more expansive model for the analysis of Soviet cultural production, one that allows for different processes of artistic development in the republics and the center, yet one that allows these processes to shape each other. The case of Bulgakov and Kulish offers a snapshot of internal transnationalism in action.

Let me clarify the scope of this case study. Through Bulgakov and Kulish this article focuses on internal transnationalism specifically between Moscow and Soviet Ukraine. During the early Soviet period, the southwest borderlands, the region that included the former Jewish Pale of Settlement and became Soviet Ukraine in 1922, proved particularly fertile for the creation of Soviet culture thanks to the significant numbers of artists who came from the Southwest and moved to Moscow. Scholars have also noted that Soviet Ukraine enjoyed an extraordinary artistic flourishing in its own right, thereby challenging the standard Moscow-centered diffusion narrative of Soviet cultural development. Yet the Ukraine-centered model, which focuses exclusively on oppression by Moscow after korenizatsiia, fails to explain fully the eventual collapse of this artistic flourishing in the 1930s.

As playwrights, Bulgakov and Kulish offer a reorientation of Soviet cultural analysis away from the world of literature to the world of theater. As a form of cultural development, live theatrical performance differed substantially from the more commonly studied printed page. Theater constituted the 19th century's mass culture, and the southwest borderlands were an extraordinarily rich theatrical landscape for multiple audiences. Theatrical performances operated with more autonomy under the Russian imperial state than the printing of literature. In the interwar period, economic depression and new technologies of film and radio forced artists in the West to redefine theater's place in the cultural marketplace, and many theater artists suffered unemployment. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, the state protected and

Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, 5 [2006]: 1444). See also Philipp Ther, "The Transnational Paradigm of Historiography and Its Potential for Ukrainian History," in *Ukraine: Laboratory of Transnational History*, ed. Georgiy Kasianov and Ther (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 100.

even privileged theater artists. Stalin himself loved the theater and attended Bulgakov's *Turbins* over 15 times. The case study of Bulgakov and Kulish and their intertwining texts, then, presents an analysis of Soviet culture focused not on literature but on theater, and not on solely Soviet Ukraine or Moscow but on the internal transnational dynamic between them.[4]

Why Internal Transnationalism?

This article builds on recent work on transnationalism that has challenged the autarky of Soviet culture. Katerina Clark's *Moscow: The Fourth Rome*, for example, internationalizes Soviet culture. Her notion of "cosmopolitan patriots" works out how famous Soviet artists could have remained loyal to the Union while still circulating in the West. The border between the West and the East in her account was both permeable (the leftist project flourished on both sides) and fixed (Soviets were Soviets, even in the West). Michael David-Fox explores the other direction, analyzing not Soviets abroad but foreigners in the Soviet Union. Through studying how the Soviet bureaucracy managed foreign cultural figures ("fellow-travelers") in the Soviet Union, he brings transnational studies to Soviet culture. From David-Fox I take the importance of transnational exchange, but I focus here on internal transnationalism, as opposed to a Soviet/non-Soviet circulation between the USSR and Europe.[5]

Internal transnationalism offers a way to incorporate center and periphery in one narrative, as well as a way to analyze the larger "cultural topography" of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Using "cultural topography" I track a shift in artistic centers, as artists, officials, and publics reascribed significance and authority to various regions and places, remaking the relationship

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[4] On Bulgakov and Stalin, see Anatoly Smeliansky, *Is Comrade Bulgakov Dead? Mikhail Bulgakov at the Moscow Art Theater*, trans. Arch Tait (New York: Routledge, 1993), 170–73; and Iurii Elagin, *Taming of the Arts*, trans. Nicholas Wreden (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1951), 102–3. Fifteen is the number of visits counted in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (New York: Vintage, 2005), note on 98. On Stalin's obsession with the Turbins, see the chapter "Stalin's Dream" in Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memories, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009). The development of theater follows the trajectory of film more closely than that of literature. In the early Soviet period, Soviet Ukraine competed with Moscow for distribution and production of film; the centralization of film under Sovkino turned Soviet Ukraine's film factories into mere regional affiliates. See Bohdan Nebesio, "Competition from Ukraine: VUFKU and the Soviet Film Industry in the 1920s," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 29, 2 (2009): 159–80; and my "A Cesspool of Intrigues: Les Kurbas, Aleksandr Dovzhenko, and the Early Soviet Ukrainian Motion Picture Industry," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 56, 1–2 (2014): 83–99.

[5] Michael David-Fox, "The Implications of Transnationalism," *Kritika* 12, 4 (2011): 885–904; David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Clark, *Moscow the Fourth Rome*.

between center and periphery. My methodological point is twofold: first, to "provincialize" Moscow, and second, to deprovincialize Soviet Ukraine. Only a wider spatial lens on Soviet culture can show Moscow's emergence as a powerful centripetal force and the consequences for cultural production in the world beyond the Soviet capital.[6]

Provincializing Moscow deprovincializes Soviet Ukraine. The region that became Soviet Ukraine was central to Russian imperial culture, as well as to the creation of Soviet culture, including the eventual rise of Moscow as a cultural center. Many early Soviet cultural elites came from this region, and they brought the richness of the provinces with them to Moscow. This demographic shift may have encouraged a de facto supraethnic inclusivity to Soviet culture in Moscow that compelled the "Soviet" arts to include multiple cultural influences. The movement of cultural elites from the provinces determined Moscow's eventual status as a Soviet cultural capital. Analyzing Soviet Ukraine and Moscow together, then, produces a centralization narrative (rich periphery contributing to the center) rather than a diffusion narrative (provincial periphery copying the center).[7]

Focusing on Moscow and Soviet Ukraine via the cases of Bulgakov and Kulish further deepens our understanding of the relationship between these regions by showing how circulation can create imbalance and transform the cultural topography. People, talent, and ideas moved from the former southwest to Moscow while leaving a transformed landscape in their wake. Artists who left for Moscow (or Leningrad) became involved in the creation of Soviet culture; those who remained in Soviet Ukraine created a culture that was both Soviet and Ukrainian. The Soviet and the Soviet Ukrainian cultural projects were different, although they unfolded simultaneously.

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[6] By paraphrasing Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), I am not employing a postcolonial framework to prove that the center was a colonizing force and the periphery was colonized. This is itself a diffusion model. Rather, I build on the ideas of circulation developed by Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) to focus on the cultural construction of the center and the periphery. Scholars have used the postcolonial framework extensively for Ukraine, which assumes that the territory of Ukraine was a colony in the West European sense. In fact, it was a multiethnic imperial space with no clear line between "empire" and "colony." The postcolonial framework, moreover, rarely includes the Poles, Jews, and Russians who called the region home. For a productive use of the postcolonial framework, see Vitaly Chernetsky, *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

[7] Liliana Riga argues in *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) that the political universalism of Bolshevik ideology emerged precisely because most Bolsheviks came from the multiethnic imperial borderlands. As non-Russians, they were invested in creating an ethnically neutral political system.

When examining cultural development in Moscow and Soviet Ukraine, it is particularly striking that Moscow was spared korenizatsiia, while the periphery was not. Scholars have focused on the benefits of korenizatsiia and ensuing negative consequences of Russification policies, especially in Soviet Ukraine. But korenizatsiia may have actually challenged the development of culture in the provinces, while its absence in the capital may have facilitated cultural production, even at the height of Stalinism. This is not a judgment on cultural elites in Soviet Ukraine; rather, the case of Soviet Ukraine reveals the difficulties inherent in grafting Soviet nationality policy onto a profoundly multiethnic region. Unlike the inclusivity of the "Soviet" culture as produced by former provincials in the capital, "Soviet Ukrainian" cultural production remained exclusive in the former provinces. Moscow and Soviet Ukraine then evolved in tandem. It was this internal dynamic that contributed to Soviet culture both in Moscow and in the provinces, ultimately making Moscow central and the southwest provinces peripheral to Soviet cultural production and reception.

