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WHOSE LANGUAGE DO WE SPEAK?

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MASTER NARRATIVE

OF UKRAINIAN HISTORY WRITING

“The past” becomes history only as thought, which is the negation of chaos and the selection of what is “important”: “important” for my, “present” life. ... Therefore, from every historical text we learn first of all about its author: about his worldview, ideology, etc., and about his generation and epoch.

Lev Bilas, *Ideology as History and as Poetry*, 1961¹

In *Metahistory* Hayden White contends that the past does not exist apart from its descriptions, language is not a neutral medium, historical narratives are constructed according to certain tropes, and that “we can tell equally plausible, alternative, and even contradictory stories without violating rules of evidence.”² This rhetorical relativism not only deconstructed

¹ Lev Bilas. *Istoriia iak ideolohiia i iak poeziia* (Z pryvodu dvokh novykh prats' O. Ohloblyna) // *Suchasnist'*. 1961. No. 7. P. 48.

² Hayden White. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore, 1973.

the objectivity myth and emphasized the relevance of any historical text's literary form but also, as some critics have argued, “denied the possibility of fruitful professional discourse except within communities of believers.”³ White's influential theory provoked no discussion in either Soviet or diaspora Ukrainian historiography. During late perestroika, historians usually debated the challenges of writing new history in terms of “filling the blank spots” and overcoming Soviet censorship.⁴ There were Ukrainian scholars who responded to some of their Moscow-based colleagues' call to embrace the methodology of the French *Annales* school and study mentalities,⁵ or make history a “true science” and study historical sources with mathematical methods.⁶ In the 1980s and 1990s, neither the drift toward historical anthropology and microhistory nor the strengthening of the traditional positivist approach by means of the historical method's “machinization” helped to address the challenges of *Metahistory*.

One of the very first Ukrainian surveys of American poststructuralist histories warned that these encouraged scholars to take a narcissist stance and allow arbitrary analysis.⁷ Later a prominent Ukrainian conservative historian, Yaroslav Dashkevych, denounced White's “extreme relativism” and warned against the dangers of this approach for “national history, in particular those nations that in the nineteenth century were defined as nonhistorical.”⁸ Interestingly, the Ukrainian translation of *Metahistory* has never been published, and it is hard to find enthusiasts of White's model in Ukrainian-language historiography, unlike, for instance, the Polish historical profession.⁹ Why?

It seems that the majority of historians are not particularly interested in the epistemological problems posed to “empiricists” by “philosophical” analyses of historiography, such as White's. In particular, the question of choosing the

³ Peter Novick. *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge, 1988. P. 603.

⁴ One of the most important texts was Serhii Bilokin'. *Chy maiemo my istorychnu nauku?* // *Literaturna Ukraïna*. 1991. January 10.

⁵ A. Ya. Gurevich. *O krizise sovremennoi istoricheskoi nauki* // *Voprosy istorii*. 1991. No. 2–3. Pp. 21–35.

⁶ I. D. Koval'chenko. *Kolichestvennye metody v istoricheskikh issledovaniakh*. Moscow, 1984.

⁷ S. I. Zhuk. *Zakhidna istoriografii ta epistemolohichni problemy istorychnoi nauky* // *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*. 1994. No. 1. P. 51.

⁸ Yaroslav Dashkevych. *Postmodernizm ta ukraïns'ka istorychna nauka* // *Ukraïnski problemy*. 1999. No. 1–2. P. 116.

⁹ See Ewa Domańska. *Historia egzystencjalna. Krytyczne studium narratywizmu i humanistyki zaangażowanej*. Warsaw, 2012. Pp. 25–50.

language for modeling the past is not perceived as methodologically important. The Marxist-Leninist legacy probably does not have much to do with it. The advice of the Canadian historian Orest Subtelny in the early 1990s to his Ukrainian colleagues – that they not abandon Marxism completely because its cognitive potential has not been exhausted – was rather naive. Subtelny implied that Ukrainian Soviet historians deeply interiorized the Marxist approach and reminded that: “As the work of Eric Hobsbawm and ... that of Roman Rozdolsky, demonstrates, it is possible to be a good historian *and* a Marxist.”¹⁰ This could be true, but serving a regime that claimed to be Marxist-Leninist is not the same as being a Marxist. In the late Soviet Union Marxism was more a rhetoric, a collection of quotations that illustrated whatever thesis the authorities needed, a rhetoric more than a method. This is why nobody took Subtelny’s advice particularly close to heart.

We would like to suggest that Ukrainian historiography en masse (as produced by thousands of university lecturers, researchers at Academy of Sciences institutes, and independent scholars), since the second half of the nineteenth century and up to the present, has followed several main paradigms. Often overlapping, they have survived throughout all political regimes. The first such paradigm is empiricism as characterized by the cult of “fact” and “historical truth.” The second is an understanding of the historical profession as a service to the nation/people. Not surprisingly, thus broadly defined, the key tropes of these main paradigms have survived for many decades without significant change.

We understand “tropes” as mechanisms for capturing and communicating meaning in a most concentrated way, which inevitably involves elements of symbolic language. Such tropes produce and sustain a logically closed, self-referential paradigm. Inside this paradigm, the language of ideology and politics directly converts into the language of scholarship, which is perceived as quite convincing by the community of likeminded “ours.” In other words, we are talking about common symbolic resources allowing the incorporation of certain local subjects, themes, and personalities in the general historical scheme. These tropes set common parameters for understanding the course of history and the selection and interpretation of historical sources in a way that corresponds to the basic scheme.

By presenting and analyzing some of those tropes we want to reflect on their intellectual genealogy as well as to show some alternatives and

deviations. We also want to draw attention to some overlooked or forgotten historical texts that deserve more attention today. Our essay does not aspire to cover all the possible topics or to present a comprehensive bibliography. We see this text, based on our research and teaching experience in different fields of Ukrainian history, as an exercise in self-reflection that invites further investigations and discussions.

What is Ukrainian history?

Mykhailo Hrushevsky’s programmatic article announcing the deconstruction of the traditional scheme of interpreting Russian history appeared in Ukrainian in 1904 in a multilanguage collected volume published by the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences.¹¹ At the time, Hrushevsky was a professor of East European history (“with Ruthenian the language of instruction”) at Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv University in the Habsburg Empire. In this article he called for separate treatment of the three East Slavic nationalities’ histories as individual histories of different peoples (*narody*) and rejected the traditional, state-focused approach. Hrushevsky postulated the continuity (*tiahlist’*) of Ukrainian history as the history of Ukrainian people and identified a series of “national revivals” during its course. His call to clearly distinguish between the Russian state, the territory of Russia, and the Great Russian people brought Hrushevsky to a bold conclusion about the beginnings of Ukrainian history:

The Kyiv period passed not into the Vladimir-Moscow period, but into the Halych-Volhynian period of the thirteenth century, then into the Lithuanian-Polish period of the fourteenth–sixteenth centuries. The Vladimir-Moscow state was neither heir nor progenitor of the state of Kyiv, it grew on its own root, and its relation to Kyiv can rather be compared with the relation of the Roman state to its Gaul provinces, rather than the continuity of the two periods in the political and cultural life of France.¹²

As a number of scholars have noted, Hrushevsky’s scheme had some unnoticed predecessors in the 1890s.¹³ Still, the modern scheme of Ukrainian

¹¹ M. Hrushevsky. Zvychnaia schema “russkoi” istorii i sprava ratsional’noho ukladu istorii Skhidniogo Slov’ianstva // V. I. Lamanskii (Ed.). Stat’i po slavianovedeniiu. St. Petersburg, 1904. Vol. 1. Pp. 293–304.

¹² Ibid. P. 299.

¹³ See D. I. Bahalii. Akademik M. S. Hrushevsky i ioho mistse v ukrains’kii istoriografii (Istorychno-krytychni narys) // Chervonyi Shliakh. 1927. No. 1. P. 172; V. M. Zaruba.

¹⁰ Orest Subtelny. The Current State of Ukrainian Historiography // Journal of Ukrainian Studies. 1993. Vol. 18. No. 1–2. P. 42.

history was duly associated with Hrushevsky's name, particularly after the publication of his fundamental *History of Ukraine-Rus'* (the first volume was published in 1898 in Lviv).¹⁴ Hrushevsky's main focus was on the history of the people (*narod*), even though he never clearly defined this category. In the inaugural speech at Lviv University in 1894 Hrushevsky confidently stated that popular masses "should be the starting point and the only true hero of our history," and that these masses were "hardly ever" not opposed to the ruling government.¹⁵

In this belief Hrushevsky followed the Ukrainian populist (*narodnytska*) and socialist tradition of the nineteenth century he was raised in. And it was exactly his focus on the people's masses that provoked disagreement among the historians who became known as the statist school. *Ukrainian History* (1919) by Stepan Tomashivsky tended to look at Ukraine more as geographical than ethnographical entity and defined the medieval Principality of Halych and Volhynia "the first nationally Ukrainian state."¹⁶ Viacheslav Lypynsky's beautifully written works on Khmelnytsky's Cossack Uprising of 1648 presented Khmelnytsky as a "conscious builder of the Ukrainian state" and a "European ruler" who agreed on the Pereiaslav Treaty with Muscovy on the basis of complete equality.¹⁷ Lypynsky's texts and the notion of a "statist school" proved to be very influential during the interwar time in the context of the failed project of the socialist and federalist Ukrainian People's Republic (with Hrushevsky as one of its leaders).¹⁸ The conservative Lypynsky was a

Antin Syniavs'kyi: zhyttia, naukova ta hromads'ka diial'nist' (1866–1951). Dnipropetrovs'k, 2003. Pp. 113–27; Aleksei Tolochko. "Dlinnaia" istoriia Ukrainy // A. Tolochko. *Kievskaiia Rus' i Malorossiiia*. Kyiv, 2012. P. 34.

¹⁴ Mykhailo Hrushevsky. *History of Ukraine-Rus'*. Vol. 1 / Ed. by Andrzej Poppe and Frank Sysyn. Transl. by Marta Skorupsky. Edmonton–Toronto, 1997.

¹⁵ Mykhailo Hrushevsky. *Vstupnyi vyklad z davnioi istorii Rusy, vyholoshenyi u Lvivs'kim universyteti 30 veresnia 1894 r.* // *Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka*. Vol. 4. Lviv, 1894. P. 149.

¹⁶ Stefan Tomashivsky. *Ukraïns'ka istoriia*. Vol. 1. Starynni i seredni viki. Lviv, 1919.

¹⁷ Waclaw Lipiński. *Dwie chwile z dziejów porewolucyjnej Ukrainy* // W. Lipiński (Ed.). *Z dziejów Ukrainy. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Włodzimierza Antonowicza, Paulina Święcickiego i Tadeusza Ryłskiego*. Kraków, 1912. Pp. 514–617; Viacheslav Lypynsky. *Ukraïna na perelomi. 1657–1659. Zamitky do istorii ukraïns'koho derzhavnoho budivnytstva v XVII-m stolittii*. Vienna, 1920.

¹⁸ Ivan Krevets'ky. *Ukraïns'ka istoriografii na perelomi* // *Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka*. Vol. 134–35. Lviv, 1924. Pp. 161–84. Cf. Viacheslav Zaïkyn. *Viacheslav Lypyns'ky iak istoryk* // *Dzvony*. 1932. No. 6. Pp. 473–90 and his important conclusion about the primacy of Christian ethics for Lypynsky and in this respect his (unconscious) closedness to the Russian conservative Konstantin Leontiev.

direct political opponent of the socialist Hrushevsky, but in terms of history writing he rather adhered to Hrushevsky's scheme, just putting more stress on the "statist tradition." More importantly, both "populist" and "statist" Ukrainian historians remained loyal to the nationalistic worldview with its essentialization of the "nation" as an eternal, self-conscious collective entity, identical to itself at all stages of historical development.

The main success of "statist" historians was a rehabilitation of the very idea of the national state and the downplay of the populist image of Ukrainians as a nation incapable of state life. No wonder that very soon any criticism of the prevailing tendency to seek in history "anything that could be adjusted to the ideal of a modern national state" required quite some guts. Such an observation was made in Mykhailo Antonovych's *History of Ukraine* published in 1941 in Prague. Antonovych found the rhetoric of "national oppression" inadequate when referring to a monarchy ruling over a society constituted by estates of the crown. He also objected to the vilification of the Union of Lublin 1569 and proposed "to trace the evolution of Ukraine, abstracting from the nation-state standards of the present, but considering all past forms of life as a consequence of political ideas and aspirations of that time."¹⁹ His voice was barely heard.

Another critical response to Hrushevsky's historical scheme was also mostly ignored by Ukrainian historians – namely, Dmytro Bahalii's questioning of the thesis of Ukraine as the sole heir to the old Rus'. Bahalii was one of the leading Soviet Ukrainian historians who publicly accepted Hrushevsky's scheme in general, while simultaneously trying to produce a Marxist history of Ukraine.²⁰ Already in the late 1920s he proposed recognizing the rights of the Russians to the Kyivan period as a starting point of their history, though "to a much lesser extent than for the primary history of Ukraine."²¹

One of Hrushevsky's students, Myron Korduba went even further. In his 1930 article he identified the moment "uniting Ukrainians into a separate ethnic group" in the second half of the fourteenth century as coinciding with the separation of the northwestern territories of Rus' from the Southwestern Rus' lands, which merged into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.²² Instead of

¹⁹ Mykhailo Antonovych. *Istoriia Ukraïny*. Vol. 1. Kniazha doba. Prague, 1941. P. 9.