Theater in the Prison House of Nations

The provinces were central to Russian imperial theater. Understanding Soviet cultural topography, centered in Moscow with peripheral provinces, requires taking into account the artistic culture of the provinces during the imperial period. The authoritarian Russian Empire managed and controlled culture from St. Petersburg with countless state decrees. Yet the study of theater as live performance shows that, unlike printed literature, the implementation of authoritarian regulations devolved to local officials in the regions, and that theatrical culture in the provinces of the prison house of nations was varied and rich. By the late 19th century, St. Petersburg and Moscow may have dominated the sprawling networks of imperial theater, but they constituted only two out of several important centers. Theater actors, directors, and entrepreneurs followed work from city to city, traveling from Kyiv to Tbilisi to Moscow and back again.[8]

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[8] I. F. Petrovskaia, *Teatr i zritel´ provintsial´noi Rossii* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1979), 5. The best source on pre-reform provincial theater is Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia: The Pleasure and the Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), but Stites ignores non-Russian-language theaters, such as those in Ukrainian and Yiddish, which made the postreform provinces as artistically productive as the capitals. For work on the imperial periphery itself, see Harsha Ram, "Modernism on the Periphery: Literary Life in Revolutionary Tbilisi," *Kritika* 5, 2 (2004): 367–82. Virlana Tkacz and Irena Makaryk, eds., *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), makes an argument similar to Ram's for the necessity of including the imperial periphery in any analysis of modernism; One memoirist notes that he performed in 72 cities in the Russian

Legal restrictions within the Russian Empire, paradoxically, contributed to the theatrical richness of the provinces. Jewish subjects were restricted to the Pale of Settlement, and technically theater troupes were not allowed to perform in Yiddish, Polish, or Ukrainian, except in certain circumstances. Moscow and St. Petersburg rarely saw the extensive theatrical repertoire in non-Russian languages, such as Yiddish, Polish, or Ukrainian. Stars of the empire's borderland stages, from celebrated divas such as Helena Modrzejewska in Polish, Ester-Rokhl Kaminska in Yiddish, or Maria Zankovets´ka in Ukrainian—not to mention the many unknown Jewish violin players on the streets of Odesa—entertained the public only in Russia's imperial provinces.[9] Whether better or worse, the artistic scene in the provincial cities of Kyiv, Odesa, or Warsaw differed from that in the capitals.

Tsarist restrictions, such as the 1876 Ems ukaz circumscribing Ukrainian-language printing and theater, attempted to homogenize culture across the Russian imperial space by centralizing cultural management. However, the way in which the tsarist officials on the borderlands carried out these directives varied from place to place and from official to official. As memoirs by Ukrainian-language actors and directors attest, the crucial element determining performance permissions was the interpretation of the Ems ukaz by local officials rather than the ukaz itself. The Ukrainian-language directors, actors, and entrepreneurs Mykola Sadovs´kyi and Panas Saksahans´kyi both recall instances when a bribe of free tickets and prime seats softened local officials' interpretation of imperial regulations. Moreover, Ukrainian and Russian entrepreneurs alike often hired Jewish musicians and wrote the requisite letter to the governor-general of Kyiv requesting that their artists receive residency permits for the theatrical season. The archives contain file upon file of these pro forma requests.[10]

Empire (Veniamin Nikulin, *Zapiski teatral´nogo direktora: Gosudarstvo, obshchestvo i teatr* [New York: Sovetskii pisatel´, 1942], 350).

[9] Beth Holmgren, *Starring Madame Modjeska: On Tour in Poland and America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); S. N. Durylin, *Mariia Zankovetskaia, 1854–1934: Zhizn´ i tvorchestvo* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1982); Ida Kaminska, *My Life, My Theater* (New York: Macmillan, 1983).

[10] Technically, Yiddish theater was forbidden after 1883. Ukrainian theater was forbidden after 1876, unless performed together with a Russian-language play. Yet Yiddish and Ukrainian-language theater continued to be staged. See John D. Klier, "Exit, Pursued by a Bear: Russian Administrators and the Ban on Yiddish Theater in Imperial Russia," in *Yiddish Theater: New Approaches*, ed. Joel Berkowitz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 159–74. On the Ems ukaz, see Fedir Savchenko, *Zaborona ukrainstva 1876* (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo, 1930), 381–83, reprinted with analysis in Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the 19th Century* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 267–69, esp. 276. On residency rights, see, e.g., Tsentral´nyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy m. Kyiv (TsDIAU) f. 442, "Kantselariia Kyivs´koho, podils´koho ta volyns´koho general

Moreover, an official's knowledge of cultural directives and how they should be interpreted in the regions was often minimal. For example, the premier Ukrainian-language troupe performed on tour in St. Petersburg to great acclaim in 1887 and even received accolades from Emperor Alexander III. At this very time, the troupe was forbidden to perform in Kyiv Province thanks to the whimsical decision of Governor-General Aleksandr Drenteln. Likewise, Governor-General of Warsaw Konstantin Maksimovich wrote in 1905 to the Department of Police in St. Petersburg inquiring whether the ban on Yiddish theater had been lifted; he enclosed a poster advertising Yiddish-language theater that had been performed in St. Petersburg. Learning that technically the ban still stood, Maksimovich nevertheless replied, requesting that St. Petersburg allow Yiddish theater in Congress Poland because it was so widely performed anyway.[11]

Indeed, it was precisely when the restrictions on Ukrainian-language and Yiddish-language theater were strongest that these minority-language theaters professionalized and spread across the southwest provinces. The Crimean War, followed by the Russo-Turkish wars of the 1870s, meant that garrison towns offered opportunities for savvy entrepreneurs. Paying military audiences and troupes that continued to criss-cross the southwestern provinces meant that Ukrainian- and Yiddish-language theater flourished on the periphery. By the late 19th century, artistic production was particularly rich both in quantity and quality, not only in the major cities like Kyiv but also in the small towns where itinerant troupes set up shop and performed in Yiddish or Ukrainian for local audiences.[12] Jewish actor Dmitrii Zhabotinskii's earliest memories were

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gubernatora," op. 852, s. 4, ark. 1–180 (each page a request for a pravozhitel´stvo). Professional Polish-language theater was not allowed anywhere except in Congress Poland after the Polish uprising of 1863, but Lemberg's Miejski Theater, directed by the famed Polish director Tadeusz Pawlikowski, was allowed to perform in Kyiv in early 1905. See Franciszek Pajączkowski, *Teatr lwowski pod dyrekcją Tadeusza Pawlikowskiego* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo literackie, 1961), 326–29; Kyiv's Polish-language social club, Ogniwo, also supported its own amateur theater group. The Kyiv Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Kyiv branch of the Okhrana, the tsarist-era secret police, kept tabs on the Ogniwo, but never shut it down (TsDIAU f. 274, op. 4, s. 206, ark. 3). Similarly, the Okhrana monitored Ukrainian-language theater artists because of their youthful connections with revolutionaries, though the Okhrana's observation was lackadaisical at best (TsDIAU f. 275, op. 1, s. 3684, ark. 5–6 [1914 observation in Uman]).

[11] Mykola Sadovs´kyi, *Moi teatral´ni zhadky* (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva, 1956), 54–55, 61–62, 97–104, 125; Panas Saksaganskii [Saksahans´kyi], *Iz proshlogo ukrainskogo teatra* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1938), 74, 83; Klier, "Exit," 171–72.

[12] For memoirs on garrison-town theater during the Crimean and Russo-Turkish wars, see Marko Kropyvnyts´kyi, *Zbirnyk statei, spohadiv i materialiv*, ed. Pavlo Dolyna (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1955), 48; Sofiia Tobilevych, *Moi stezhky i zustrichi* (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzyvhnoi literatury, 1962*)*, 96, 140; and Vasyl´ Vasyl´ko, *Teatru viddane zhyttia* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1967), 8–9. For the intersection of early Yiddish

of hearing non-Jewish girls singing "beautiful Ukrainian songs." As a child in Cherkassy, he joined a traveling Russian-language troupe to perform a Russian rendition of Jacob Gordin's 1900 Yiddish-language *God, Man, and the Devil.* Zhabotinskii enjoyed performances of "German-Jewish" theater (i.e., theater in Yiddish) as well as itinerant Russian-language theater. His career ultimately reflected the Russian–Yiddish–Ukrainian aural environment of the southwest provinces, so utterly absent in Moscow or St. Petersburg. Beginning his career in Russian-language theater, he transferred to performing Russian-language *kupletn* "in a Jewish style," starred in the Yiddish theater in Soviet Ukraine, and returned after the troupe's liquidation to the Russian-language stage.[13]

The Russian Empire was an authoritarian state, to be sure, but on-the-ground theatrical production reveals a much richer provincial scene than a study of St. Petersburg's directives would suggest. The Russian Empire, centered in St. Petersburg and Moscow, enjoyed a paradoxically decentralized cultural topography, with spheres of innovative activity across the empire, particularly in the southwest borderlands. Multidirectional exchange between cultural spaces continued across the revolutionary divide; during the Stalinist interwar years, however, the decentralized cultural topography became centralized in Moscow.