²⁰ D. I. Bahalii. *Narys istorii Ukraïny na sotsial'no-ekonomichnomu grunti*. Vol. 1. Kharkiv, 1928.

²¹ Bahalii. *Akademik M. S. Hrushevsky i ioho mistse*. P. 196.

²² Myron Korduba. *Naivazhnishyi moment v istorii Ukraïny* // *Literaturno-naukovyi visnyk*. 1930. No. 6. P. 540.

academic discussion, Korduba's proposition triggered a series of personal accusations that did not keep him from rigorously elaborating his argument in a longer and more detailed article that has been all but completely ignored to this day.²³ One can see how Korduba's main hypothesis closely resonates with the thesis formulated thirty years later by the Soviet Ukrainian historian Kost' Huslysty: "The appearance of the Ukrainian nationality as a separate ethnic community took place in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, the time of the Lithuanian and Russian states' formation."²⁴ An important difference between the two historians is that Korduba recognized Kyivan Rus' as a common heritage of the three East Slavic nations, while Huslysty had to follow the Soviet orthodoxy postulating the existence of one old Rus' nationality.

The effect of the ideological pressure on Huslysty's historical model seems obvious: even if he wanted to, he could not reproduce Hrushevsky's scheme of Ukrainian history completely. Therefore, it is all the more significant to discover the persistence of basic elements of Hrushevsky's scheme in Soviet history writing after Hrushevsky himself and his historical school were proclaimed "bourgeois nationalists." Attempts to introduce Marxist periodization into Ukrainian history independently of Russian history, such as Matvii Yavorsky's attempt, were forcefully stopped in the late 1920s. Yavorsky identified "a period of subsistence economy, a merchant-serfdom period, a period of industrial capitalism, and a period of social revolution."²⁵ He was accused of "having nothing in common with Marxism and fully following Hrushevsky's scheme" and he was persecuted.²⁶ Nevertheless, the post-Yavorsky Soviet Ukrainian, formally Marxist historiography continued to follow not just Hrushevsky's scheme but also the rhetoric of Ukrainian populist historiography.

Officially rejecting Hrushevsky, Soviet Ukrainian historians continued to write about the "formation of Ukrainian national ethnic territory" and the "awakening of national life in the Dnipro Ukraine."²⁷ The "Thesis on the 300th Anniversary of Ukraine's Reunification with Russia" written in 1954 by Kyivan historians and approved by the Central Committee of the

Communist Party of the Soviet Union included phrases such as the "treacherous policy of the Ukrainian feudal lords," "the imposition of Catholicism," "the constant bandit raids of the Turks and Crimean khans," and the "yoke of landlord Poland."²⁸ The "reunification" (the term itself was actually introduced in the nineteenth century by the Ukrainian populist writer Panteleimon Kulish, who was unwelcome in the Soviet Ukrainian canon) was described as the "natural outcome of the entire previous history of Ukraine." The rhetorical novelty of this document was limited to praising Russia's role in Ukrainian history, its "beneficial influence" and "inspiring example."²⁹

The basic structure of historical narrative in Soviet Ukraine, even after the repressions of the 1930s and 1972, absorbed the crucial elements of Hrushevsky's scheme. This narrative was defined by a perception of the territory of Soviet Ukraine as a historical national territory and Ukrainians as an essentialized national group and the main historical actor. Populist terms such as "popular masses" were quite easily replaced with "working classes," and "national idea" and its "revivals" were substituted with the "eternal struggle for social liberation" and, even more important, "reunification with Russia."

In other words, the Soviet Ukrainian narrative largely remained a national history wrapped in Marxist-Leninist rhetoric. Any attempts to question the superficial Marxism of this narrative and reintroduce a hard-core class struggle approach were severely punished. This happened to Mykhailo Braichevsky, whose essay "Incorporation or Reunification?" was submitted for publication in a leading historical Kyiv-based journal in 1966 but was finally published abroad in 1972. In this polemical text Braichevsky convincingly deconstructed the approach to the Khmelnytsky Uprising and the Pereiaslav Treaty of 1654 with Muscovy by the authors of the 1954 "Thesis." He found them "assessing any event and figure in Ukrainian history not according to their class essence, but based on their attitude to Russia" and "moving the Russian people and its history beyond the rules of historical materialism."³⁰ In his essay Braichevsky called for problematizing the very notions of the "Russian people" and "Ukrainian people," and observed that in many Soviet publications Marxist analysis was actually replaced

²³ Miron Korduba. *Die Entstehung der ukrainischen Nation* // M. Korduba (Ed.). *Contributions à l'histoire de l'Ukraine au VII-e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques*, Varsovie Août 1933. Lviv, 1933. Pp. 19–68.

²⁴ K. H. Huslysty. *Do pytannia pro utvorennia ukrains'koï natsii*. Kyiv, 1967. P. 12.

²⁵ Matvii Yavorsky. *Narys istorii Ukraïny*. Part 1. Kyiv, 1923. Pp. 21–22.

²⁶ T. Skubitskii. *Klassovaia bor'ba v ukrainskoi istoricheskoi literature* // *Istoriik-markсист*. 1930. No. 17. P. 39.

²⁷ Huslysty. *Do pytannia pro utvorennia ukrains'koï natsii*. Pp. 22, 43.

²⁸ *Tezisy o 300-letii vossoedineniia Ukrainy s Rossiei (1654–1954)* // *Pravda*. 1954. January 12. No. 12. Pp. 3–4.

²⁹ For more on "Tezisy," see Serhy Yekelchuk. *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination*. Toronto, 2014.

³⁰ M. Yu. Braichevsky. *Pryiednannia chy vozziednannia? (Krytychni uvahy z pryvodu odniieï konceptsii)*. Toronto, 1972. Pp. 13, 18.

with nationalistic rhetoric.³¹ But he was the one accused of nationalism. Braichevsky lost his job at the Academy of Sciences and was criticized by fellow Ukrainian historians for “following in the footsteps of Hrushevsky.”³²

In the late 1980s–early 1990s, when Hrushevsky’s works were republished in Ukraine along with a number of other forbidden texts, the majority of Ukrainian historians easily switched their ideological colors. They started producing a historical narrative characterized by a mixture of populist and Soviet historiography with some elements of the statist school, a mixture based on several “mythical formulas” responsible for constructing a coherent Ukrainian national myth.³³

The Ukrainian Narod and its democratic nature

Mykola Kostomarov’s essay “Two Russian Nationalities,” published in 1861, was probably the most influential text of Ukrainian populism. It argued that Southern Rus’ (Ukraine), with its prevailing personal freedoms (in contrast to Northern Rus’, with its traditions of communal life and political autocracy), had historically proved its “incapacity for state life.”³⁴ Kostomarov simultaneously praised the “eternal democratism” of the Ukrainians and used it as an argument necessitating Russian-Ukrainian state unity. The first (democratic) part of this claim has been repeated so often as to become a kind of common knowledge. Ukrainian writers, historians, and political activists (all three roles often embodied by the same person) eagerly and proudly spoke about their “plebeian nation” (*muzhys’ka natsia, narod bez paniv*) and its future “revival.”³⁵

Populism still shapes the structure, ideology, and mode of argumentation of Ukrainian historical texts. Following Hayden White’s approach, we can characterize the literary trope of Ukrainian post-Soviet historiography as epic, in which the properties of the cultural hero are ascribed to the entire mythologized “People” (capitalized to convey this meaning). The inviolability of the cult of nationality in Ukrainian historical scholarship is

³¹ Ibid. Pp. 29, 16–17.

³² O. S. Rubliov. Vyvilniaiuchys’ iz mahnyetchnoho polia impershyny: obhovorennia v Instytutu istorii AN URSSR pratsi M. Braichevs’koho “Pryiednannia chy vozziednannia?” [4 lypnia 1974 r.] // Ukraïns’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal. 2016. No. 5. Pp. 66, 69.

³³ Natalia Yakovenko. Kil’ka sposterezhen’ nad modyfikatsiiamy ukraïns’koho natsional’noho mifu v istoriohrafii // Dukh i Litera. 1998. No. 3–4. Pp. 113–24.

³⁴ N. I. Kostomarov. Dve russkie narodnosti // Osnova. 1861. No. 3. Pp. 33–80.

³⁵ This discourse is analyzed in detail in Tetiana Portnova. Liubyty i nacvaty. Selianstvo v uiaavlenniakh ukraïns’koï intelihentsii druhoï polovyny XIX st. Dnipropetrovsk, 2016.

related to its genesis and original mission – to provide academic support for “national revival,” leading to the construction of a national state within the “ethnographic boundaries.” The historians who upheld epic language in the name of the People inherited from populist and Soviet historiography a presumption of the people’s historical and moral righteousness at all stages of history, in all conflicts with external authority – the princes, landlords and nobility, the Church, or a foreign power.

Thus, the People (*Narod*) as a trope becomes a transhistorical subject, moving freely and without any significant internal transformations across time and space, always remaining true to its inner self. Like a semidivine epic hero, *Narod* as a subject of history can go into decline and be reborn again, suffer from oppression and fight against oppressors. As in other national cultures, the People is mostly identified with the peasants: not some land tillers of the past but the mythologized ahistorical trope of the peasant. This myth eventually consumed historiographical practice. The presence of the People trope in the text is a sure indicator of an ideologically motivated historian. Knowing how the national history ends (at least, to the present), such a historian identifies with the People, fusing his role as a creator of the historical narrative with the People’s function as the demiurge of the historical process. If history is made by the People, then logically narrating its course means revealing the People’s master plan. Historians double their collective protagonist and, taking advantage of modern knowledge about the past, retrospectively streamline the course of historical events. The autonomous logic of narrative dictates a familiar story, so the modern author just needs to provide the right examples to illustrate the predetermined conclusion.

The cult of *Narod* promotes narrowly schematic and highly selective writing. The ideal populist scheme excludes as irrelevant many broader historical phenomena – events, cultural products, ideas, territories, and people – that are directly unrelated to the Ukrainian political movement. Serhii Plokyh has criticized this selectivity and the limitations of nationalist teleology as a way of modeling the Ukrainian past:

One would like to believe that the future of Ukraine lies in Europe, but its past should stay where it belongs, in the multiplicity of worlds created by civilizational and imperial boundaries throughout the history of the territory known today as Ukraine. There is little doubt that Ukrainian history can only benefit from being imagined outside the limits imposed on historical thinking by the national paradigm.³⁶

³⁶ Serhii Plokyh. Between History and Nation: Paul Robert Magocsi and the Rewriting of Ukrainian History // Nationalities Papers. January 2011. Vol. 39. No. 1. P. 122.

A number of other Ukrainian scholars share this critical view of populist schemes and approaches as mythological. Several historians of the peasantry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – a topic that should epitomize the *Narod* during the decisive period of national awakening – have written their studies in a deliberately “nonpopulist” key.³⁷ But on the whole, most Ukrainian historians have proved themselves passive and uncritical when it comes to this aspect of the national myth. Compassion and sympathy for the People continue to turn historians into populists. This cult is inclusive and pervasive, capable of drawing into its orbit and reshaping any event, fact, phenomenon, person, or entire social institution.

The myth of the natural democratism of Ukrainians as a collective subject of history suggests that anyone and anything belonging to this collective subject shares its fundamental traits, including democratism. A most vivid embodiment of this myth’s projection on reality is the representation of the Zaporozhian Cossacks over the past two hundred years. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ukrainian federalist and socialist Mykhailo Drahomanov proposed a “simple and easy-to-understand” way of telling Ukrainian history to the masses. It was centered around the story of Zaporozhian Cossacks, “free people who owned their own land and were governed by communes (*hromady*)”; forced by their Polish opponents to seek help from the Moscow tsars, they did so “not as slaves, but as allies, who govern themselves at home according to their own will and customs.”³⁸ Drahomanov’s narrative of past events was more concerned with the future, explicitly advancing the political program of “returning” to the golden age of presumed Cossack equality and self-governance. As if responding to Drahomanov from the future, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Petro Shelest, in his 1970 book *Our Soviet Ukraine*, also identified Zaporozhian Cossacks with the entire Ukrainian people, described them as self-governed *hromady*, and praised their equality.³⁹ True, Shelest’s book was severely criticized and even banned for “an idealized, not-class-based portrayal of the Zaporozhian Cossacks” and a failure to reveal the “beneficial influence of Russian culture” on the historical development of Ukraine, and

³⁷ See two books on the history of Ukrainian peasants in the Russian and Habsburg Empires published in 2007: Oleksandr Mykhailiuk. *Selianstvo Ukraïny v pershi desiatylittia XX st.: Sotsiokul’turni protsesy*. Dnipropetrovsk, 2007; and Andriy Zayarnyuk. *Idiomy emansypatsii: “Vyzvol’ni” proiekty i halyts’ke selo u seredyni XIX st.* Kyiv, 2007.

³⁸ M. P. Dragomanov. *Velukorusskii internatsional i pol’sko-ukraïnskii vopros*. Kazan, 1906. Pp. 60–61.

³⁹ P. Iu. Shelest. *Ukraïno nasha Radians’ka*. Kyiv, 1970. Pp. 19–21.

contributed to his removal from office in 1972.⁴⁰ Still, the continuity of interpretations for almost one hundred years begs for explanations, particularly given that Drahomanov was purged from the Soviet Ukrainian historical canon as a “bourgeois thinker.”

During the Soviet period, it was virtually impossible to sustain the Cossack myth by directly quoting Ukrainian authors such as Drahomanov. Luckily, the established narrative of the Zaporozhian Cossacks as an embodiment of eternal Ukrainian democracy could be framed by other, more appropriate references to Marxists, including Karl Marx himself, who once spoke of the “Christian Cossack republic.”⁴¹ As if fulfilling Drahomanov’s wishful thinking, in the new Marxist interpretation, Zaporozhian “democrats” were rendered historical predecessors to Social Democrats – that is, Bolsheviks – fighters for the freedom, equality, and enlightenment of people in the twentieth century. With a decorative change of rhetorical devices it became possible to legitimize the interest of Ukrainian Soviet historians in the Cossack topic simply by citing Marx’s formula: “The Ukrainian people’s armed forces acquired clear organizational forms after the establishment of Zaporozhian Sich, which in the second half of the sixteenth century developed into the Cossack Republic – a peculiar expression of Ukrainian statehood, although the latter did not cover the entire territory of Ukraine.”⁴² This formula was eagerly embraced by Soviet Ukrainian historians, who developed on the basis of Marx’s occasional comment a whole explanatory model of Ukraine’s early modern history that persisted until the 1990s and remains influential today: “At a time when almost all countries of Europe were ruled by monarchs, the Cossacks had a republican form of government.”⁴³

The narrative of democratic Cossackdom has framed not only the concept of a Cossack democratic polity but also a theory of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine as uniquely democratic (*sobornopravne*). The thesis of the profound difference between Ukrainian Christianity and Russian Christianity is a key component in the populist conceptualization of Ukraine as the antipode of the autocratic Russian Empire. The myth of a special, nonrou-

⁴⁰ For details, see Lowell Tillett. *Ukrainian Nationalism and the Fall of Shelest* // *Slavic Review*. Winter 1975. Vol. 34. No. 4. Pp. 752–68; Yaroslav Bilinsky. *Mykola Skrypnyk, and Petro Shelest: An Essay on the Persistence and Limits of Ukrainian National Communism* // J. R. Azrael (Ed.). *Soviet Nationality Politics and Practices*. New York, 1977. Pp. 105–43.

⁴¹ Vitalii Sarbei. *Storinky istorii Ukraïns’koho kozatstva v tvorchii spadshchyni Marksa* // *Ukraïns’ke kozatstvo: vytoky, evoliutsiia, spadshchyna*. 1993. No. 2. Pp. 68–77.

⁴² O. M. Apanovych. *Zbroini syly Ukraïny pershoi polovyny XVIII st.* Kyiv, 1969. P. 9.

⁴³ Yu. A. Mytsyk, S. M. Plokhly, I. S. Storozhenko. *Yak kozaky voiuvaly*. Dnipropetrovsk, 1990. P. 72.

tine (*ne-kazionnoe*) Ukrainian Orthodoxy was developed by Drahomanov and another major populist author, Borys Hrinchenko.⁴⁴ In his influential article “Three National Types,” the leading populist historian Volodymyr Antonovych, a professor at St. Vladimir University in Kyiv and Hrushevsky’s teacher, contrasted the “truthfulness, social equality, warmth, and sincerity” of Ukrainians’ religious feelings with the “blind adherence to rites,” supposedly characteristic of Russians.⁴⁵

Viacheslav Zaikyn, a Ukrainian émigré historian in Poland, tried to deconstruct this claim already in the early 1930s. He pointed to its populist roots, noting how the clichéd “national traits” of Russians and Ukrainians were later “projected onto church history” by authors motivated by “a strange hatred of Russia that was, in any case, unacceptable in academic work.”⁴⁶ He argued that the Orthodox church in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ukraine was characterized not so much by *sobornopravnist’* as by feudal patronage: the parish priest was appointed (often through a bribe) by a local landlord or prince, rather than the peasants. Going against the popular historical narrative, Zaikyn’s critical reassessment of one of its elements did not have success with Ukrainian historians.

The myth of a uniquely Ukrainian tradition of electing parish priests by laymen naturally leads to a conclusion that the abolition of this practice in the eighteenth century was part and parcel of the Russian Empire’s anti-Ukrainian policy aimed at suppressing the Ukrainian free spirit. It should be noted that Orthodox priests were often elected from the peasant milieu in pre-Mongol Rus’, but this early medieval tradition had little to do with the modern understanding of democratic institutions and was by no means limited to the would-be Ukrainian lands.⁴⁷ The tradition of *sobornopravie* could be found in all Orthodox Christian communities, including in North-eastern Rus’. It was a natural consequence of the premodern peasant community’s structure, fairly immune to the regulations of the nascent state.

⁴⁴ Borys Hrinchenko. *Yak zhyv Ukraïns’kyi narod* (Korotka istoriia Ukraïny). Chernivtsi, 1910. P. 35.

⁴⁵ Volodymyr Antonovych. *Try national’ni typy narodni // V. Antonovych. Moia spovid’*. Vybrani istorychni ta publitsystychni tvory. Kyiv, 1995. P. 97.

⁴⁶ V. Zaikin. *Uchastie svetskogo elementa v tserkovnom upravlenii: Vybornoie nachalo i “sobornost’” v Kievskoi mitropolii v XVI i XVII vv.* Warsaw, 1930. For an analysis of Zaikyn’s biography and historical views, see Andrii Portnov. *Istoriï istorykiv. Oblychchia i obrazy Ukraïns’koï istoriohrafii XX stolittia*. Kyiv, 2011. Pp. 107–42.

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of such interpretations, see Sergei [Serhii] Savchenko. *Osobennoe ukrainskoe pravoslavie: k probleme istoriograficheskogo mifotvorchestva. Part 2 // <https://bit.ly/3knQdCA>* (all web resources last accessed on February 2, 2021).

Emperor Paul I abolished the election of the clergy as part of his policies of institutional and educational modernization. These policies included the enhanced regulation and specialization of all social institutions, including the legal separation of clergy from laymen, and professionalization of the church service. From the early eighteenth century, the imperial government assigned a number of nonpastoral functions to priests such as serving as notaries, clerks, and announcers of imperial decrees for the illiterate population. Performing these administrative functions, the Russian Orthodox Church during the synodal period essentially became an element of the state apparatus, prompting modern historians to speak of the Russian Empire as a “confessional state.”⁴⁸ Therefore, Paul I attempted to coordinate the status of priests with that of regular public servants. At least in their capacity of government administrators, the priests were obliged to receive special training and educate their children as part of their service duty.⁴⁹

Be it the cult of Cossackdom or the idealization of Ukrainian domestic Orthodox Christianity, the populist narrative is invariably hostile to empire, and interprets the conflict of modern Russian imperial institutions with Ukrainian premodern traditions as “anti-people” and anti-Ukrainian policy. This interpretation dominates modern Ukrainian historiography, with the important exception of several recent attempts to consciously break with it, primarily by scholars studying the eighteenth century. Dealing with the history of education, childhood and family, or the integration of Ukrainian regions into the Russian Empire, these scholars abandon the narrative of “imperial enslavement” in favor of a more nuanced and contextualized, and hence more analytical and less poetic narrative of multifaceted Enlightened Absolutism and its local variations and unintended consequences across the Russian Empire.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Curiously, the historiographic discussion of whether Russian Empire could be characterized as a confessional state was started with the study of the role of Islam, rather than the “state religion” of Orthodox Christianity: Robert Crews. *Empire and the Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia // American Historical Review*. 2003. Vol. 108. No. 1. Pp. 50–83.

⁴⁹ B. N. Mironov. *Sotsial’naia istoriia Rosii perioda imperii (XVIII–nachalo XX vv.)*. Vol. 1. St. Petersburg, 2000. P. 364.

⁵⁰ See Volodymyr Maslychuk. *Zdobutky ta iluzii: Osvitni initsiatyvy na Livoberezhnii ta Slobids’kii Ukraïni druhoï polovyny XVIII – pochatku XIX st.* Kharkiv, 2018; Ihor Serdiuk. *Malen’kyi doroslyi: Dytyna i dytynstvo v Het’manschyni XVIII st.* Kyiv, 2018; Volodymyr Sklokin. *Rosiis’ka imperiia i Slobids’ka Ukraïna u druhoï polovyni XVIII st.: Prosvichenyi absoliutyzm, impers’ka intehratsiia, lokal’ne suspil’stvo*. Lviv, 2019; Vadym Adadurov, Volodymyr Sklokin (Eds.). *Impers’ki identychnosti v Ukraïns’kii istorii XVIII–pershoï polovyny XIX st.* Lviv, 2020.

Revolutions: always on the “people’s side”

The cult of the People is directly linked to the cult of the Revolution, which can be considered one of the key historiographic tropes, often used as a metaphor for European culture or modernity. Once embraced by the mid-nineteenth century as a synonym for rapid progress,⁵¹ revolution became an integral part of the teleological vision of history as the society’s advancement from one stage to another on an objectively predetermined path toward the future. In this logic, a revolution gives meaning to the preceding historical period, and itself acquires a particular meaning when viewed through the prism of subsequent developments. Revolutions thus help to frame a manifold, multidirectional historical process as a coherent monological narrative. This narrative informs historians’ thinking and predetermines both the formulation and elucidation of research problems. As the dean of Ukrainian historians, Hrushevsky already recognized that rebellions and rebels were important “manifestations of the People’s activity” and thus “a favorite topic” of modern Ukrainian historiography.⁵² In the wake of the 1917 upheaval, Hrushevsky frequently used the term “revolution” in his works.⁵³ Generations of Soviet Ukrainian historians had to follow a rigid and highly selective narrative of revolutions, necessarily taking “the People’s” side in depicting them. After Ukraine’s independence in 1991, the understanding of revolutions and the People driving them has radically changed, but not historians’ positionality as identifying with the people. This is especially true when it comes to the events of 1917–1921. In Serhy Yekelchuk’s words, Ukrainian historians tend to “celebrate the revolution as their people’s drive to overthrow Russian colonial domination, re-establish their statehood, and thus ‘return’ to the road to modernity.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ The popular consensus on this equation was reflected in Victor Hugo’s bestseller *Les misérables* (1862). Cf.: “The brutalities of progress are called revolutions. When they are over we realize this: that the human race has been roughly handled, but that it has advanced.” “If you wish to understand what revolution is, call it progress; and if you wish to understand what progress is, call it to-morrow.” Victor Hugo. *Les misérables*. London, 1862. Vol. 1. Pp. 38, 292.

⁵² M. Hrushevsky. *Ukraïns’ka partiia sotsialistiv-revolutsioneriv ta її zavdannia: Zamitky z pryvodu debat na konferentsiakh zakordonnykh chleniv partii // Boritiesia – poborete!* 1920. No. 1. P. 15.

⁵³ Serhii Plokhyy. *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History*. Toronto, 2005. P. 289.

⁵⁴ Serhy Yekelchuk. *The Revolution at Eighty: Reconstructing Past Identities after the “Linguistic Turn” // Journal of Ukrainian Studies*. 1999. Vol. 24. No. 1. Pp. 69–84.

In his lectures on the origins of the French Revolution, Roger Chartier famously asked whether or not the established narrative confuses the cause and the effect when it claims that the Enlightenment had begotten the Revolution: perhaps the Revolution invented a particular vision of the Enlightenment in order to legitimize itself?⁵⁵ It seems productive to raise the same question regarding the Revolution (or rather Revolutions) of 1917: to what extent has the interpretation of the prerevolutionary period been predetermined by the revolutionary master narrative in an attempt to justify the specific course of events identified as revolutionary? The imperial order was depicted in negative categories such as “darkness,” “crisis,” “degradation,” “suffering,” “injustice,” “exploitation,” and “ignorance” that might characterize the revolutionary worldview as much as the Old Regime. These characteristics are not necessarily inaccurate, it is just that historians of the imperial period have to take into account the existence of an influential and self-sufficient narrative that arranges these characteristics into an implicit explanatory model. Instead of consciously positioning their own scholarly inquiry vis-à-vis that preexisting narrative, most historians uncritically embrace it, along with the cult of revolution as the ultimate expression of the people’s will. While during the Soviet period “the people” were mainly understood as a socioeconomic designation of the toiling classes, now they usually mean Ukrainians as a nationality.

It is the persistence of the established narrative of revolution that explains why, after all conceptual and political transformations, many historians still share the political apocalypticism of the early twentieth century. That narrative is permeated with the vocabulary and symbolism produced by the populists, Marxists, and anarchists of the period, who developed a peculiar textual representation of their sociopolitical environment. Uncritically following the narrative of revolution, modern historians unwittingly reproduce its original language, which makes some of their studies read as if penned by a revolutionary journalist a century ago. Only now the solemn rhetoric of the proletarian revolution is being applied to the Ukrainian people’s awakening and revival. Studying the complex of revolutionary belles lettres and journalism, Marina Mogilner pointed to “the dependence of the historian on models created by the characters of his or her research” as “one of the main cognitive problems of history writing.”⁵⁶ In modern Ukrainian historiogra-

⁵⁵ Roger Chartier. *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*. Durham, 1991. P. 5.