Mikhail Bulgakov and Moscow's Centralization

Bulgakov and Kulish both hailed from the southwest borderlands, and an analysis of their respective experiences offers alternatives to the Moscow-centered narrative. They represent two different life paths. Bulgakov was part of the demographic shift that contributed to the rise of Moscow as a cultural mecca. Kulish remained in the new Soviet Ukraine. The former grew up in a well-to-do educated family in the major provincial city of Kyiv; the latter came from a peasant village in the steppes near Kherson. Bulgakov attended one of the best high schools in Kyiv, then medical school at Kyiv University; Kulish was accepted to university in Odesa, but the war curtailed his education. Both, however, served in the Imperial Army in World War I and were profoundly shaped by years of war and revolution in the southwest borderlands. Bulgakov did not serve in the Red Army but worked as a doctor and survived multiple transfers of power in his hometown. Starting in 1920 he worked on a novel that captured his experience of revolution, *The White Guard*, which six years

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theater and the Russian military, see Nina Warnke, "Going East: The Impact of American Yiddish Plays and Players on the Yiddish Stage in Tsarist Russia, 1890–1917," *American Jewish History* 92, 1 (2005): 4.

[13] Instytut iudaiky (Kyiv) f. 21, "Dmitrii Zhabotinskii," op. 1, s. 8 ("lebns-bletlach fun a jidishn aktior"), 4, 9, 15–18, 22–23, 29, 32.

later became *Days of the Turbins* in Moscow. Kulish served in the Red Army
and upon his decommissioning began to write seriously, while serving as a
school inspector in Odesa. He, like Bulgakov, wrote of his experience during
the Civil War; his play *97* told of a local communist hero who saved his
community during the famine of the Civil War years: "1914–1922 (the war
and revolution) will not leave me until I pour it out on paper in words that
are alive and in clumps of truth." Kulish did indeed write of the war and
revolution, but his truth differed from Bulgakov's.[14]

Bulgakov was part of a strikingly large group of future elites who came from
the southwest borderlands and settled in Moscow. Many were Jews, fleeing
from violent pogroms or toward new opportunities presented by the collapse
of the Pale of Settlement. But Ukrainians and Russians, too, came north to
Moscow to make Soviet culture. The list of artists and other cultural elites
who came from the region that became Soviet Ukraine is indeed so extensive
that it bears some attention. The list might begin with Bulgakov, but it should
certainly include the novelist Konstantin Paustovskii; the journalist Mikhail
Kol´tsov (Fridliand) and his cartoonist brother Boris Efimov (Fridliand); the
actress Natal´ia Rozenel´, who married the former Kyiv theater critic and
Soviet Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii; the poet Osip
Mandel´shtam, who in Kyiv met the artist Nadezhda Khazina, who studied
at the painter Aleksandra Ekster's studio with artists and set designers Isaak
Rabinovich and Aleksandr Tyshler; the future filmmaker Grigorii Kozintsev,
whose sister Liuba married Ilya Ehrenburg (Il´ia Erenburg), who funded
Kozintsev, Aleksei Kapler, and Sergei Iutkevich's early theatrical misadventures
in Kyiv; the Jewish culturalists Peretz Markish, Dovid Bergelson, Leyb
Kvitko, and Der Nister (Pinchas Kaganovich); the violinist David Oistrakh,
the composer Isaak Dunaevskii and the future jazz legend Leonid Utesov
(Weisbein); Isaak Babel´, as well as the writers of the Odesa school, such as
Iurii Olesha, Il´ia Il´f (Fainzil´berg) and Evgenii Petrov, the younger brother
of the writer Valentin Kataev. This list is hardly complete, but it shows the
overwhelming number of early Soviet elites who came from the southwest
provinces of the Russian Empire.[15]

[14] Summarized from Marietta Chudakova, *Zhizneopisanie Mikhaila Bulgakova* (Moscow:
Kniga, 1988); E. S. Bulgakova, *Vospominaniia o Mikhaile Bulgakove* (Moscow: AST, 2006);
Antonina Kulish, "Spohady pro Mykoly Kulisha," in Kulish, *Tvory* (New York: Ukrains´ka
vil´na Akademiia nauk u SShA, 1955), 365–433; Tsentral´nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv literatury
ta mystetstva Ukrainy (TsDAMLM) f. 941, "Kulish Mykola Hur´ovych," op. 1, s. 17, ark. 2.
[15] Natal´ia Lunacharskaia-Rozenel´, *Pamiat´ serdtsa: Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo,
1997), 225–28; Sergei Iutkevich, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1: *Molodost´* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990),
32–53; Aleksei Kapler, *Dolgi nashi* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1973), 322–35, here 326;
Grigorii Kozintsev, *Glubokii ekran* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971), 10, 21–23; Miron Petrovskii,

The southwest provinces were therefore important, contributing artistic and personal networks of early Soviet cultural elites. Mikhail Bulgakov joined a group of young artists and writers at a literary journal, *Gudok*. The circle soon included Boris Efimov, one of the Fridliand brothers who had been working in Kyiv, as well as Kataev, Olesha, Il´f, and Petrov, part of a large group of writers from Odesa. In the early days of the new Soviet capital, a critical mass of former provincials—Jewish, Ukrainian, and Russian—forged new connections in Moscow. These aspiring artists not only created a certain *zemliachestvo* (group solidarity based on common locality) but also brought the sights, sounds, and stories of home to Soviet culture writ large. To wit, Bulgakov's story of the Turbins in Kyiv in 1918, a time and place he knew from personal experience, became a Soviet classic, as did Il´f and Petrov's Ostap Bender, the ultimate urban con man from Odesa. For artists like Bulgakov—or Babel´, Kataev, Petrov, or Il´f—opportunities for advancement existed in Moscow, and their relocation en masse contributed to the centralization of Soviet culture. Babel´ complained to a friend in 1923 that "there is nothing in Odesa" and noted the city's "provincialism." Imperial Odesa, by contrast, never felt either empty or provincial.[16]

Soviet Leningrad was not neglected by these developments, far from it; indeed, in becoming Leningrad St. Petersburg acquired its own version of a Soviet culture and remained one of the primary cities for the arts. But Bulgakov did not settle in Leningrad. Nor, in fact, did the majority of artists moving north from the Russian imperial southwest provinces. Leningrad also lost much of its cultural elite in the infamous Philosophers' Ship that Lenin dreamed up in 1922 to deport potentially aggravating intellectuals from the Soviet Union.[17]

Gorodu i miru: Kievskie ocherki (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2008), 245–82; Boris Efimov, *Moi vek: Kak eto bylo* (Moscow: Agraf, 1998), 33–35, 92. On *Gudok* in particular, see Evgenii Petrov, *Moi drug Il´f*, esp. 93–106.

[16] Also working at the journal *Gudok* was Yelena Yezhova, who had an affair with Babel´ when she worked at the office of the Soviet trade representative in Berlin and founded her own patronage salon, supporting Babel´, Utesov, and the actor Solomon Mikhoels. See Efimov, *Moi vek*, 33–35, 92; Elena Bulgakova, *Vospominaniia o Mikhaile Bulgakove*, ed. V. I. Losev (Moscow: Astrel´, 2006), 314, 542; Letter from Babel´ to Livshits, 17 April 1923, in Isaak Babel´, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4: *Pis´ma* (Moscow: Vremia, 1996), 9–10.

[17] The Sovietization of Petersburg is described as largely unwilling assimilation in Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). On ballet, see Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2011), 355–56; on Lenin and the St. Petersburg intelligentsia, see Stuart Finkel, *On the Ideological Front: The Russian Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

Overall, it was south to north migration that became definitive for Soviet culture, and Moscow became the destination of choice for most, including Bulgakov and his zemliachestvo. How childhood in the culturally rich imperial provinces may have influenced their later aesthetic production still invites speculation. At any rate, the demographic shift from southwest borderlands to Moscow challenges the diffusion narrative by suggesting a centralization narrative, according to which Moscow drew people from the provinces to make the city—eventually—the center that would dominate scholarship on Soviet culture.

Mykola Kulish and Theater in Center and Periphery

A wider lens on Soviet culture shows that south to north migration was only one of many spatial dynamics in the early Soviet period, and not everyone considered Moscow a desirable destination. Cultural dynamics happen simultaneously: just as many young artists considered Moscow their mecca, so other young artists set their sights on Kharkiv, Minsk, or Tbilisi. Nor did artists in one town form a coherent unit. Kulish lived in Odesa side-by-side with the entire Odesa group but never joined them, even though he was trying to write and looking for professional contacts. Nor did Kulish want to go to Moscow, which held no cachet for him. Instead, Kulish moved to Kharkiv in 1926.[18]

And why not? Kharkiv, then the capital of Soviet Ukraine, was enjoying its own cultural renaissance. Just as culture flourished in early Soviet Moscow, so too did culture flourish in early Soviet Kharkiv. Former Austrian Galicians came to the Soviet Union to experiment in creating art using the Ukrainian language, including Les´ Kurbas, one of the greatest theater directors of the period. Dubbed the "Ukrainian Meyerhold," he was once known throughout the Soviet Union, like Kulish, even if he is now known primarily to specialists of the region. Yiddish modernist prose, translated into Ukrainian, appeared in Soviet Ukrainian literary journals, and none other than Bauhaus leader Walter Gropius won a worldwide architectural competition for designing a new theater for mass spectators in Kharkiv. Mykola Kulish's plays sparked debate everywhere from the cafes to the papers to the Soviet Ukrainian Politburo. Kharkiv produced and exhibited art just as innovative as that appearing in Moscow, showing that cultural centralization around Moscow was far from a fait accompli in the early 1920s.[19]

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[18] Kulish to Dniprovs´kyi, 13 October 1924, in Kulish, *Tvory*, 2 vols., ed. Les´ Taniuk (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990), 2:511.

[19] Tsentral´nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads´kykh ob´ednan´ (TsDAHOU) f. 1, op. 20, "Tsentral´nyi komitet, 1917–1941," s. 4193, ark. 22–24 (Lyst vid zastupnyka holovy Rady

In 1929, a group of Soviet Ukrainian writers traveled to Moscow for meetings with Russian-language writers and the Soviet leadership. As part of their visit, they were treated to an evening at the Moscow Art Theater, where they saw Mikhail Bulgakov's 1926 play *Days of the Turbins*.[20] *Turbins* was already a hit inside and outside the Soviet Union, and Stalin, as previously noted, saw the Moscow production 15 times. It was performed abroad, in Paris and London, and it was such a widely known early Soviet cultural product that a fellow by the name of Bulgakov—not the famous writer but a staff member at the Soviet consulate in Canada—was renamed "Days-of-the-Turbins" by his colleagues. The apparent incongruity of a celebrity name and an ordinary apparatchik seems to have amused the consular staff no end.[21] The Moscow Art production, then, was probably meant to show the visitors the best of the new Soviet repertory at the best theater in the Soviet capital.

However, the writers took great offense, both as Soviets and Ukrainians, and they spent the majority of their meeting with Stalin the next day complaining about Bulgakov and his Turbins. They were offended that a play with such an ideologically dubious plot, that of the demise of a non-Soviet intelligentsia family, had garnered such support from the state and from Stalin himself. Unlike Bulgakov, many of these writers had fought in the Red Army, brought socialism to victory in the south, and considered themselves loyal and true Communists. It is not surprising, therefore, that the depiction of the revolution in Kyiv offended them because it ignored their own story of loyalty to Soviet communism and to Ukraine. They were offended, moreover, as Ukrainians, expressing shock at how the Moscow Art actors presented the German characters with a flawless German accent but caricatured the Ukrainian accent for laughs. Stalin countered their objections, however, by asserting that the play was good, and as the Soviet arts had as yet produced few good plays, everyone had to reconcile themselves to Bulgakov and his Turbins.[22]

Even after returning to Soviet Ukraine, Kulish continued to express displeasure at Bulgakov's play and the Moscow Art production. Kulish did not

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Narodnykh Komisariv. 16 list. 1931. Sekretno). In other words, Moscow was becoming a center, but it did not become a center overnight. Focusing only on Moscow prevents analysis of all the cultural dynamics facilitating that centripetal force.

[20] Iurii Shapoval, "'Oni chuvstvuiut sebia, kak gosti...' (nad storinkamy stenohramy zustrichi Stalina z ukraïns´kymy pys´mennykamy 12 liutoho 1929 roku)," in *Ukraïna XX stolittia: Osoby ta podiï v konteksti vazhkoi istoriï*, ed. Shapoval (Kyiv: Heneza, 2001), 93–130.

[21] The consular official referenced this joke throughout this memoir (Ivan Kulyk, *Zapysky konsula* [Kharkiv: DVO, 1929]).

[22] Shapoval, *Ukraïna XX stolittia*, 107.

appreciate the "attempt by the Art Theater to discredit, as it were, the national movement in Ukraine" and wondered why managers of the Moscow Art Theater did not "send their workers to Ukraine to at least acquaint themselves with the history of the national movement." The broad Ukrainian accents in the production made it seem as if "all rebels in Ukraine were some kind of dimwits." In fact, *Days of the Turbins* became such a bête-noire for Kulish that he later mentioned the play as an exemplar of Russian chauvinism to his informer-cellmate in the concentration camp on the Solovki Islands. Nor was Kulish alone. A certain Petrenko, an arts official representing Soviet Ukraine, also decried *Turbins* before the All-Union Conference of Arts Workers in Moscow in 1929 as a play that was "harmful" both from an ideological and a national point of view, because it presented the Ukrainian revolutionary movement as "wild banditism." Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii himself wrote Stalin in 1929 to complain that the Moscow Art Theater "continues to stage a play that distorts the Ukrainian revolutionary movement and offends Ukrainians. And the director of the theater and the Commissariat of Enlightenment of the RSFSR do not understand the harm that this will bring in mutual relations with Ukraine."[23]

In response to Bulgakov and his *Turbins*, Kulish wrote his own play about the years of revolution and civil war, *Sonata Pathétique*. Although Kulish's play also took place in Kyiv in 1918 and featured a young hero and his encounter with revolution, Kulish's work differed from Bulgakov's in every other way. Instead of Bulgakov's cozy family home, Kulish placed his characters in the communal boarding house of a former monarchist. Instead of the charming Chekhovian figures in Bulgakov's play, *Sonata* presented a prostitute, a paraplegic war veteran turned Bolshevik, a politically indecisive hero, and the Ukrainian nationalist femme fatale Maryna, who plays the Beethoven sonata from which the play took its name. While Bulgakov's play was a lyrical ode to the world lost in the revolution, *Sonata* was more ambiguous in its political orientation. The nationalist Maryna, for example, was clearly responsible for the hero's demise, but hardly as flat as Bulgakov's faithless Talberg. Likewise, Kulish's nameless hero waffled among Ukrainian patriotism, Bolshevism, and lovelorn ennui, while Bulgakov's Aleksei Turbin was unquestionably anti-Bolshevik and antinationalist. Bulgakov wrote his *Turbins* for the psychological

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[23] Mykola Kulish, "Vystup na teatral′nomu dysputi 1929 roku," in hia *Tvory*, 2:464; Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhba bezpeky Ukrainy (SBU) 36546 fp (fond prypynenykh sprav), v. 3 (Kulish Nikolai Gurovich), 203; on Petrenko, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 5508, "TsK Rabis," op. 1, d. 1307, l. 135; "Stenogramma utrennogo zasedaniia 7. Vsesoiuznogo s″ezda rabotnikov iskusskv 1929"; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial′no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 142 "Lunacharskii," op. 1, d. 461, l. 8 ob.

depth of the actors at the Moscow Art Theater, while Kulish wrote *Sonata* for Les´ Kurbas's experimental Berezil Theater Company, the most avant-garde troupe in Soviet Ukraine.[24]

Most significant, however, was that Bulgakov's play told a story of revolution, while Kulish's told a story of national revolution. Bulgakov painted all Ukrainians as nationalists, while Kulish's characters represented Ukrainian nationalism across the entire political spectrum. If Bulgakov's play was anti-Ukrainian, Kulish's was pro-Ukrainian, albeit in a Soviet key. As he stated, he wished to focus on "unraveling the national question … and not with kid gloves." Kulish intended *Sonata* to show, *pace* Bulgakov, the complex variety of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in, around, for, and against the Bolshevik revolution. He wanted his play to show the legitimacy of the Soviet Ukrainian project, and how it differed from the non-Soviet Ukrainian nationalist movement, as well as from the non-ethnicized "Russian" revolution itself. For Kulish, the "national problem" was central to cultural production in Soviet Ukraine.[25]

The Repertory Committee in Soviet Ukraine did not approve Kulish's play. Although I have not been able to find accounts of their deliberations, the decision was most likely motivated by their dissatisfaction with the author himself. Officials frequently mentioned Kulish with frustration in Soviet Ukrainian Politburo and Central Committee protocols. Kulish was a key figure in the cultural and political elite, serving on the editorial boards of multiple literary journals and party committees. His work therefore carried political authority, rendering any display of political subtlety problematic. Kulish challenged even his friends when he argued that plays should always make the audience "uneasy" and should "not name enemies abroad" but rather "uncover them here."[26]

Like all Soviet artists, however, Kulish understood the cultural topography of the Soviet Union. He sent the play to a colleague in Moscow

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[24] Mykola Kulish, *Sonata Pathétique*, ed. and trans. George and Moira Luckyj (Littleton, CO: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1975), based largely on Mykola Kulish, *Patetychna sonata* (L´viv: Ukrains´ke vydavnytstvo, 1943). There is also the Russian version: Kulish, *Pateticheskaia sonata: Maklena Grasa. P´esy*, trans. P. Zenkevich (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964). See also Maria Popovich-Semeniuk, "*Sonata Pathetique* by Mykola Kulish and *Days of the Turbins* by Mikhail Bulgakov: A Literary Dialogue" (Ph.D. diss., University of Ottawa, 1990); and Iryna Chuzhynova, "Narodnyi Malakhii: Fragmenty maibutnikh doslidzhen´," *Kurbasivs´ke chytannia*, no. 2 (2007): 149–64.