⁵⁶ Marina Mogilner. *Mifologiiia “podpol’nego cheloveka”: radikal’nyi mikrokozmos v Rossii nachala XX v. kak predmet semioticheskogo analiza*. Moscow, 1999. P. 6.

phy, too, the language of early twentieth-century socialist journalism, which ideologically prepared the Revolution of 1917, has been incorporated into the language of scholarly analysis. Decoupled from its original socialist and populist semantics, this language is now applied, however, to all figures of the Ukrainian national movement, including the conservative pro-German government of Hetman Pavlo Skoropads'ky.⁵⁷

Perhaps the first historian to draw attention to the anachronistic and uncritical language of analysis of traditional Ukrainian historiography was Lev Bilas, who was active in German-language countries and the United States. In 1961, he published an article deconstructing the language of the Ukrainian émigré historian Oleksander Ohloblyn's texts. Even today, this article is notable for its boldness of analysis, both political – targeting the patriotic clichés of the authoritative diaspora scholar – and conceptual.⁵⁸ Bilas identified the linguistic mechanism of Ohloblyn's historical narrative, consisting of overlapping poetic, mythological, and rhetorical levels. According to Bilas, the concepts used by Ohloblyn such as “social struggle” (and its “intensification”), “system of economic exploitation,” “social oppression,” and the like were elements of “social mysticism” produced by nineteenth-century ideology, “which was to cement workers into political movements and parties in order to seize power,” to bring about a revolution as a breakthrough into “an eschatological ‘classless society.’”⁵⁹

This transfer of turn-of-the-century ideology to historical scholarship was accomplished during the immediate postrevolutionary period. The February Revolution of 1917 made the Ukrainian national project a practical possibility by legitimizing any ideas censored or suppressed under the tsarist regime. The Bolsheviks attempted to keep Ukraine under their political control by force of arms, but their indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) policy of the 1920s supported the segment of the Ukrainian national project that was loyal to the Soviet regime. In 1924, the Marxist historian Matvii Yavorsky celebrated this

union of the socialist and national revolutions: “Ukrainian nationalism stood in the way of imperialism; it fought against the big bourgeoisie in Ukraine and broke the shackles of the ‘one indivisible’ [Russia] – in this sense it was revolutionary.”⁶⁰ The Ukrainian project's success in the 1920s was largely prompted by its conceptual and social connection with the Soviet project: the Ukrainian agenda was incorporated into the project of the worker-peasant state with its initial anti-imperialist and internationalist agenda. The leader of early Soviet historiography, Mikhail Pokrovsky, declared that “only the October Revolution revealed what a great revolutionary past the peoples exhausted under the oppression of the ‘Russian’ tsar had, starting with the Great Russians themselves” and added that it was “thanks to the victory of the proletarian revolution that the national revival [of the peoples of the USSR] became possible.”⁶¹

In this scheme, what was previously branded as the subversive “heresy of Ukrainianism” was regarded as part of a progressive revolutionary movement, oppressed by tsarism but eventually prevailing. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who became a member of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv, wrote in 1927, “Now, when the work started by the previous generations ... has finally been accomplished, crystallized and concentrated in new forms of national life and socialist construction ... the centuries-old struggle of the Ukrainian nation for its self-determination has justified itself.”⁶² Hrushevsky instructed Ukrainian historians working in the academy's historical-philological division under his supervision to study the genesis of this centuries-old struggle's triumph. Incidentally, the completion of the Soviet Ukrainian national project, which Hrushevsky celebrated, became possible after the Bolshevik regime crushed the Ukrainian Central Rada, presided over by Hrushevsky himself. The revolutionary narrative, to which Hrushevsky had personally contributed, was more persuasive to him than his personal life experience.

No wonder then that even the most prominent Ukrainian post-Soviet historians have a hard time resisting this powerful Soviet revolutionary narrative. Natalia Yakovenko has shown how modern Ukrainian historians apply the narrative of the 1917 October Revolution to the Kholmynsky Uprising (1648–1657) as a “national revolution.” Their language is peppered with familiar clichés such as “irreconcilable contradictions,” “objective

⁵⁷ See, for example, Pavlo Hai-Nyzhnyk. *Pavlo Skoropads'ky i Vlasnyi Shtab het'mana vsiieï Ukraïny: borot'ba za vladu i derzhavnist'.* Kyiv, 2019.

⁵⁸ Before World War II Oleksander Ohloblyn was one of the most successful Soviet Ukrainian historians, respected for his research on Ukrainian industry in the nineteenth century as well as publications on the Cossack past. In 1922, at the age of twenty-two he was appointed a professor of Ukrainian history at Kyiv University and he actively promoted the Sovietization of higher education. In the 1930s he was criticized for “political mistakes.” In 1941 he stayed in German-occupied Kyiv and became the first head of the city administration. After 1951 he lived in the United States. On Ohloblyn's early career, see Ihor Verba. *Oleksandr Ohloblyn: Zhyttia i pratsia v Ukraïni.* Kyiv, 1999.

⁵⁹ Bilas. *Istoriia iak ideolohiia i iak poeziia.* P. 56.

⁶⁰ Matvii Yavorsky. *Narys istoriï Ukraïny.* Part 2. Kyiv, 1924. P. 234.

⁶¹ M. Pokrovsky. *K istoriï SSSR // Istorik-marksist.* 1930. Vol. 17. Pp. 20, 18.

⁶² M. Hrushevsky. *Perednie slovo // Za sto lit. Materiialy z hromads'koho i literaturnoho zhyttia Ukraïny XIX i pochatkiv XX stolittia.* 1927. Vol. 1. Pp. iii–iv.

socioeconomic and political preconditions,” “ripening” and subsequent “extreme aggravation” of the revolutionary situation, “the broad course of the revolutionary struggle,” and the “triumphant march” of the victorious rebels.⁶³ The Soviet orthodoxy that praised the Khmelnytsky Uprising for bringing about “reunification with Russia” is dismissed in favor of a modern interpretation, which celebrates Khmelnytsky for laying the foundation of a Ukrainian nation-state, but the general historical narrative largely remains the same. The hold of this narrative over modern histories of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 is even stronger.

The only way to counter the classical revolutionary narrative’s inertia is to problematize historians’ own analytical language and approach to the past. For instance, Serhy Yekelchuk has suggested considering the potential of new cultural history to analyze the Ukrainian Revolution’s own symbolic practices, language usage, cultural codes, and vocabularies, instead of using them merely as illustrations of some grand narrative. Thus, the language of the revolution reveals the plurality of its intellectual sources and political contexts. In their administrative practices, various political regimes in 1917–1921 almost simultaneously used antiquated Cossack terminology (*rada*, *hryvnia*, *sotnyk*), Russian imperial categories (*huberniia*, *senat*, *rada ministriv*), and terms of the French Revolution (*dyrektoriia*, *trudovyi konhres*) along with socialist neologisms (*tovarysh*, *komisar*).⁶⁴ The productive approach proposed by Yekelchuk was tried in a number of studies reconstructing composite identities of participants in the Ukrainian Revolution, who combined various loyalties and cultural codes.⁶⁵ A recent study of the various political regimes’ propaganda in 1917–1922 also contributes to the new cultural history of the Ukrainian Revolution.⁶⁶

⁶³ Natalia Yakovenko. V koliorakh proletars’koï revoliutsii // Ukraïns’kyi humanitarnyi ohiad. 2000. Vol. 3. Pp. 58–78.

⁶⁴ Yekelchuk. The Revolution at Eighty. Pp. 69–84.

⁶⁵ See Mark von Hagen. A Socialist Army Officer Confronts War and Nationalist Politics: Konstantin Oberuchev in Revolutionary Kyiv // *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*. 2008–2009. Vol. 33–34. Pp. 171–97; Idem. I Love Russia, and/but I Want Ukraine,” or How a Russian Imperial General Became Hetman of the Ukrainian State, 1917–1918 // Frank E. Sysyn and Serhii Plokhyy (Eds.). *Synopsis: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Zenon E. Kohut*. Edmonton–Toronto, 2005. Pp. 115–48; Idem. Pavlo Khrystiuk’s History and the Politics of Ukrainian Anti-Colonialism // Oksana Yurkova (Ed.). *Ukraine on the Historiographical Map of Interwar Europe*. Kyiv, 2014. Pp. 15–37.

⁶⁶ Stephen Velychenko. *Propaganda in Revolutionary Ukraine: Leaflets, Pamphlets, and Cartoons, 1917–1922*. Toronto, 2019.

To sobornist’ through “national revivals”

A central problem faced by the modern Ukrainian national project when it formed in the nineteenth century was the determination of the territorial boundaries of the Ukrainian nation. Initially, this territory was conceived of as a future Ukrainian autonomy – the idea of national statehood emerged somewhat later. The standard approach to national attribution of a territory was known as an “ethnographic principle,” which should instead be called a linguistic principle: the main ethnographic criterion was the language prevailing among the local peasant population. If the majority of villagers spoke a dialect classified as a variation of Ukrainian, their territory was considered nationally Ukrainian. This approach allowed the Ukrainian-speaking lands divided by the state border between the Russian and Habsburg empires to be conceptualized as parts of the single Ukrainian national territory, and the confessional splits (first of all, between Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Greek Catholics) to be disregarded. The ideal of the unification of all “ethnographically Ukrainian” lands was called *sobornist’*, which became a central category of the Ukrainian national project.

The earliest evidence of mental mapping closely approximating the territory of modern Ukraine was *A Topographic Description of Kharkiv Vicegerency* published in 1788 in Moscow.⁶⁷ The first printed map of ethnographic Ukraine was produced in 1861 in Lviv.⁶⁸ In 1878 in the preface to the Geneva-based journal *Hromada*, Mykhailo Drahomanov outlined the limits of “our peasant Ukraine” (*nashoi muzhytskoi Ukraïny*) and formulated the simplest criterion of ethnoterritorial unity: “The Ukrainian land is where the same peasants live as in the former Cossack Ukraine along the Dniipro River.”⁶⁹ Drahomanov’s ethnographic cum social geography was surprisingly close to the modern borders of Ukraine. The main difference was counting as Ukrainian the Kholm (Chełm) region of present-day Poland, Brest (Berestia) and southern Gomel (Homel) regions of Belarus, and parts of Kursk and Voronezh regions along with Kuban of the Russian Federation.

Approximately the same territory was attributed to “ethnographic Ukraine” by the Lviv geographer Stepan Rudnytsky. On the eve of World

⁶⁷ Roman Szporluk. Mapping Ukraine: From Identity Space to Decision Space // *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*. 2008–2009. Vol. 33–34. Pp. 448–52.

⁶⁸ Anton Kotenko. Ukraine’s First Ethnographic Map: Made in the Russian Empire // *Nationalities Papers*. 2020. Vol. 48. No. 5. Pp. 931–941.

⁶⁹ Mykhailo Drahomanov (Ed.). *Hromada: Ukraïns’ka zbirka*. Geneva, 1878. P. 6.

War I he published a map of his version of ethnographic Ukraine in a book synthesizing a study of the “land and population” of Ukraine.⁷⁰ Rudnytsky’s maps engaged in an ideological battle with competing “ideal geographies” of neighboring national projects of Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, and Belarusian cartographers and linguists.⁷¹ The same ethnographic principle, which allowed the inclusion of Austrian Galicia and Bukovina as well as “Hungarian Rus” into a single Ukraine, was pursued in a synthesized study of the Ukrainian people that was published in Petrograd during the war.⁷² At the same time, Ukrainian historians and geographers, who would turn into practicing politicians in 1917, consistently excluded the Crimean Peninsula from the territory claimed by the Ukrainian national movement, recognizing it as an ethnographic territory of the Crimean Tatars. For them, ethnographic Ukraine ended at the continental part of the former Taurida province.⁷³

Galicia, a territory that had been annexed to the Austrian monarchy as a result of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late eighteenth century, was much more important to the Ukrainian movement in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷⁴ In the nineteenth century, Austria’s attitudes toward the Ruthenian language and the Greek Catholic Church were definitely less repressive than those of the Russian Empire. Ukrainian intellectuals in Russia spoke of Galicia as the “Ukrainian Piedmont” – an obvious reference to the Italian model of national unification. They envisioned Galicia as a national center from which the

⁷⁰ Stephen Rudnitsky. *Ukraine: The Land and Its People*. New York, 1918. Rudnytsky’s book was first published in Ukrainian in 1910, and the German edition appeared in 1916 in Vienna.

⁷¹ For a contextual analysis, see Steven Seegel. *Map Men: Transnational Lives and Deaths of Geographers in the Making of East Central Europe*. Chicago, 2018; Maciej Górny. *Kreślarze ojczyzn. Geografowie i granice międzywojennej Europy*. Warsaw, 2017.

⁷² F. K. Volkov, M. S. Hrushevsky et al. (Eds.). *Ukrainskii narod v ego proshlom i nastoiashchem*. Vol. 2. Petrograd, 1916.

⁷³ For details, see Igor B. Torbakov. *Russian-Ukrainian Relations, 1917–1918: A Conflict over Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet // Nationalities Papers*. 1996. Vol. 24. No. 4. Pp. 679–89; Valerii Soldatenko. *Rossiiia – Krym – Ukraina. Opyt vzaimootnoshenii v gody revoliutsii i Grazhdansko voiny*. Moscow, 2018. Soldatenko claims to present “an unbiased, rigorous, consistent scholarly analysis,” but the text clearly reveals his sympathies: he sympathizes with the Bolsheviks and negatively depicts the Crimean Tatar national movement.