[25] Kulish, "Vystup na teatral´nomu dysputi 1929 roku," 460.

[26] Tsentral´nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady Ukrainy (TsDAVOVU) f. 166, "Narodnyi komisariat osvity," op. 9, s. 247, ark. 99; *Literatura i mystetstvo* (Kharkiv), 22 June 1929, 2–3; examples of Kulish's appearance at the highest republican discussions include TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, s. 142, ll. 54–56 (1928 discussion of Kulish's play *Narodnyi Malakhii*).

for translation, and Aleksandr Tairov decided to direct the play at his theater in the capital. Like Kurbas's Berezil Theater in Kharkiv, Tairov's Kamernyi (Chamber) Theater was perfectly suited to Kulish's play, because the theater regularly featured constructivist sets, well suited to highlight the symbolic nature of the play's characters. Tairov worked with excellent actors, including Alisa Koonen, who starred as Maryna. She made the character a "Medea," and her celebrity made the character one audiences loved to hate. Koonen wrote in her memoirs that Raisa Azarkh, one of Kaganovich's people, came backstage after a performance and informed her that Lazar´ Moiseevich was displeased with her interpretation because her acting choices made it unclear that the audience should not feel sympathy for Maryna. Koonen was such an attractive personality that it was hard for audiences to dislike her character, even if they recognized the hero's love for her as his fatal flaw.[27]

The production ran for 40 performances from December 1931 to March 1932. Although it could not be staged in Soviet Ukraine, the play had found a home in Moscow. *Pravda* gave the play a lukewarm review, titled "Unsuccessful Pathos," although the editors praised Kulish for managing to frame the national question "correctly," and called *Sonata* "one of the best plays of this season." Whereas Soviet Ukrainian officialdom may have feared Kulish's exploration of national revolution, the *Pravda* review indicates that in the context of the Soviet capital, the play simply seemed—like Bulgakov's—a well-written contribution to the Soviet repertory and less politically provocative. Celebrated Civil War general Semen Budennyi watched the show in a loge box with Kulish and, according to Kulish's wife's memoirs, praised the production and invited the writer for tea. In fact, theaters across the Soviet Union picked up the play, scheduling *Sonata* for performance in Leningrad, Omsk, Irkutsk, and Kazan. The play was even translated into German and published in Berlin by fellow-traveler Friedrich Wolff, who lauded its "atmosphere of the Ukrainian land."[28]

This successful run came to an end in March 1932, when an anonymous editorial in *Pravda* written by "I. Ukrainets" complained about the play's Ukrainian nationalism, *Pravda* staff apologized for their previous review, and Tairov had to close down the production. "No, it would be better if Comrade Kulish, for whom this is not the first unsuccessful play, would work on himself for several years, simmer in the workers' pot, and then start to write, because

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[27] Alisa Koonen, *Stranitsy zhizni* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1975), 340–43.

[28] B. Reznikov et al., "Neudavshaiasia Patetika," *Pravda*, 9 February 1932 (no. 39); Antonina Kulish, "Spohady pro Mykoly Kulisha," in Kulish, *Tvory* (New York: Ukrains´ka vil´na Akademiia nauk u SShA, 1955), 365–433; Mykola Kulish, *Die Beethovensonate: Ein Stück aus der Ukraine 1917*, ed. Friedrich Wolf (Berlin: Fischer, 1932).

he has talent, but he is not giving his talent to us," wrote the anonymous *Pravda* reviewer. All accounts point to Kaganovich as the review's author; not only was he—like Bulgakov and Kulish—from the southwest borderlands, but from 1925 to 1928, he had worked hard in Soviet Ukraine to manage and subdue the local intelligentsia, and he was not one of Mykola Kulish's fans.[29]

This story of Bulgakov's *Turbins* and Kulish's *Sonata* reveals the importance of internal transnationalism in Soviet culture. Is the failure of *Sonata* a Soviet Ukrainian story? Certainly, its rejection in Soviet Ukraine and the Kremlin accusations of Ukrainian nationalism would suggest so. Is it also a Moscow story? Certainly, the success of the play in the capital, which launched further performances throughout the Soviet Union, would suggest so. The role of a major Politburo player in its shutdown would further underscore *Sonata*'s integral ties to Moscow. Yet the dynamic between the two texts and their authors suggests a larger framework, one of internal transnational circulation. A play by a Kyiv native about Kyiv events found success in the capital, which provoked a Soviet Ukrainian writer to write a play about the same events; lack of support in the provinces led to success in the capital, but events from the provinces shut down the production. Ultimately, both Bulgakov's *Turbins* and Kulish's *Sonata* are Soviet cultural products representing not only one place, Moscow or Soviet Ukraine, but also an internal transnational circulation between them.

Circulation continued, in fact, beyond the Soviet space. Kulish was executed in 1937, but his wife and two children survived and remained in Nazi-occupied Ukraine during World War II. Kulish's son Volodymyr preserved his father's texts and had *Sonata* published by a Ukrainian-language publishing house in Nazi-occupied L´viv (Lemberg). Later Volodymyr Kulish took the text with him to the displaced persons camps and thence to the United States. But as the text traveled, so did its reception and, consequently, its meaning shift: the figure of its author, a Soviet Ukrainian writing about the chaos of revolution, became a Ukrainian anti-Soviet writing a play against revolution. The reception of *Sonata* illustrates how the category of "Soviet Ukrainian" lost the Soviet element and became exclusively Ukrainian. Now Kulish is largely known only among scholars of Ukraine, when in fact his pro-Soviet play exemplifies a dynamic between Moscow and Soviet Ukraine,

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[29] I. Ukrainets, "O Pateticheskoi sonate Kulisha," *Pravda,* 24 March 1932 (no. 63); a review in *Sovetskii teatr* put it bluntly, "The talented artist needs seriously to take himself in hand to reconsider his own ideological baggage" (Boris Alpers, "Sud´ba liricheskoi dramy," *Sovetskii teatr*, no. 2 [1932]: 14–19). On Kaganovich in Soviet Ukraine, see TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 20, s. 2695 (obshchii otdel, 1928), which details all of Kaganovich's dealings with the Soviet Ukrainian literary intelligentsia.

was performed by leading artists in Moscow, and caused enough of a scandal at the highest Soviet levels to be shut down. Nor does the narrative of Soviet Ukrainian culture that sees Moscow only as a force of oppression explain how production and reception in Moscow created more opportunities and success for artists living and working elsewhere.[30]

The reception of *Sonata* and *Turbins* also shows how Soviet culture lost the Ukrainian element. *Turbins* was a Soviet phenomenon, one written by someone who was from the former imperial South, a region that became Soviet Ukraine, and that inspired an entire cohort of cultural elites. The content of the play came from the southern provinces; the zemliachestvo of early Soviet Moscow nurtured the play; and its wider resonance included a polemic written by a Soviet Ukrainian. *Sonata* and *Turbins* belong in one framework that captures the dynamic between center and republic, as opposed to two separate and exclusive narratives of culture in Moscow and culture in Soviet Ukraine.