⁷⁴ On the intellectual history of the concept of “Galicia,” see Larry Wolff. *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture*. Stanford, 2010.

awakened nation should begin to gather its “territorial body.” The origin of this popular metaphor is usually attributed to Volodymyr Antonovych, who visited Galicia in the 1860s on his way to Italy.⁷⁵

Whether it was Antonovych who coined it or someone else, this metaphor proved to be enduring, and shaped the master narrative of Ukrainian history. The ideologeme of the rebirth of a united (*soborna*) nation, with its emphasis on the will of a collective subject that wakes up and recalls its natural boundaries, posits the homogeneity and invariability of this subject in time and conceals the centrality of situational and often accidental factors in the historical process. This is the main role of this metaphor in the structure of the Ukrainian historical master narrative, which prevails over individual historians’ awareness of the significance of accidental conjunctions of circumstances. Thus, in 1906 Hrushevsky admitted that unless Austrian Galicia and Russian Ukraine “converge their paths of development,” there was a possibility in two or three decades of two nationalities emerging in place of the Ukrainians, “grown out of the same ethnographic basis similar to Serbs and Croats.”⁷⁶ This warning countered the belief in a coherent and self-conscious national body as the primary historical subject, but did not make Hrushevsky question the master narrative of Ukrainian history, which he had helped to shape. This narrative demonstrated its full independence from historical circumstances when the metaphor of the Ukrainian Piedmont that formerly designated Galicia was applied in the late 1920s to Soviet Ukraine. According to the leader of Ukrainian national communists Mykola Skrypnyk, the former Ukrainian territories of the Russian Empire now became a “cultural Piedmont of the entire Ukrainian people.”⁷⁷

In the late 1920s, the Soviet regime abandoned its benevolent indigenization policy, strengthening centralization and destroying “Ukrainian bour-

⁷⁵ On Antonovych as the author of the formula, see Ihor Chornovol. *Pol’s’ko-ukraïns’ka uhoda 1890–1894 rr*. Lviv, 2000. P. 46; Ihor Raïkivs’ky. *Ideia ukraïns’koï sobornosti v pidavstriïskii Halychyni (XIX–pochatok XX st.)*. Ivano-Frankivs’k, 2016. P. 238; Michael Moser. *Ukraiïns’kyi Piemont? Doshcho pro znachennia Halychyny dlia formuvannia, rozbudovy i zberezhennia ukraïns’koï movy*. Lviv, 2011. P. 8. However, an exceptionally well-researched early article on Antonovych’s Galician connection contains no mention of his having coined the “Ukrainian Piedmont” metaphor: Myron Korduba. *Zviazky V. Antonovycha z Halychynoiu // Ukraïna*. 1928. No. 5. Pp. 32–78.

⁷⁶ M. Hrushevsky. *Halychyna i Ukraïna // Literaturno-naukovyi vistyky*. 1906. No. 7. Pp. 147–51.

⁷⁷ M. Skrypnyk. *URSR – Piemont ukraïns’kykh trudiashchykh mas // M. Skrypnyk. Stati i promovy z natsional’noho pytania*. Munich, 1974. P. 180.

geois nationalism,” along with national communism (Skrypnyk committed suicide in 1933). But with historical circumstances radically changed and so many people gone, the narrative of Ukrainian history persisted in many key aspects. The Stalinist regime did not abandon the ethnographic notion of Ukraine, and brilliantly exploited it for political purposes. In 1934, after signing a nonaggression pact with Poland, the capital of Soviet Ukraine was moved from the Russian border city of Kharkiv to historic Kyiv. Just five years later, in 1939, the Soviet Union joined Nazi Germany in disintegrating the Polish state under the pretext of the “reunification” of the western and eastern Ukrainian lands within the USSR. These territorial acquisitions were enshrined in the post–World War II delimitation of borders in Europe, so that for the first time in history Lviv and Odessa were included in the same political territory, designated as nationally Ukrainian. As Ivan L. Rudnytsky put it in 1970, “one of the ironies of World War II was the fact that of all the world’s leading statesmen it was Stalin – the perpetrator of unspeakable crimes against the Ukrainian people – who showed the greatest awareness of the potentialities of the Ukrainian problem.”⁷⁸ The narrative of Ukrainian history centered on *sobornist*’ helped Soviet Ukrainian historiography to ideologically justify Stalin’s territorial expansion, but substituting the politically compromised term with its longer description “reunification of the Ukrainian lands.” Even though in practice it came about as a result of Stalin’s adventurist foreign policy, this reunification was presented as the historically inevitable and morally justified result of previous historical development, a triumph of the “Ukrainian national revival.”

“National revival” was one of the key tropes in Hrushevsky’s historical scheme that helped to structure the Ukrainian historical narrative. It echoed the powerful European metanarrative of national history based on the Hegelian triad and envisioned three main periods: the formation of Ukrainian nationality, its decline (denationalization), and its inevitable revival.⁷⁹ The trope of the Ukrainian national revival proved to be one of the most vital in Ukrainian historiography. In the most concise way, it was summarized by Volodymyr Kravchenko:

According to [the paradigm of national revival] the Ukrainian [Cossack] state, always belonging to Europe, later became a victim of Russian imperialism; part of the Cossack elite betrayed their homeland and defected to Russia, having lost their mother tongue and national tra-

⁷⁸ Ivan L. Rudnytsky. *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*. Edmonton, 1987. P. 469.

⁷⁹ Bahalii. *Akademik M. S. Hrushevsky i ioho mistse*. P. 209.

ditions. The Russian government pursued a colonial, repressive policy in Ukraine, siphoning off resources and ignoring local needs. In this situation, nationally conscious patriots, mostly from the intelligentsia, emerged on the scene ..., and despite the repressions, they began to fight hard for the revival of Ukrainian culture. ... They defended national interests in a duel with tsardom, convinced the “people” to follow them – and then begins the history of the Soviet Union, understood as a continuation of the Russian Empire.⁸⁰

Characteristically, some nationalist historians were more prone to criticizing this master narrative as restricting the scope of the Ukrainian national body for the sake of underscoring its longevity. In 1971, Oleksander Ohloblyn wrote that within the framework of Hrushevsky’s vision of the nineteenth century as a “century of Ukrainian revival,” “the broad and full-flowing river of the Ukrainian historical process has turned into a narrow, though strong and fast stream, beyond which the entire social life of Ukraine of that time remained.”⁸¹ Ohloblyn urged his colleagues not to limit themselves to studying the phenomena of the “Ukrainian-speaking circles” and to investigate the processes of formation of the Ukrainian territory, capitalist development, and the “formation of the modern Ukrainian nation.” The concept of national revival was also criticized from the opposite political and methodological position of innovative Ukrainian history. In the late 1980s, without discarding the notion itself, Paul Robert Magocsi suggested a “new analytical framework” of “national revival” centered on the “hierarchy of multiple loyalties and mutually exclusive identities.”⁸²

Critical reassessments of its individual elements did not question the master narrative of Ukrainian history as such, and the rise of independent Ukraine after 1991 was perceived as vivid proof of this narrative’s validity. The trope of “Ukrainian national revival” has become extremely popular during the post-Soviet period, both as an element of a teleological historical scheme and a synonym for nation-building. The latter usage owed to the exceptional popularity in Ukraine during the 1990s of the Ukrainian Canadian historian Ivan L. Rudnytsky, who wrote that “the central problem

⁸⁰ Volodymyr Kravchenko. *Ukraïna, imperiia, Rosiia. Vybrani staty z modernoi istorii ta istoriohrafii*. Kyiv, 2011. P. 394.

⁸¹ Oleksander Ohloblyn. *Problema skhemy istorii Ukraïny 19 – 20 stolittia (do 1917 roku) // Ukraïns’kyi istoryk*. 1971. No. 1–2. Pp. 5–6.

⁸² Paul Robert Magocsi. *The Ukrainian National Revival: A New Analytical Framework // Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*. 1989. Vol. 16. No. 1–2. Pp. 45–62.

of modern Ukrainian history is that of the emergence of a nation: the transformation of an ethnic-linguistic community into a self-conscious political and cultural community.”⁸³

Rudnytsky’s neutral “transformation” was quickly interpreted as “modernization,” which for a time became the most popular framework for conceptualizing the history of Ukraine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A popular concept in former Russian studies in the West of the 1980s, modernization did not converge effortlessly with the master narrative of Ukrainian national history. The rapid urbanization of the second half of the nineteenth century solidified the “non-Ukrainian character” of large cities, repeatedly noted by Ukrainian activists in 1917–1921. Likewise, Soviet social transformations both promoted the Ukrainian national project and compromised the coherence of the national body.⁸⁴ This ambivalent role of modernization encouraged Yaroslav Hrytsak to conclude in the mid-1990s that “Ukrainians have remained Ukrainians to a large extent not thanks to modernization, but in spite of it.”⁸⁵ Key here is the word “remained.” It points to the perception of Ukrainian identity as preceding modernization, which itself is stripped of its normative interpretation. In Hrytsak’s scheme, industrialization and the development of communications did not necessarily contribute to national unification, and Eastern Europe in general and Ukraine in particular were not fundamentally backward in comparison to Western European societies.⁸⁶

This partial revision of normative historical concepts allowed historians to question elements of the Ukrainian historical master narrative, particularly the predestination of Ukrainian territorial and national unity (*sobornist*). Thus, John-Paul Himka examined alternative scenarios of modern national projects in Galicia and looked for a contextual explanation of the final suc-

cess of the all-Ukrainian project.⁸⁷ The very question of possible alternatives to straightforward nation-building undermines the teleological narrative of essential national unity and is thus incompatible with the dominant scheme of Ukrainian history. This explains why the logic of situational choice, analyzed by Himka using the case of the Galician Ruthenians/Ukrainians, has not been systematically applied to peasants of “ethnographic Russian Ukraine,” as if they faced no similar choices. The problem of their identification in the nineteenth century is usually discussed not in the categories of situational political choice between Ukrainian and Little Russian identifications, but in terms of forced Russification, denationalization, and deprivation of their original Ukrainian identity. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian and Little Russian activists shared the same ethnographic canon despite the fundamental political contradictions between the two identity projects. Thus, the “ethnographic principle,” which was fundamental for the formulation of the Ukrainian national project, could equally accommodate the Ukrainian and Little Russian scenarios.

Between West and different Easts

“Ukraine between East and West” is one of the most stable tropes of the Ukrainian national narrative, still very popular in post-Soviet historiography. “The West” in this formula is a static notion, both territorially and substantially. It begins in Poland and manifests itself in Ukrainian history in the form of Magdeburg rights in towns, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, as well as the Uniate Church, understood as a synthesis of Western and Eastern Christianity, which managed to survive despite all the efforts of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union to destroy it. The assertion and confirmation of Ukraine’s “westernness” has become a staple of post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography.⁸⁸ In this regard, too, it is a continuation of the Soviet-era historical narrative, which was overly concerned with finding typological similarities with “western” patterns conceptualized by Marxism as normative and universally applicable. In turn, Soviet historiography tacitly reproduced the earlier narrative of Ukrainian national history. This

⁸³ Ivan L. Rudnytsky. *The Role of the Ukraine in Modern History* // *Slavic Review*. 1963. Vol. 22. No. 2. P. 202. For more on Rudnytsky as one of the most influential Ukrainian liberal historians, see Yaroslav Hrytsak. *Ivan L. Rudnytsky: Historian, Public Figure, and Political Thinker* // *Ab Imperio*. 2020. No. 1. Pp. 301–22.

⁸⁴ Bohdan Krawchenko. *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine*. London, 1985.

⁸⁵ Yaroslav Hrytsak. *Narys istoriï Ukraïny: Formuvannia modernoiï ukraïns’koï natsiï XIX–XX st.* Kyiv, 1996. P. 12. For an insightful review of this book, see Olga Andriewsky. *Toward a “Normal” Ukrainian History: A Review Article* // *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*. 1998. Vol. 23. No. 1. Pp. 91–97.

⁸⁶ Yaroslav Hrytsak. *Istoriia natsiï: prodovzhennia skhemy Hrushevs’koho shchodo ukraïns’koï istoriï XIX–XX st.* // Ya. Hrytsak and Ya. Dashkevych (Eds.). *Mykhailo Hrushevsky i ukraïns’ka istorychna nauka*. Lviv, 1999. Pp. 122–23.

⁸⁷ John-Paul Himka. *The Construction of Nationality in Galician Rus’: Icarian Flights in Almost All Directions* // Ronald G. Suny, Michael D. Kennedy (Eds.), *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*. Ann Arbor, 2001. Pp. 109–69.