The spatial map on which Soviet artists and officials operated comprised the entire USSR; opportunities to work in either the center or the republics, and relations between them, shaped Soviet cultural production and reception. Many artists worked this cultural topography to their advantage. Kulish, in fact, was not too dispirited by *Sonata*'s closure, for he attempted another production in Moscow. In 1933, the Soviet Ukrainian Commissariat of Enlightenment shut down Kulish's play *Maklena Grasa*, which had premiered at the Berezil Theater in Kharkiv. This led to the removal of the theater's artistic director, Les´ Kurbas, and the end (not long after) of the theater itself. Despite the scandal, Kulish wrote to his former mistress that he believed the play had a future in Moscow. The Soviet Ukrainian playwrights Ivan Mykytenko and, later, Oleksandr Korniichuk found success on the Moscow and union stages.[31] The entire Soviet Union, then, was always in the mind

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[30] See George Luckyj's introduction to Kulish, *Sonata Pathétique*. Scholarship on Kulish would benefit from the kind of work that Istvan Rev did for Imre Nagy. By peeling away the layers of interpretation, Rev was able to recuperate the original Nagy: a reform communist. Rev noted an irony with respect to Nagy that could also be applied to Kulish: by labeling him as anti-Soviet, one simply reifies the (fake) secret police accusations against him. Kulish was not anti-Soviet but rather practiced "engaged social criticism," in Marko Stech's words, to improve his society (Istvan Rev, *Retroactive Justice: A Pre-History of Post-Communism* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005]; Marko Stech, "Kulish and the Devil," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 32, 1 [2007]: 2). This aporia may explain why *Sonata*, a very good play, has not been promoted and staged: for Ukrainians, Kulish is too Soviet, but for others, he is too Ukrainian.

[31] On Mykytenko, see TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, s. 237, ark. 178. For an account of the end of the Berezil, see Yosyp [Iosyp] Hirniak, "Birth and Death of the Modern Ukrainian Theater," in *Soviet Theaters 1917–1941*, ed. Martha Bradshaw (New York: Research Program on the USSR, 1954), 326–36; TsDAMLM f. 941, op. 1, s. 48 (Letter from Kulish to Korneeva-Maslovaia,

of Soviet artists as a particular and changing map, with a rugged topography of opportunities and limitations, rather than a blank slate of a vast expanse.

Korenizatsiia as a Problem

A focus on internal transnationalism implies that different cultural spheres existed inside the Soviet Union that people, ideas, and cultural products could cross. Different cultural processes took place in different parts of the Soviet Union at the same time: a simple truth, but one occluded by an exclusive focus on Moscow or a non-Russian region. Kulish wanted professional success for his play in Moscow, and at the same time (and without contradiction) he believed that artistic culture must be instrumental in building Soviet Ukraine as a Soviet nation. Although he and his colleagues fully believed in the primacy of Soviet socialism, they believed equally as strongly that culture in Soviet Ukraine should be qualitatively "Ukrainian." Culture is constructed, and constructing culture not only as Soviet but also as Ukrainian was no easy task.[32]

Most of the scholarship on non-Russian culture focuses on the positive effects of korenizatsiia (here, Ukrainianization) because officialdom promoted and supported culture in non-Russian languages in a way that the state never had in the imperial period. Indeed, the years of korenizatsiia corresponded to years of artistic flourishing in Soviet Ukraine. The korenizatsiia-as-positive focus identifies oppression promulgated from Moscow as the cause of the demise of the 1920s renaissance in Ukrainian-language artistic culture, and there is no doubt that the murder of the top artists during two days in 1937 in Sandormorkh challenged the future creative output of Soviet Ukraine.[33]

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10 October 1933), l. 1; Oleksandr Korniichuk, *Dramatychni tvory*, ed. I. O. Dzeverin and introduction by D. T. Vakulenko (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1990), 9, 12, 81–83; and George Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 224–25.

[32] The idea that national identity is constructed is now accepted in other fields. Two classics are Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchman: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Terry Martin and Francine Hirsch, among others, have taken up the idea of the construction of the Soviet "national" identity, but the notion that Soviet Ukrainian identity could also be constructed is little explored. Serhy Yekelchyk has begun this exploration for Soviet Ukrainians with *Stalin's Empire of Memory*. For recent work on the construction of other Soviet identities, see Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); and Brigid O'Keeffe, *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance, and Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

[33] On the murder of the intelligentsia from Soviet Ukraine, see Serhii Bohunov, Volodymyr Prystaiko, and Iurii Shapoval, eds., *Ostannia adresa*, 2 vols. (Kyiv: Sfera, 1999).

But korenizatsiia, more than a specific set of policies outlined in 1923, represented a more general practice of ethno-national categorization characterizing the entire Soviet period. For a multiethnic place, ethnic particularism posed particular challenges. Yuri Slezkine, in a famous article, used the Lithuanian Bolshevik Juozas Vareikis's image of the "communal apartment" to analyze the paradox that the Bolsheviks, avowed enemies of nationalism, actually promoted nationalism in the form of ethnic particularism. But the communal apartment image breaks down when taken out of the context of Bolshevik ideology and placed in the concrete context of Soviet Ukraine.[34]

It is perhaps significant that Vareikis, a Lithuanian Bolshevik working in 1924 in the Central Asian apparat, used an image that focused on the universal inclusivity of Soviet nationality policy; put simply, there was room for everyone, from Balts to Central Asians, in the Soviet Union. Yet looking from the provinces, Vareikis's metaphor resonates differently: his metaphor has no room for republics, only for ethnicities. The space envisioned is a unitary one, and Soviet Ukraine as a separate region ceases to exist. Kulish and his comrades, in fact, understood Soviet nationality policy in an entirely different way. For them, ethnic particularism offered a means not to create universal Soviet culture but rather to promote their own national culture locally in the complicated ethnic patchwork of Soviet Ukraine.

Moreover, "Ukrainian" was far from an objective cultural category. Terry Martin and Francine Hirsch have both shown how the ethno-nations themselves were constructed in the interwar period. Korenizatsiia required articulating what precisely each ethnic culture would look like, and few agreed on either form or content. When comparing cultural processes in Moscow and Soviet Ukraine, it is therefore striking that Bulgakov and Kulish were engaged in different cultural processes: while Bulgakov was creating Soviet culture, Kulish was creating Soviet "ethno-national" (here, Ukrainian) culture. Categorization by ethnicity shaped cultural production and reception in Soviet Ukraine far more than in Moscow.[35]

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[34] Indeed, if we can accept that the decline of culture on the borderlands was not exclusively due to oppression from the center, then the Soviet case offers potential for contributing to the wider debate on how states manage multiethnic populations and the arts. The Soviet Union was perhaps the biggest experiment in multiculturalism, leaving a legacy that continues today; not only Russians disappear, as Yuri Slezkine shows, but also the spatial reality of the Soviet Union ("The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, 2 [1994]: 414–52).

[35] On the constructivism of Soviet nationality policy, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell

Soviet Ukraine posed a particular challenge for ethno-national categorization simply because its population comprised so many ethnic groups. According to the 1926 census, 80 percent of the population declared itself Ukrainian, but most of those respondents lived in villages. Cities displayed quite a different makeup; only 4 percent of Odesa's population was Ukrainian, for example. Of the 12,000 artists registered with the Artists' Union in Soviet Ukraine, 40 percent were registered as Jews, 30 percent as Russians, and 24 percent as Ukrainian. Reflecting this diversity, Soviet Ukraine sponsored 48 theaters in eight languages: Moldovan (2), Russian (7), Ukrainian (33), Yiddish (2), German, Polish, Bulgarian, and Armenian (1 each). As a result, Soviet Ukraine sponsored more theaters in non-Russian languages than any other republic. These numbers show the monumental task facing Soviet Ukrainian elites who believed in the necessity of culture—Ukrainian as well as Soviet.[36]

How were cultural elites supposed to map Soviet nationality policy onto this multiethnic space? Kulish and his fellows solved this dilemma, like good Soviets, by organizing the arts according to ethno-national categories: Jewish audiences were assigned to the Jewish theater with Jewish artists and Jewish plays; Ukrainian audiences to the Ukrainian theater with Ukrainian artists and Ukrainian plays; Polish audiences to the Polish theater with Polish artists and plays, and so forth. Organization according to ethno-national units contained a specific hierarchy, whereby the theaters of the titular ethnos of the republic received the most funding from the party-state, and theaters of ethnic minorities received significantly less support (such as allocation of funds for renovations or opportunities for touring). Soviet Ukraine accordingly privileged its Ukrainian-language theaters. In Soviet Ukraine, the Russian-language theaters, Yiddish-language theaters, and the Polish-language theater (in fact, the only one in the entire USSR) competed for local support and funding.[37]

University Press, 2001); and Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[36] Census mentioned in, e.g., TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 20, s. 2894, ark. 14–15 (Letter from A. Ia. Shumskii, addressed to L. M. Kaganovich, criticizing his previous position on the question of Ukrainianization, 11–20 December 1929). Contemporaries did not miss the disparity between census data and cultural production. See, for example, the director-actor Vasyl′ Vasyl′ko's obsession with the data in Derzhavnyi muzei teatral′noho, muzychnoho, ta kino-mystetstva Ukrainy (DMTMKU) f. "Vasyl′ Vasyl′ko," op. 10374 (Shchodennyky), vol. 9, ark. 56; and Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI) f. 962, op. 7, d. 12, "Svodki o sostoianii teatral′noi seti i kolichestve rabotnikov iskusstv s 1917–1936," ll. 1–3.

[37] On early Soviet nationality policy, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire;* and Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*. For an explanation of why "Jewish" meant Yiddish-language and not

These categories necessarily broke down in practice, both artistically and institutionally. The creative work of certain of Kulish's colleagues contains characters, themes, or images that emerge from a multiethnic landscape—such as the translations from Yiddish to Ukrainian of the Jewish modernist Der Nister's prose, or the self-conscious satire on Ukrainization in Ostap Vyshnia's short stories. Similarly, the institutional boundaries between ethno-national theaters often remained fluid. The director Favst Lopatyns′kyi, for example, worked in the Yiddish and Ukrainian-language theaters, as did the actor Shimon Goldshtein (also known as Semen Semdor and Semen Doroshenko). The acting company of the Polish theater was in fact only 45 percent Polish at its demise in 1937.[38]

Yet cultural and political elites still aspired to the full separation of cultural institutions by ethnicity and privileged Ukrainian-language culture. At an Artistic-Political Council meeting of 1929, the managing director of the Yiddish theater in Kharkiv, Saul Guzhnovskii, expressed concern about the lack of Ukrainian-language plays available for translation and inclusion in his theater's repertory. The Yiddish theater could not produce Kulish's *Myna Mazailo*, a satire on Ukrainianization, because "they [the Jewish audience] would not understand this play, the Ukrainian spectators would not react approvingly [to a Yiddish translation], and moreover the Jewish listener would not understand." Guzhnovskii's concern reflects the assumption behind ethno-national organization of complete difference between the Yiddish and Ukrainian theater audiences. The "Ukrainian spectators" and the "Jewish listener" did not overlap for Guzhnovskii. However fluid these borders may in fact have been in practice, officials viewed these cultural institutions—and therefore the cultures represented inside—as separate.[39]

The ethnic separation of theater institutions, ultimately, led theatrical culture to be categorized by ethnicity and not by region. Apparatchik Petrenko's speech in 1929 reflected this rigid understanding of cultural categories. Although he declared himself in favor of "Ukrainian Soviet art," he still believed "that all the national minorities in Ukraine should be provided with their own national art." Non-Ukrainian minority art was

Hebrew-language, see Kenneth Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[38] For Der Nister, see *Literaturnyi iarmarok* (February 1929): 157–60; Ostap Vyshnia, *Usmishky* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1969); DMTMKU f. "Vasyl′ Vasyl′ko," op. 10242 (Shchodennyky) vol. 8, ark. 190–91; Zhabotinskii, "lebens-bletlach," 69–70; TsDAVOVU f. 166, op. 6, s. 2001, ark. 255.

[39] TsDAVOVU f. 166, op. 9, s. 247, ark. 43; indeed, even though one can find examples of fluidity of personnel, aesthetics, and plays traversing from one "ethnic" theater to another, I do not see a trend toward cultural hybridity.

"national," in the same way that Ukrainian art was itself national. The arts of national minorities deserved protection in Soviet Ukraine but were not included in the cultural category of "Ukrainian" Soviet art. This shows the dilemma of korenizatsiia in a multiethnic space: categorization by ethnicity prohibited the development of a particularly "Soviet Ukrainian" theater that might include and incorporate other ethnic categories, focus on region as opposed to ethnicity, or highlight the cultural hybridity unique to the region. Petrenko's declaration thus carried the assumption that Soviet Ukraine should support Yiddish theater, but it does not allow for the more localized cultural category of "Soviet Ukrainian Yiddish."[40]

Moreover, separating the arts by ethnos demanded clear differentiation among the various artistic cultures in the region: Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Jewish, and more. The content of "Ukrainian" culture itself was far from clear—to artists, to officials, and to audiences. Kulish declared in a meeting that "the national question is not such a trivial question; it is the question of an entire era of social revolution, the question of our party, and so on, which has been solved in the union but not solved in its entirety." Kulish's friend, the provocateur Mykola Khvylovyi, outlined the aesthetic contours of the problem: "Will we consider our national art subservient … and eternally dependent … in relation to those global arts that have attained their highest development? Or, leaving behind this subservient role, will we find it necessary to raise our artistic level to the level of worldwide masterpieces?" The task of Soviet Ukrainian culture, then, lay in creating "masterpieces," products of high culture that had previously not existed in the Ukrainian language. The stakes for creating a new (Soviet) Ukrainian culture were indeed high. Not only did artists have to create masterpieces, but they also had to overcome the prejudice of the center. The apparatchik Petrenko expressed his displeasure at Moscow's failure to comprehend the artistic transformation taking place in Soviet Ukraine: "In the RSFSR and in the other union republics they are not well enough acquainted with our achievements in the sphere of art … everything presented here is a legacy of the past. *Malorossiishchina* and the *hopak* have no place in Ukraine, and yet here [they] are presented as Ukrainian art." Art in Soviet Ukraine, as Petrenko well knew, included the plays of Kulish, but at the

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[40] DMTMKU f. "Datsenko," op. 16533 (Letter from O. K. Datsenko to Iu. H. Fomina, 23 October 1989); GARF f. 5508 "TsK Rabis," op. 1, d. 1307, l. 97. Elissa Bemporad shows that in the case of Minsk, *Yidishizatsiia* created a Soviet Yiddish culture alternative to Moscow. Indeed, she argues that the center of Yiddish culture was not in Moscow but in Soviet Belorussia and Soviet Ukraine, where most Jews lived (*Becoming Soviet Jews*, esp. chap. 4).

union level, "Ukrainian" art appeared as only folk dancing and 19th-century melodrama.[41]

Beyond this village-inspired folk culture, the content of Soviet Ukrainian culture was highly contested. Elites in Soviet Ukraine wrote in the press, argued in private (as memoirs attest), and debated the content of "Soviet Ukrainian" culture at meetings. In each setting they expressed great disagreement. First, the older generation and the younger generation were at odds. Mykola Sadovs´kyi, an established Ukrainian-language artist from the older generation, wrote to his sister-in-law in 1925 that he was so glad his brother, the director Panas Saksahans´kyi, had finally succeeded in creating a new theater company, "which is so necessary to us now, after all that *kurbalesia* of the Berezil," a dismissive reference to Kulish's friend and colleague, the theater director Les´ Kurbas. Second, disagreement over the content of Soviet Ukrainian culture existed even between members of the younger generation. Mykhail Semenko's journal, *Nova generatsiia*, was famously anti-Kulish and anti-Kurbas, and a review of Kulish's plays noted that "Kulish 'forgot' that, apart from Russian chauvinism, there is also Ukrainian, Petliura-esque [chauvinism], which has no place in Soviet theater." It was far from clear to those making Soviet Ukrainian theatrical culture how that culture was supposed to look on the stage.[42]

Moscow provides a striking contrast. Here, culture was structured neither by korenizatsiia nor, more broadly, by nationality. Moscow (largely) enjoyed non-ethnicized cultural institutions: neither the Moscow Art Theater nor Tairov's Kamernyi Theater were categorized as "Russian" in ethnicity. They produced plays in the Russian language, but Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, and Russians, among others, all performed on stage and sat in the audience. The focus of these institutions lay in creating art that was not "Russian Soviet," but simply Soviet, representing the supraethnic inclusiveness of the "Soviet" category. Artists had the opportunity, and the obligation, to employ Soviet, not national, categories. Moscow could simply take the best from the entire USSR and incorporate it into "Soviet" culture; everyone wanted to perform in Stalin's capital, and the best plays, like *Sonata*, could find a production there. As one Soviet Ukrainian Politburo member summarized, "in Moscow there is industrialization, and here [there is] Ukrainianization." Locked, almost by definition, into the conceptual

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[41] TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, s. 102, ark. 127, 135, 144; TsDAVOVU f. 166, op. 9, s. 247, ark. 114; Mykola Khvyl´ovyi, "Kamo hriadesh," in *Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia: Antolohiia 1917–1933,* ed. Iurii Lavrinenko (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2007; original Paris, 1959), 805; GARF f. 5508, op. 1, d. 1307, l. 97.