⁸⁸ Natalia Yakovenko. “Ukraïna mizh Skhodom i Zakhodom”: proektsiia odniieï ideï // Natalia Yakovenko. *Paralel’nyi svit. Doslidzhennia z istoriï uiaвлен’ ta ideï v Ukraïni XVI–XVII st.* Kyiv, 2002. P. 361.

continuity is well illustrated in the thesis of uniquely Ukrainian versions of Renaissance and Reformation that was formulated by Ukrainian historians in the early twentieth century and remains influential today. In this logic of self-westernization, the major sixteenth-century Orthodox writer Ivan Vyshensky is characterized as a “humanist” and “reformer.”⁸⁹ Once again, the explanatory logic imposed by the universally upheld historical narrative outweighs and bends historical evidence: as Dmytro Chyzhevsky observed long ago, Vyshensky “did not accept anything that originated in the west.” “Even if he belonged to the Ukrainian ‘Renaissance,’ he represented a Savonarola within the movement, one who would not hesitate, perhaps, to annihilate all the values of the new culture.”⁹⁰ A prominent historian of Byzantium Ihor Shevchenko drew attention to the problem of Ukraine’s indirect access to European culture via intermediaries. Medieval Byzantine literature made its way to Ukraine mainly through Bulgaria, the ideas and culture of the Counter-Reformation – through Poland, and Classicism in architecture – through the Russian Empire.⁹¹ Thus, often problematic, Ukrainian “westernness” owed much to the intermediaries that could themselves claim the position “between East and West.”

While the location and definition of the “West” seemed clear, the “East” in this binary formula remained a very vague category. Depending on the historical and political context, it could mean the Byzantine Empire, Eurasian nomads, Russia, the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire (sometimes merged into the “Turkic-Islamic world”).

Regarding the role of Byzantium as an embodiment of the East, modern Ukrainian historians mostly agree with Ivan L. Rudnytsky’s authoritative dictum: “Ukraine, located between the worlds of Greek Byzantine and Western cultures, and a legitimate member of both, attempted, in the course of its history, to unite the two traditions in a living synthesis.”⁹² Curiously, this thesis had as much to do with the master narrative of Ukrainian history as with the pronouncement of Rudnytsky’s German *Doktorvater* Eduard Winter,

⁸⁹ See Serhii Savchenko. *Davnia Rus’ v polemichnii literaturi kintsia XVI – XVII st.* Dnipropetrovsk, 2007.

⁹⁰ Dmitry Čiževsky. *Ivan Vyšens’kyj // The Annales of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.* 1951. Vol. 1. No. 2. P. 117.

⁹¹ Ihor Ševčenko. *Ukraine between East and West // Harvard Ukrainian Studies.* June 1992. Vol. 16. No. 1–2. P. 180.

⁹² Ivan L. Rudnytsky. *Ukraine between East and West // Ivan L. Rudnytsky. Essays in Modern Ukrainian History.* Edmonton, 1987. P. 9. First published in 1966, this article is considered to be one of the most influential texts about Ukraine *in between*.

who in a comprehensive survey of Ukrainian church history completed in 1940 wrote about “the struggle of Byzantium and Rome for the souls of the East Slavic peoples” as the “heaviest burden” for the Ukrainian people.⁹³ Whereas Winter regarded the Ukrainian people as a passive object in the clash of civilizations, Rudnytsky took the opposite stance and endowed Ukrainians with ultimate historical subjectivity.

Whenever the “East” stood for the non-Christian nomads of the Middle Ages or the Turkic-Islamic world of the early modern period, Ukraine’s intermediary role between East and West acquired a militant connotation as a “bulwark of civilization.” Its relative backwardness becomes interpreted as a price paid for the defense of Europe.⁹⁴ This discourse is hardly unique to the Ukrainian historical narrative: the claim to serve as Europe’s shield against the Steppe and the explanation for lagging behind Western Europe by the centuries of the “Mongol yoke” were typical of nineteenth-century Russian historiography. The prominent Marxist historian Mikhail Pokrovsky and his followers in the early twentieth century harshly criticized these claims from anticolonial positions. In early Soviet Ukrainian historiography, Volodymyr Parkhomenko was the most devoted critic of the negative stereotypes about nomads as the embodiment of the evil Orient: “It is obvious that the East not only destroyed the Kyivan state but also took some part in the cultural life of Kyiv. This reconciliation of the East with the West adds a special flavor and significance to the life of the Kyivan state.”⁹⁵ Even Hrushevsky partially acknowledged the validity of Parkhomenko’s criticism and proposed distinguishing between the Steppe as “a space of destructive hordes” and the Steppe as “a system of communication lines and trade routes.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Eduard Winter. *Byzanz und Rom im Kampf um die Ukraine. 955–1939.* Leipzig, 1942. P. 210. Eduard Winter supervised Rudnytsky’s dissertation on the political ideas of Mykhailo Drahomanov at the German University in Prague. It was defended in 1945 right before the Soviet troops entered the city. After World War II Rudnytsky emigrated to the United States, and Winter moved to East Germany where he made an impressive career occupying positions such as the rector of Halle University and a professor of Humboldt University in Berlin.

⁹⁴ Liliya Berezhnaya and Heidi Hein-Kircher (Eds.). *Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism.* New York–Oxford, 2019. As an extreme example of “bulwark mythology” produced by a Ukrainian historian, see Omeljan Terletsky. *Ukraïna zaborolom kul’tury i tsyvilizatsii pered stepovykamy.* Lviv, 1930.

⁹⁵ Volodymyr Parkhomenko. *Novi istorychni problemy Kyivs’koï Rusi // Ukraïna.* 1928. No. 6. P. 3.

⁹⁶ M. S. Hrushevsky. *Step i more v istorii Ukraïny. Kilka sliv shchodo plianu i perspektyv sioho doslidu // Ukraïns’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal.* 2016. No. 1. P. 190.

However, the overall narrative structure of Ukrainian history remained intact, so Hrushevsky did not go beyond admitting the role of nomads as “rather unconscious transmitters of certain cultural phenomena.” Even Parkhomenko was not free himself from the tendency to measure the nomads by the “civilizational standards” of sedentary societies, for example noting their “interest in urban life” as an argument helping to normalize nomads in the eyes of fellow historians.⁹⁷ Eventually, the logic of the dominant historical narrative prevailed, and Soviet scholars, Russian and Ukrainian, gradually returned to the familiar, purely negative and foreign view of the nomadic East.

A more consistent and powerful attempt to normalize nomads as full-fledged protagonists of Ukraine’s history was made in 1980 by Omeljan Pritsak, a renowned Turkologist and first director of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. He proposed reinterpreting the familiar trope of Ukraine as a key intermediary between East and West in less normative and binary categories. Pritsak interpreted Ukrainian lands as the “crossroads of various cultures and religions” and believed that Ukrainian historians needed to study the past of all the cultures and states that had ever existed on the territory of present-day Ukraine. As Pritsak argued, “with such an approach, the Tatars are no longer alien robbers, but on a par with the Zaporozhians, our ancestors.”⁹⁸ However, when republishing this article ten years later, at the end of the text Pritsak added a comparison of Ukraine with Spain as “an eastern outpost of Europe.”⁹⁹ Thus, he downplayed the potential of his approach to deconstruct the dominant master narrative of Ukrainian history, reenforcing its trope of Ukraine as Europe’s last bulwark. Readiness to accept “the Tatars” as “our ancestors” served more as an indicator of political inclusiveness and open-mindedness than of methodological revisionism. One can consider a multinational history of Ukraine written by Paul Robert Magocsi as a full-scale application of Pritsak’s approach to the long history of the country.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ For an analysis of Parkhomenko’s works and their reception in historiography, see Andrii Portnov. *Volodymyr Parkhomenko – doslidnyk rannioi istorii Rusi*. Lviv, 2003.

⁹⁸ Omeljan Pritsak. *Shcho take istoriia Ukraïny? // Ukraïns’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*. 2015. No. 1. P. 195. Pritsak’s thesis of Tatars as “our ancestors” seems to be intentionally provocative. It immediately sparked criticism as a “phrase with no historical and factual basis” (Oleksander Dombrovsky. *Shcho take istoriia Ukraïny // Ukraïns’kyi istoryk*. 1982. No. 1–2. P. 82).

⁹⁹ Pritsak. *Shcho take istoriia Ukraïny?* P. 209. The comparison of Ukraine to Spain as “the last bastion of European spirit” could also be found in Borys Krupnytsky. *Istorychni osnovy evropeïzmu Ukraïny // Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*. 1948. Kn. 1. P. 130.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Robert Magocsi. *A History of Ukraine. The Land and Its People*. 2nd ed. Toronto, 2010.

Yaroslav Dashkevych’s 1991 article making the case for Ukraine “between East and West” was probably the most influential affirmation of this trope in post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography. Dashkevych wrote of Ukraine in the fourteenth–eighteenth centuries as the “Great Frontier” – “a zone of diverse ethnic contacts, which functioned on the principle of a selective filter (but not a sanitary cordon).”¹⁰¹ He also argued that historians “have no reason to contrast sedentary lifestyle and nomadism in the border zones of the Great Frontier: they did not oppose each other, but were mutually complementary.”¹⁰² The perspective outlined by Dashkevych has been developed in a series of studies on the history of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, particularly those that compare the Cossacks to other borderland military formations.¹⁰³ In her innovative course on the history of medieval and early modern Ukraine, Natalia Yakovenko used the familiar trope of Ukraine as “civilizational crossroads between East and West” not to reaffirm but to deconstruct the dominant nation-centered historical narrative.¹⁰⁴ Referring to this underlying intention of Yakovenko’s approach, Oleksii Tolochko noted that her reference to Ukraine’s intermediary position “between East and West” was no more than a way to bring “the illusion of continuity” to the narrative.¹⁰⁵ He cited Hayden White’s *Metahistory* and ironically concluded that modern Ukrainian historians pursue innovative methodological approaches in their studies while falling back on “underground positivism” (such as permanently fitting Ukraine between East and West) as a subconscious means “to protect us from methodological madness.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Yaroslav Dashkevych. *Ukraïna na mezhi mizh Skhodom i Zakhodom (XIV–XVIII st.) // Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva im. T. Shevchenka*. Vol. 222. Pratsi istoryko-filolohichnoi sektsii. Lviv, 1991. P. 39.

¹⁰² Ibid. P. 44. See also the earlier Russian-language version of this article: Yaroslav Dashkevych. *Bol’shaia granitsa Ukrainy. Etnicheskii bar’er ili etnokontaktnaia zona // I. I. Krupnik (Ed.). Etnokontaktnye zony v Evropeiskoi chasti SSSR. Geografiia, dinamika, metody izucheniia*. Moscow, 1989. Pp. 7–21.

¹⁰³ A useful comprehensive historiographic survey on the topic can be found in Denys Shatalov. *Ukraïns’kyi stepovyi kordon (druha polovyna XV–persha polovyna XVII st.): viina i zdobych / MA thesis; Dnipropetrovs’k National University, 2015*. See also Ihor Chornovol. *Komparatyvni frontyry: svitovyi i vitchyzniani vymir*. Kyiv, 2015. For an in-depth analysis of the “Eastern influence” on the Zaporozhian Cossacks, see Oleksandr Halenko. *Luk ta rushnytsia v lytsars’kii symvolitsi ukraïns’koho kozatstva: paradoksy kozatskoi ideolohii i problema skhidnoho vplyvu // Mediaevalia Ucrainica: mental’nist’ ta istoriia idei*. 1998. Vol. 5. Pp. 93–110.

¹⁰⁴ Natalia Yakovenko. *Narys istorii Ukraïny z naidavnishykh chasiv do kintsia XVIII st.* Kyiv, 1997. P. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Oleksii Tolochko. *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly // Krytyka*. 1998. No. 7–8. P. 30.

¹⁰⁶ Oleksii Tolochko. *Svoi svoia ne poznasha // Krytyka*. 1998. No. 11. P. 30.

Thus, framing the Ukrainian past with the formula “between East and West” could serve to sustain not only the traditional narrative of Ukrainian history but also its tacit subversion. Another reason for the popularity of this trope is its role in asserting Ukraine’s historical subjectivity. Essentially, claiming that Ukraine was situated “between East and West” is another way to call it a borderland, avoiding the connotation of a periphery of some self-sufficient metropole. At the beginning of the twentieth century, many historians still viewed the notion of a borderland as rather derogatory. Some argued against the usage of the very word “Ukraine” as signifying “just a margin (*Okraina*).”¹⁰⁷ Even in the 1960s, the frontier role of Ukraine was perceived as its major historical disadvantage: “The tragedy of Ukrainians is that since the fifteenth century their territory has been a ‘borderland’ between East and West, incapable of committing itself entirely to either side and denied a free choice because it has been coveted by both.”¹⁰⁸ It took a conceptual revolution of sorts to think of the country’s “frontierness” as a blessing. In his 1995 programmatic article “Does Ukraine Have a History?” Mark von Hagen formulated a new agenda for Ukrainian studies:

Ukraine represents a case of a national culture with extremely permeable frontiers, but a case that perhaps corresponds to postmodern political developments. ... In other words, what has been perceived as the “weakness” of Ukrainian history or its “defects” when measured against the putative standards of west European states such as France and Britain, ought to be turned into “strengths” for a new historiography. Precisely the fluidity of frontiers, the permeability of cultures, the historic multi-ethnic society is what could make Ukrainian history a very “modern” field of inquiry.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ I. A. Linnichenko. *Malorusskii vopros i avtonomiiia Malorossii. Otkrytoe pis'mo prof. M. A. Hrushevskomu*. Odessa, 1917. P. 20. This “open letter” is a fascinating document presenting a critique of Hrushevsky’s historical scheme from the Little Russian intellectual perspective. It was penned by another pupil of Antonovych, a professor of history in Odessa, Ivan Linnichenko. Linnichenko rejected the Ukrainian political movement in favor of the “all-Russian” identification, a topic omitted by modern Ukrainian historiographic studies. An important exception is O. P. Tolochko. *Dvi ne zovsim akademichni diskusii (I. A. Linnychenko, D. I. Bahalii, M. S. Hrushevsky) // Ukraïns'kyi arkhoeohrafichnyi shchorichnyk*. 1993. Vol. 2. Pp. 92–103.

¹⁰⁸ Omeljan Pritsak and John S. Reshetar. *The Ukraine and the Dialectics of Nation-Building // Slavic Review*. 1963. Vol. 22. No. 2. P. 227.

¹⁰⁹ Mark von Hagen. *Does Ukraine Have a History? // Slavic Review*. 1995. Vol. 54. No. 3. P. 670.

A similar idea, only much more cautiously, was put forward in 1952 by a Belarusian and Ukrainian émigré historian Lev Okynshevych. According to him, both Belarus and Ukraine should be conceptualized as “countries intermediate by their character” located “on the border of two cultural and historical types” and representing “a wide space of transition” from one civilization to another.¹¹⁰ Moreover, Okynshevych defined this intermediary position as a “rather positive thing.” At the time, Okynshevych’s insight remained unappreciated by fellow historians and, unlike von Hagen’s article, his text remained almost completely neglected.

Today, studies of liminal positions and multicultural communities have become mainstream in Ukrainian history. As a result, various ethnically non-Ukrainian and non-Orthodox Christian religious groups acquired a much greater visibility in the historical narrative.¹¹¹ The Jewish-Ukrainian history has long been ideologically charged and permeated with stereotypes.¹¹² Over past decades it has become a topic of some exemplary balanced studies of controversial topics such as the revolutionary period of 1917–1921, the role of Jewish writers and Jewish protagonists in Ukrainian literature, and the Holocaust and conflicting memories of it.¹¹³

The political contexts and subtexts of the national narrative’s exclusiveness and inclusiveness regarding topics traditionally deemed non-Ukrainian can be elucidated using the example of the Crimean Tatars. A negative attitude to the Crimeans as predators had informed the Russian and Ukrai-

¹¹⁰ L[ev] O[kynshevy]-ch. *Mizh Skhodom i Zakhodom // Ukraïna*. 1952. No. 8. P. 614.

¹¹¹ See, for instance, Christoph Mick. *Lemberg, Lwów, Lviv, 1914–1947: Violence and Ethnicity in a Contested City*. West Lafayette, 2016; Volodymyr Kulikov and Iryna Sklokina (Eds.). *Pratsia, vysnazhennia ta uspikh: promyslovi monomista Donbasu*. Lviv, 2018.

¹¹² Henry Abramson. *The Scattering of Amalek: A Model for Understanding the Ukrainian-Jewish Conflict // East European Jewish Affairs*. 1994. Vol. 24. No. 1. P. 40; Paul Robert Magocsi and Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern. *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-Existence*. Toronto, 2016. Pp. 2–3.

¹¹³ Henry Abramson. *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*. Cambridge, MA, 1999; Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern. *The Anti-Imperial Choice. The Making of the Ukrainian Jew*. New Haven, 2009; Myroslav Shkandrij. *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representation and Identity*. New Haven, 2009; John-Paul Himka. *Ukrainians, Jews, and the Holocaust: Divergent Memories*. Saskatoon, 2009; Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern. *Reconceptualizing the Alien: Jews in Modern Ukrainian Thought // Ab Imperio*. 2003. No. 4. Pp. 519–80; Marco Carynnyk. *Foes of our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929–1947 // Nationalities Papers*. 2011. Vol. 39. No. 3. Pp. 315–52. See also Ukrainian-language publications such as Zhanna Kovba. *Liudianist' u bezodni pekla: povedinka mistsevoho naselennia Skhidnoi Halychyny v roky “ostatochnoho rozviazannia ievreis'koho pytannia.” Kyiv, 2009; I. Ya. Shchupak (Ed.). Holokost v Dnipropetrovsku*. Dnipro, 2017.

nian historical canons from their inception. Aggressive rhetoric regarding the Crimean Tatars as “robbers” and “traitors” was typical of both Soviet and diasporic Ukrainian historiographies. As recently as the mid-1990s, Ukrainian historians responded critically to a military historian’s claim that the alliance with the Crimean Khanate was of decisive importance during the initial stage of the Khmelnytsky Uprising, that the Tatar played a crucial role in Cossacks’ victories, and that the popular cliché of the Tatar “betrayal” was groundless.¹¹⁴ The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 greatly contributed to the normalizing of Crimean Tatars’ treatment in the works of modern Ukrainian historians.¹¹⁵

The intermediary positionality of Ukraine between East and West acquires a truly strategic and politically charged importance when it comes to Polish-Ukrainian and Russian-Ukrainian relations, in which Ukraine is aligned with the East or the West, respectively. This ambiguity further exposes the profoundly contradictory character of the master narrative of Ukrainian history. Claiming a “gateway to the West” role for Ukraine, this narrative dictates the need to reconcile the histories of Ukraine and Poland as parts of a single cultural and political (“civilizational”) whole, sharing a common experience of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation. The main difficulty is that the same master narrative of Ukrainian national history is centered on the Cossacks as its main protagonists during the early modern period. Historically, the Cossacks were mostly hostile to the Polish state and Polish nobility, declared themselves the defenders of Orthodoxy, and played an important role in the weakening of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and aligning Cossack autonomy with Moscow. So the “Europeanization” of Ukrainian history through its complementary integration with the narrative of Polish history is possible only by adopting a more critical attitude toward the Cossacks as one of the foundational myths of the Ukrainian national movement.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ I. S. Storozhenko. Bohdan Khmelnytsky i voienne mystetstvo u Vyzvol’niyi viini ukrains’koho narodu seredyny XVII st. Dnipropetrovsk, 1996. A comparable point on the crucial importance of the Crimean Tatar cavalry was made by Ivan Krypiakievych in his article prepared for publication in 1930 but published only in the 1990s: I. P. Krypiakievych. Poludneva Ukraïna v chasy Bohdana Khmel’nyts’koho // Ukraïns’kyi arkhheohrafichniy shchorichnyk. 1993. No. 2. Pp. 299–302.

¹¹⁵ Viktor Brekhunenko. Viina za svdomist’. Rosiis’ki mify pro Ukraïnu ta ïi mynule. Kyiv, 2017. Pp. 229–52. See also Taras Chukhlib. Kozaky i tatory. Ukraïns’ko-kryms’ki soiuzy 1500–1700-kh rokiv. Kyiv, 2017.

¹¹⁶ For an overview of this debate, see Andrii Portnov, Poland and Ukraine. Entangled Histories, Asymmetric Memories. Berlin, 2020.

An even more daunting task is to consistently apply the explanatory paradigm of Ukraine between East and West to Ukrainian-Russian historical relations. The inertia of mainstream historical narratives is so powerful in Russia and Ukraine that the most innovative studies on the topic have been published in languages other than Ukrainian or Russian, as part of North American or German historiographic traditions.¹¹⁷ The rare exceptions highlight the established narratives’ limitations in producing a new understanding of Ukrainian-Russian entangled history beyond mere political correctness.¹¹⁸ A more inclusive rendering of Russian national history or a transcending of the narrow confines of Russian and Ukrainian national histories in a synthesized new imperial history of Northern Eurasia suggests directions for further revisions of the established historical narratives.¹¹⁹

Another potentially promising venue of developing Ukrainian history beyond the old national narrative is the postcolonial approach. To make it something more than another rhetorical repackaging of the old canon of national history, this approach needs to take seriously the theoretical foundations and critical methods of postcolonial social analysis. Simply assigning the roles of the metropole and the colony to familiar protagonists of national history would add little new and hardly alter the preexisting historical narrative. Such a mechanistic attempt to rewrite Russian imperial history as a history of colonialism was undertaken in the 1920s by the dominant Pokrovsky school of history. Despite his best intentions, Pokrovsky remained within the confines of the established narrative of Russian national history, which inevitably led him to a conflict with his fellow Ukrainian Marxist

¹¹⁷ Peter J. Potichnyj, Marc Raeff, Jaroslaw Pelenski, and Gleb N. Žekulin (Eds.). Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounters. Edmonton, 1992; Andreas Kappeler, Zenon E. Kohut, Frank E. Sysyn, and Mark von Hagen (Eds.). Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter (1600–1945). Edmonton, 2003; David Saunders. The Ukrainian Impact on Russian Culture. 1750–1850. Edmonton, 1985; Andreas Kappeler. Ungleiche Brüder. Russen und Ukrainer vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Munich, 2017.

¹¹⁸ Among notable exceptions are V. A. Smolii (Ed.). Ukraïna i Rosiia v istorychnii retrospektyvi. Vols. 1–3. Kyiv, 2004; and Anatolii Golubovskii and Nikita Sokolov (Eds.). Russko-ukraïnskii istoricheskii razgovornik: Opyty obshchej istorii. Moscow, 2017. Cf. an earlier attempt of dialogue among historians in G. Kasianov and A. Miller. Rossiia-Ukraïna: kak pishetsia istoriia. Dialogi – lektsii – stat’i. Moscow, 2011. See also K. A. Kochegarov. Ukraina i Rossiia vo vtoroi polovine XVII veka. Moscow, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Serhii Plokyh. Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation. From 1470 to the Present. New York, 2017; Ilya Gerasimov (Ed.). Novaia imperskaia istoriia Severnoi Evrazii. Vols. 1–2. Kazan, 2017.

historians.¹²⁰ Oleksander Ohloblyn, then a typical Soviet historian, was among the many Ukrainian scholars who in the 1920s studied the colonial exploitation of Ukraine by Russian imperialism.¹²¹ With the demise of the Pokrovsky school in the mid-1930s, such studies became unequivocally qualified as “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism.”¹²²

The interest in colonial and postcolonial approaches to Ukrainian history reemerged after 1991. This time, the initiative was coming not from the domestic Marxist tradition of imperialism and colonialism studies, but from Ukrainian historians educated and professionally integrated in the west, as a foreign intellectual export. In 1997 Serhy Yekelchuk observed:

Not a classic colony, Ukraine produced an ambiguous postcolonial condition. Some of its salient anxieties, like the obsessive and ultimately impossible elucidation of the precise location of the nation *between Europe and* its definitely non-Ukrainian but elusive “Other” may constitute a paradigmatic postcolonial concern, possibly not so noticeable in “classic” cases.¹²³

In the enchanted circle of national history

The first modern overview of Ukrainian history was written at the turn of the twentieth century by a woman – moreover, by a woman of Russian ethnic origin, Oleksandra Yefymenko. She responded to the announcement of a competition to write “a course of Southern Rus’ history” published in 1896 in the Kyiv-based journal *Kievskaiia starina*. The announcement contained a tentative plan of the course, which was remarkably close to what later became known as Hrushevsky’s scheme of Ukrainian history. Yefymenko’s was the sole submission in response to the call, but the jury for the competition, headed by Volodymyr Antonovych, was not very happy with her narrative. It was considered “Moscow-centric” and not “national”

enough, especially in depicting the old Rus’.¹²⁴ Paying Yefymenko part of the prize money for her work, the jury was able to prevent the publication of her text for more than five years after its completion, until 1906. So when Hrushevsky’s *Outline History of the Ukrainian People* was published in Russian in 1904 in St. Petersburg, he was acclaimed as the author of the first synthesized survey of Ukrainian history.¹²⁵

Even in 1906, in the introduction to her book Yefymenko found it necessary to advocate the validity of its focus on Ukraine as a subject in its own right, by historiographic and methodological arguments. Her final point was more of a political nature. She mentioned the “distrust in impartiality” of Ukrainian historians in Russian public opinion and referred to her own Russian origin and clear sympathies toward Northern Russian folklore expressed in prior publications as establishing her objectivity, beyond “any suspicion in Southern Russian national subjectivism.”¹²⁶

The dramatic story of publishing the first history survey of “the Ukrainian people” (not a territory or an administrative body identifiable as Ukraine) naturally raises the question of the substantial differences of their historical interpretations. Not unlike Antonovych and Hrushevsky, Yefymenko acknowledged the “independent historical development” of “two branches of the Russian people,” portrayed Cossacks as “the most typical phenomenon in Southern-Russian history,” negatively assessed Polish rule over Ukraine and the Crimean factor in Ukrainian history, and spoke about “the revival of the Ukrainian nationality.” The only serious difference in the conceptualization of Ukrainian history by Yefymenko, compared to Antonovych and Hrushevsky, was her reluctance to recognize the Kyivan Rus’ period belonging exclusively to the Ukrainian past. However, as was discussed earlier, even Hrushevsky’s loyal pupils publicly expressed similar concerns about a thesis that had more to do with the politics of history than with conceptual matters. It is no exaggeration to say that Oleksandra Yefymenko, the first

¹²⁰ Korine Amacher. Mikhail N. Pokrovsky and Ukraine: A Normative Marxist between History and Politics // *Ab Imperio*. 2018. No. 1. Pp. 101–32.

¹²¹ O. Ohloblyn. Problema ukrains’koï ekonomiky v naukovi i hromads’kii dumtsi XIX–XX v. // *Chervonyi Shliakh*. 1928. No. 9–10. Pp. 165–79.

¹²² Stephen Velychenko. *Painting Imperialism and Nationalism Red: The Ukrainian Marxist Critique of Russian Communist Rule in Ukraine, 1918–1925*. Toronto, 2015.