[42] The exact phrase is "pislia vsiakikh kurbalesii Berezilia." See Sofia Tobilevych, *Moi stezhky i zustrichi* (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi literatury, 1957), 445; and V. Snihovyi, "Teafront livoruch," *Nova generatsiia*, no. 6 (1929): 49.

frame of Ukrainianization, cultural elites worked in a setting in which both form and content were deeply contested.[43]

This necessity of creating national as well as Soviet culture profoundly affected the artistic scene in Soviet Ukraine. In 1927, Kulish's friend and colleague theater director Les´ Kurbas visited Moscow and saw a performance at Vsevolod Meyerhold's theater. He was so disappointed that he had to sit down in the street and collect himself: "He has nothing to teach me." In 1927, this was indeed true. But only a few years later, in 1933, Kurbas was thrown out of his own theater and sent to exile in Moscow, where he awaited arrest. Under later interrogation in Soviet Ukraine he begged his interrogators to allow him to return to Moscow, since "to work in the cultural situation as it is in Ukraine is like death for an artist" because Ukrainian culture was on "some sort of pathlessness … it's as if the cultural process now is in some sort of crisis or illness." Similarly, Kulish in 1934 took a trip to Moscow, and noted in a letter to his former mistress that there was "much that is of interest" in theatrical and literary Moscow. By the early 1930s, interesting cultural advances were taking place in Moscow, but these two artists, at least, felt that was not the case in Soviet Ukraine.[44]

Of course, the "Soviet" category itself was itself vague and mutable, as Stalin's declarations on Bulgakov's *Turbins* show. Political patronage determined the "Soviet" quality of an artist or cultural product, as opposed to any essential Soviet-ness. Soviet national culture was supposed to represent only the culture of the titular ethnos of the republic; multiplicity found a home in Soviet culture writ large, not in its national components. For places like Soviet Ukraine, the move from Russian imperial culture to Soviet Ukrainian ethno-national culture proved consequential.

The Russian republic also sponsored its own ethnic theaters. In fact, a professional Ukrainian-language theater existed, albeit briefly (1930–31), in Leningrad, although it failed for lack of talent and state support. Two amateur Ukrainian studios survived briefly in Moscow but performed traditional 19th-century repertory; when interviewed, one communist theatergoer noted that the theater was "not desirable at all" (*nezhelatel´no vovse*). The Romen Gypsy theater artists, as Brigid O'Keeffe shows, manipulated ethnic stereotypes to create Soviet belonging. Famously, Solomon Mikhoels's GOSET was one of

[43] TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 6, s. 102, ark. 135.

[44] Mykola Labin´s´kyi, ed., *Les´ Kurbas: Filosofiia teatru* (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2001), 62–63; SBU 75 608 fp "Kurbas Aleksandr Stepanovich," 66; TsDAMLM f. 941, op. 1, s. 52.

the highest-quality theaters in prewar Moscow and the only non-Russian-language theater on an all-union budget.[45]

Moscow and Soviet Ukraine followed different trajectories as culture continued to centralize in Moscow. The cultural flourishing in the former imperial provinces, experienced by Kulish in the 1920s, languished. While it made perfect sense for Kulish to move to Kharkiv in 1926, because officials supported and artists produced highly innovative culture, by 1933 the choice to stay in Soviet Ukraine limited one's financial and artistic possibilities. There were by now far more opportunities in Moscow than in the regions. The Soviet Ukrainian renaissance largely ended in one fell swoop when the party-state sentenced over 1,000 of the most talented cultural figures, including Kulish, to death in 1937. There were few artistic cadres to replace this human loss, because many had already left for Moscow. To be sure, leading talents in Moscow were murdered, too—Meyerhold in 1939, Mikhoels in 1948, the Yiddish poets in 1952. Bulgakov, however, died in his own bed in 1940. More broadly, the violent destruction of cultural agents did not crush Moscow's new centrality as an artistic capital. Moscow was not the only cultural center in the 1920s, but by the mid-1930s it was fixed in the cultural topography as the cultural mecca. Multidirectionality would continue, of course, as young talent from the republics flocked to Moscow (and Leningrad) to attend the best theater academies, as theaters toured across the Soviet Union from Kyiv to Kamchatka, and cultural festivals brought the best non-Russian theatrical productions from the regions to the center—but Moscow was a more powerful centripetal force than it had ever been before.

This particular internal transnational dynamic, whereby the center absorbed the talent of the periphery, and the periphery focused on ethno-national culture, shaped the Soviet arts writ large, and for the worse. The apparatchik Aleksandr Solodovnikov noted at a 1938 conference that "we have still not overcome the republican insularity" that prevented the "mutual exchange of cultural treasures" between the republics and Moscow. The consequence was that "one theater copies another and the result is that there

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[45] SBU f. 83, s. 30, P-74277, "Dmitro Rovinskii," is the record of the arrest of the artistic director of the Zhovten´ (October) Theater in Leningrad. The theater barely performed, because of both a perceived lack of quality and political difficulties caused by its support for Ukrainian culture, which was not presented as supraethnic or Soviet. See T. M. Smirnova, "Gosudarstvennyi ukrainskii teatr Zhovten´ (Oktiabr´) v Leningrade, 1930–1931," in *Natsional´nyi teatr v kontekste mnogonatsional´noi istorii: Doklady, soobshcheniia*, ed. A. A. Kolganova (Moscow: Tri kvadrata, 2010), 226–43; RGALI f. 645, op. 1, d. 257, ll. 20, 77; ibid, d. 321, l. 37; and O'Keeffe, *New Soviet Gypsies*. On Solomon Mikhoels and GOSET, see Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

are about 10–12 plays performing in almost all the theaters." The Soviet theatrical landscape was impoverished. Ironically, Solodovnikov then noted that "in Ukraine there is a wonderful play by the Ukrainian writer Tobilevych, and we don't know him here." Solodovnikov was referring (most probably) to Ivan Karpenko-Karyi, one of the Tobilevych brothers who wrote much of the 19th-century Ukrainian-language melodramatic repertory, the very repertory decried by the apparatchik Petrenko as "*malorossiishchina* and *hopak*." Yet Soviet Ukraine had also produced wonderful plays by Mykola Kulish, and these treasures remained unknown to Solodovnikov, to Moscow audiences then and now, and to scholars of Soviet culture.[46]

From Internal to External Transnationalism

Bulgakov and Kulish, *Turbins* and *Sonata*, reveal the spatial dynamics of Soviet culture. This case study requires contextualizing Bulgakov beyond Moscow, and the Soviet Ukrainians beyond Soviet Ukraine, and it demonstrates new ways in which the cultural map of Soviet artists went far beyond the boundaries of their own milieu, republic, or ethnic group. While it may seem obvious that Moscow became a cultural capital, and that provincials flocked to the capital, looking at the world beyond Moscow underscores the importance of the provinces in the making of Soviet culture. The provinces of the empire contributed demographically to the rise of Moscow; more important, the story of the provincialization of Soviet Ukrainian culture offers an alternative to a Moscow-centered narrative. Moscow may have become the cultural capital of the Soviet Union, but it did so at the expense of the periphery, and thanks (partially) to the supraethnic quality of the arts in Moscow. The final suggestion of this article is that one crucial factor that made Soviet culture particularly Soviet was indeed its cultural topography: Soviet culture was deeply centralized in Moscow (and, by a close second, Leningrad) with a hierarchy of cultural production descending from the Kremlin. There was no room, in the Soviet case, for the culturally rich provinces of the Russian empire; making a Soviet cultural center resulted in—and perhaps even necessitated—making a cultural periphery.

The post-Soviet topography of culture continues to shift. Internal transnationalism has become "external" transnationalism, remaking cultural dynamics between Russia and independent Ukraine. *Turbins* and *Sonata*, Bulgakov and Kulish, resonate once again as artists, officials, and audiences in Russia and Ukraine contest center and periphery. No longer

[46] RGALI f. 962, op. 7, d. 293, "Stenogrammy soveshchaniia nachal´nikov teatral´nykh otdelov Upravleniia po delam iskusstv Soiuznykh respublik o rabote teatrov v teatral´nykh otdelakh Upravlenii Soiuznykh respublik," l. 1.

do multidirectional dynamics link Moscow with Kyiv and Kharkiv; rather, new borders define new possibilities and limitations. Place, ultimately, shapes the meaning of cultural production and reception: if Ukraine is no longer a periphery, can Moscow remain a cultural center? In turn, how will Ukraine manage the legacy of Moscow's centripetal force and its own ethnic particularism?

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