¹²³ Serhy Yekelchuk. The Location of Nation: Postcolonial Perspectives on Ukrainian Historical Debates // *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*. 1997. Vol. 11. No. 1–2. P. 184. Cf. a discussion of the applicability of the postcolonial approach to the history of Galicia in Andriy Zayarnyuk. *Empire, Peasants, National Movements – Galician Postcolonial Triangle?* // *Historyka. Studia metodologiczne*. 2012. Vol. 43. Pp. 115–31.

¹²⁴ This story is reconstructed in Andreas Kappeler. *Russland und die Ukraine: Verflochtene Biographien und Geschichten*. Vienna, 2012.

¹²⁵ See Viktoriia Serhiienko. “Official History” for a Stateless Nation: Mykhailo Hrushevsky’s *Illustrated History of Ukraine* // Korine Amacher, Andrii Portnov, Viktoriia Serhiienko (Eds.). *Official History in Eastern Europe*. Osnabrück, 2020. Pp. 15–38.

¹²⁶ A. Ya. Efimenko. *Istoriia ukrainskogo naroda*. St. Petersburg, 1906. P. 2. Her claim for neutrality was recently supported by two Dnipro historians, who characterized Yefymenko’s history of Ukraine as “approaching [standards of] analytical historiography” in O. I. Zhurba, T. F. Litvinova. *Narrativizatsiia ukrainskogo proshlogo v kontse XIX–nachale XXI veka: vozmozhno li preodolenie* // *Vestnik Permskogo universiteta*. 2020. No. 5 (30). Pp. 30–31, 33.

woman in the Russian Empire to receive an honorary doctorate in history (1910), contributed to the formation of the authoritative canon and master narrative of Ukrainian history, which is usually associated with Hrushevsky. Her case proves that a historian's nationality, even if consciously embraced as in Yefymenko's case, does not radically alter the structure of a historical narrative. This should not come as a surprise, given that the most radical political transformations of the twentieth century could not change the master narrative of Ukrainian history.

How do we explain this extraordinary persistence of the Ukrainian national historical narrative, despite numerous attempts to revise its individual elements (be it the centrality of *Narod*, the cult of *Sobornist*, or the trope of Ukraine between East and West)? Paradoxically, the circumstances usually regarded as the most hostile and damaging to the national historical narrative were also the main factors of consolidation and preservation of its early twentieth-century version until our time.

Thus, the Soviet regime ruthlessly persecuted any manifestations of an autonomous Ukrainian national movement that were not confined to the Soviet idiom and the officially endorsed scheme of history. However, Bolshevism's own populist roots made it utterly susceptible to the People (*Narod*) trope, which it legitimized and appropriated, thus making a mandatory part of the Soviet Ukrainian national narrative. As Natalia Yakovenko noted, the populist narrative, "having changed its name to Marxist-Leninist, entered Soviet historical scholarship smoothly. The change of terminological apparatus did not affect the worldview framework."¹²⁷ A profoundly ambivalent category, the People, was interpreted by the Soviet historical canon mostly in socioeconomic terms while allowing its ethnonational meaning tacitly coexist behind the Marxist facade. This Trojan horse eventually contributed to the Soviet regime's strategic defeat in 1991, while the anti-Soviet reaction of the 1990s further promoted the hitherto suppressed ethnocultural reading of the People within the familiar national historical narrative.

The national historical narrative framed by Hrushevsky and conceptually endorsed by the Soviet regime envisioned the culmination of Ukraine's history in establishment of its own sovereign nation-state. The crushing of the independent Ukrainian state projects in 1918–1920 added political urgency and conceptual validity to the dominant narrative of Ukrainian national history throughout the twentieth century. The ideal of nation-state was central to Western European historiographies during the first half of

the century, so the trope of Ukraine's Western orientation contributed to the perseverance of a historical narrative telling the story of a nation striving for centuries to build a state of its own. The post–World War II political and intellectual climate contributed to the deconstruction if not compromising of traditional national histories in "Western" societies. In the context of liberal transnational globalization, this model of history writing has been operating with completely different notions of personal and social identifications, forming a different type of social memory. But while a part of the USSR, discarding of the traditional national narrative meant for Ukraine's historians the surrender to the equally traditional and increasingly Russian nationalist, Moscow-backed historical narrative. The independence of Ukraine brought about the need to support the fragile nascent statehood and substantiate its cultural autonomy, while ideological service to the ruling regime was a central element of Soviet humanitarians' identity, taken as a given by most post-Soviet academics. Therefore, in the increasingly postmodern and postnational world, in which the cult of ethnoconfessional nation is perceived as an anachronism or even as radical fundamentalism, Ukrainian historiography continues its mission of academic support of the nation-building project.

In this way, the historical circumstances helped to preserve the master narrative of Ukrainian national history, which, in turn, frames a specific reading of these circumstances. In the enchanted circle of national history, new political challenges, be it Russian military aggression or internal political strife, are perceived as the ultimate confirmation of the old national paradigm's validity. Even three decades after Ukraine became an independent state, Ukrainian historians feel obliged to write their studies on behalf of an "awakened" or "oppressed" nation, inspired by the rhetoric of the nineteenth-century prophetic poets.

Many historians understand that the old national narrative's persistence into the twenty-first century has had a detrimental effect on the productivity and global relevance of Ukrainian historiography, and that its radical revision is imperative. Some ten years ago Andreas Kappeler concluded that the logic of the development of Ukrainian historiography can be described as a transition from national history – through *multinational* history – to *transnational* history.¹²⁸ This observation was backed by the fact that it appeared in an edited volume conspicuously titled *A Laboratory of Trans-*

¹²⁷ Yakovenko. *Narys istorii Ukraïny*. P. 4.

¹²⁸ Andreas Kappeler. From an Ethnonational to a Multiethnic to a Transnational Ukrainian History // Georgiy Kasianov, Philipp Ther (Eds.). *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*. Budapest – New York, 2009. Pp. 51–80.

national History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography, featuring contributions by leading international scholars. They demonstrated concern about the fluid and interwoven dimensions of the historical process and the entangled histories of neighboring societies, and paid special attention not only to fixed identities but also to the role of social mobility and intellectual transfers. This collection of articles also proved that the revised approach to Ukrainian history demonstrated in its pages was not so much about abandoning the established national historical narrative as about expanding and “transnationalizing” it.¹²⁹

Once again, the master narrative of Ukrainian national history has prevailed, because, whether transnational or multinational, the historical narrative remains centered on “nation” as its main and “natural” category. The same applies to the notion of “national indifference,” which attempts to indicate some other type of social reality by means of the dominant nation-centered narrative, but applied in some kind of apophatic logic – through negation as a negative assertion.¹³⁰ In other words, these sophisticated modifications of the classical national narrative fall short of fulfilling the task of finally overcoming “the realism of the group” and the “natural” grouping of diverse populations into nations, with national identity prioritized over other forms of social identification.¹³¹ A declarative rejection of the established national narrative and awareness of the newest methodologies, alone, do not deliver on this task either, making scholars even more dependent on “the invisible hand” of the master narrative tacitly guiding their pens. It comes as no surprise then that three contributors to *A Laboratory of Transnational History* reproduced totally essentialist narratives in their contributions to the 2015 forum “The Ukrainian Crisis and History” in a leading professional journal *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*.¹³²

Historiography is a genre of prose, and thus the hope of simply discarding a coherent narrative is utopian and self-delusional. Reliance on the

classical principle of historicism – “each time period should be described in its own terms” – as an argument in favor of speaking of “Ruthenians” and “Little Russia” instead of “Ukrainians” and “Ukraine” when dealing with pre-twentieth-century topics,¹³³ could be misleading. Not part of a coherent, if anachronistic, narrative of “Ukrainian” history, those Ruthenians and Little Russians inevitably became elements of some other sequential narrative, most likely that of Polish or Russian history. No less “national” than the mainstream Ukrainian historical canon, these narratives are even less self-reflective, speaking of “Poles” and “Russians” as stable collective entities, essentially unchanging throughout centuries. No wonder that in most synthesized accounts that differentiate between “Ruthenian,” “Little Russian,” and “Ukrainian” identities, no attempt is made to offer an equally nuanced demarcation of *ruskii*, *rossiiskii*, and *velikorusskii*.

With no magic formula existing to escape the power of narrative or to do without a narrative, all historians can do is to sustain a more conscious and self-critical attitude to the language of our own texts. In this respect, it is instructive to reread the words of the Ukrainian historian Lev Bilas, who back in 1961, long before the publication of White’s *Metahistory*, realized that Ukrainian historiography functioned as a mythologized poetry:

Inattention to the word as a concept, to the weight of its designated, clear content deprives it of value, turns it into a stamp, a meaningless phrase (at best, into poetry). Language becomes a means of manifesting often incomprehensible feelings, dreams, and sentiments, takes us into the realm of mythology, mysticism, or poetry. “Patriotic” phraseology, all these “poetic additions” are objectionable precisely because history is not poetry. History is the thought, logos. ... Patriotic or any other poetic history is not a true history because it is not thought.¹³⁴

SUMMARY

This article reconstructs the general scheme for structuring and narrating Ukrainian history that was finally crystallized at the turn of the twentieth century and is usually associated with the name of Mykhailo Hrushevsky. The authors reconstruct the genesis of this scheme, noting the collective

¹²⁹ Sebastian Conrad. *What Is Global History?* Princeton, 2016. P. 46. Compare the very same conclusion about “Laboratory of Transnational History” book in Volodymyr Sklokin’s review: *Ukraina Moderna*. 2010. T. 6. P. 301.

¹³⁰ Tara Zahra. *Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis* // *Slavic Review*. 2010. Vol. 69. No. 1. Pp. 93–119.

¹³¹ Cf. Ilya Gerasimov. *When Neighbors Begin to Hate* // *Ab Imperio*. 2019. No. 2. Pp. 138–40.

¹³² Andriy Zayarnyuk. *A Revolution’s History, A Historians’ War* // *Ab Imperio*. 2015. No. 1. Pp. 449–79, especially 464–65. Tellingly, this convincing critical piece has not received proper attention within the community of Ukrainian historians.

¹³³ H. V. Kasianov, O. P. Tolochko. *Natsional’ni istorii ta suchasna istoriografii: vyklyky i nebezpeky dlia napsyannia novoi istorii Ukrainy* // *Ukrains’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*. 2012. No. 6. P. 20.

¹³⁴ Bilas. *Ideolohiia iak istoriia*. Pp. 49–50.

nature of the enterprise and registering its persistence to this day as the master narrative of Ukrainian history. They identify several key elements of this narrative: its populism and insistence on the primordial democratism of Ukrainian social institutions; the cult of revolution as a culmination of the teleological process of nation-building; the idea of fundamental unity of all “ethnographically Ukrainian” territories (*sobornist*’); and the belief in Ukraine’s historical mission as an intermediary between the civilizations of the West and the East. Drawing on the broad survey of Ukrainian historiography, the authors demonstrate that, at various times, individual elements of this narrative have been deconstructed and criticized by Ukrainian historians. However, these partial revisions were always marginalized and rebuffed by the very fact that they did not fit the established, coherent, and all-embracing master narrative, but also did not offer an equally comprehensive alternative story. The authors conclude that the main reason for the remarkable perseverance of the master narrative of Ukrainian history was the persistence of circumstances that are usually regarded as the most hostile and damaging to the Ukrainian national project. Abandoning the nation-centered historical paradigm did not seem appropriate in the situation of the unresolved or jeopardized nation-building project. Another reason is the global prevalence of a national model of history writing, with partial methodological innovations unable to undermine the archetypal national master narratives. The available approaches to postnational historiography have not yet gained universal acceptance, so all that historians can do at present to keep the power of narrative in check is to sustain a more conscious and self-critical attitude to the language of their own texts.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Статья воссоздает масштабную карту мастер-нарратива украинской истории, окончательно оформившегося к началу XX в. и обычно связываемого с именем М. С. Грушевского. Авторы реконструируют генезис этой схемы, отмечая коллективный характер ее создания и выделяя несколько ее ключевых элементов: народничество и убежденность в изначальном демократизме украинских социальных институтов; культ революции как кульминации телеологического процесса нациестроения; идея фундаментального единства всех “этнографически украинских” территорий (*соборність*); вера в историческую миссию Украины

как посредника между цивилизациями Запада и Востока. Опираясь на широкий обзор украинской историографии, авторы обращают внимание на то, что отдельные элементы этого нарратива время от времени деконструировались и критиковались украинскими историками. Однако эти частичные коррективы всегда маргинализировались и отторгались уже в силу того факта, что они не вписывались в устоявшийся, последовательный и всеобъемлющий мастер-нарратив и при этом не предлагали столь же всеобъемлющую альтернативную историю. Авторы приходят к выводу, что главной причиной удивительной устойчивости мастер-нарратива украинской истории было сохранение обстоятельств, которые обычно считаются наиболее враждебными и разрушительными для украинского национального проекта. Отказ от нациецентричной исторической парадигмы был немислимым в ситуации незавершенного или находящегося под угрозой национального проекта. Другой причиной является глобальное доминирование национальной модели историографии. Частичные методологические новации не способны радикально изменить архетипические национальные мастер-нарративы, а существующие подходы к написанию постнациональной истории пока не получили всеобщего признания. Так что все, что пока остается историкам в деле ограничения автономной власти нарративов над их исследованиями, – это сохранение сознательного и самокритичного отношения к языку своих текстов.